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Address all correspondence to
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BULLETIN MATTERS

With DB43, the first issue of our eighth year of publication, we go to the new 28-page format. In part the four additional pages will be taken up with material that was usually included in a separate dittoed
"Report" that was stapled into the copies of subscribers who had supported the DB with either financial or written contributions and who automatically and involuntarily became members of the Discussion Bulletin Committee. This material includes a financial statement for each issue, a list of contributors, and news of interest to DB subscribers.

It is also our intention to use this space in future issues to carry subscription information, renewal forms, the description of the DB's purpose and the sub blank that were stapled into the sample issues sent to non-subscribers.

As usual we ask for your letters and articles. They must be typewritten and camera ready. Our format is 8 1/2 by 11 reduced for printing. Please use narrow margins and single space to conserve space.

In this issue, we have the first installment of Capitalism & Its Revolutionary Destruction, a publication of the councilist Wildcat group. Future issues will carry the concluding four pages of the article and the six pages of debate with the Socialist Party of Great Britain, part of which was published in the Socialist Standard. Next, Jeff Stein contributes to the socialism/greenism discussion, Ben Perry returns Bob Black's latest serve and comments on semantics as a cause of misunderstanding in our sector, and Ed Stamm reviews Earnest Mann's book. Steve Coleman writes a very laudatory (to DB and fg) introduction to a Socialist Standard article on socialist industrial unionism. The top-heavy load of party patriotism in the intro deserves an answer as much as the article. In another review Ben Perry gives us a second opinion of Coleman's Daniel De Leon. Henri Simon of Echanges clarifies a DB35 article on anarcho-syndicalism and councilism. John Zarzan's and E.R.'s letters in DB41 are answered, and we end with a soate of reviews.

Financial Report

Once again we find ourselves in our usual condition of deficit financing. In part this is a result of a temporary increase in postage costs. We reported the income from sales of back issues in DB42 but not the cost of mailing them. Also, the four-page increase in size carries with it an increase in the cost of printing. Postage due hadn't been reported for several issues, and still to come is a bill for labels and copies for the past few issues.

During the period from June 24 to August 20, 1990, we received the following contributions: Ben Perry $4.50; Ed Stamm $5; Anonymous $2; Frank Syratt $20; Tom Cope $2; Mark Manning $25; Phillip Colligan $2; E.H. Royer $2; Ralph Forsyth $4; Frank Smith $5; Frank Girard $22; Monroe Prussack $. Total $100.50. Thank you, comrades

BALANCE RECEIPTS
June 24 (per bank statement) $ 21.20

Contributions $100.50
Subs and Sales 100.97
total $201.47

(Cont'd on p.18)
"CAPITALISM & ITS REVOLUTIONARY DESTRUCTION" - DEBATE BETWEEN WILDCAT AND THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN (SPGB)

INTRODUCTION

Capitalism & Its Revolutionary Destruction was originally published as a pamphlet by the 'Wildcat' group in Britain in mid-1986. It was the product of many months of intense discussion within the group. Indeed, the amendments and additions to successive drafts which carried on right up to the eve of publication are still noticeable in the at times slightly disjointed nature of the final text.

When it was published it was hoped that Capitalism & Its Revolutionary Destruction would provide a sound basis for collective activity at a time when the 'Wildcat' group was expanding and integrating new members. However, this was not to be. About eighteen months after the text was published a majority of members resolved to dissolve the group. Subsequently they resumed activity as 'Subversion'. A statement explaining the background to these events can be obtained from Subversion at Box 11, c/o Raven Press, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester M1 2BU, England. Some of the pamphlets published by the old 'Wildcat' group, such as What is Communism by Jean Barrot and Class War on the Home Front (reviewed in DB 27) can also still be obtained by writing to this address.

One member refused to accept the dissolution of the group and has since continued activity as 'Wildcat' (write to BN Cat, London, WC1N 3XX, England). Recently this group has stated that it would no longer be distributing Capitalism & Its Revolutionary Destruction, and that it is "involved in discussions on producing a more comprehensive platform".

My own view is that the text still stands as a good statement of the basic positions of 'council communism', updated in the light of the group's experience of the class struggle in the 1980s, particularly the inner-city riots in Britain in the early 1980s and the year-long British miners' strike of 1984-85. Of course, this is not to imply that the text is flawless. For example, although much of what it says is situated in the context of the "world economic crisis", it says next to nothing about the causes of this crisis. Other sections of the text are so brief that they can appear overly simplistic and invite misinterpretation. Yet, as the original introduction to Capitalism & Its Revolutionary Destruction emphasised, the text was not presented "as some definitive statement of revolutionary theory, but rather as a tool for dialogue".

One group which entered this 'dialogue' was the Socialist Party of Great Britain, which published a critical review of the pamphlet in the December 1987 issue of the Socialist Standard (SPGB, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN, England). This review, and some of the further correspondence which it generated, is also reproduced hereafter.

Mark Shipway.

CAPITALISM & ITS REVOLUTIONARY DESTRUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet has been produced as a first draft to give a brief introduction to the ideas of the Wildcat group. We are producing it not as some definitive statement of revolutionary theory, but rather as a tool for dialogue. As our discussions and activity develop, many
of our ideas will be modified, become more detailed and more clearly related to what's happening in the class struggle.

If you think that the following is in any way a contribution towards the revolutionary destruction of capitalism, we welcome any correspondence/criticisms you may have. Obviously we also look forward to working with other revolutionaries on both a practical and theoretical level.

CAPITALISM

We the working class create the wealth of society. But we do so only for the profit of the bosses on terms dictated by them. As workers, we are forced to work long hours in conditions which endanger our physical and mental health. We have no control over what we produce, how it is produced or what it is used for.

Every aspect of our lives is dominated by the need for money. At most, what we are paid allows us to consume a part of what the bosses decide it is profitable for us to produce. Even then, the goods we buy often fall apart before we have paid for them. The food we eat is adulterated.

The working class is the dispossessed class. We depend on selling our labour power to the bosses. But since labour power, as a commodity, is bought and sold like any other commodity, the bosses can refuse to buy it when it is no longer required. Ever greater numbers of our class are denied even the "privilege" of wage labour, and forced to rely on state handouts or scavenge on the margins of the economy.

For the bosses who own and control the means of production, all production has a single aim: profit. Nothing is produced unless it can be sold profitably, however much it may be needed. For the sake of profit mountains of food are destroyed. Resources are denied for basic health care. The houses and cities we live in are allowed to decay. Instead resources are devoted to arms and armies, so that the bosses can send us into war against rival profiteers. Resources are used to maintain and arm the police forces which defend the bosses from our anger. Nor do the bosses stint on luxuries for themselves. None of this would happen in a rationally organised society. It is the outcome of a society propelled by the lust for profit.

Parliament and Rights

For all these reasons, the working class has no interest in the continued existence of this society. However, we are continuously encouraged to see ourselves as members of it, as the public, as citizens, as possible voters. Such ideas have a history.

In the early stages of capitalist ascendancy, the up-and-coming capitalist class attained state power through various political revolutions. Universal suffrage, people's rights, the rights of man, justice, the democratic state; these were its slogans. The practical needs lying behind them were: the freedom of trade; the right to
private property; and certain political freedoms, which, together with the rights of the isolated individual, were designed to ensure faith in the "people's" state, i.e. in the power of the new ruling class.

Obviously it still suits the enemy today if we see ourselves as sharing interests with them. Take a look at the widespread incitements to take part in 'public debates' on whether such-and-such a government or political lobby has "right" or "wrong" policies, or on which party should be in power. Central to the "freedom of choice" allowed to those who see themselves as part of "the public" is the right to vote.

Nobody who coherently grasps the fundamental reality that this is a class society could possibly doubt that the revolutionary destruction of capitalism implies the revolutionary destruction of all parliaments. Today, parliaments are no longer even the executive committees of the ruling class, but an elaborate con trick to make us feel consulted. It follows from all of the above that revolutionaries do not, under any circumstances, participate in parliament or elections.

The End of Capitalism

Capitalism represented a great advance over previous societies, such as the medieval feudalism which it replaced in Western Europe. Under capitalism the world has progressed from a state of universal scarcity to one of potential abundance. But the drive for profit which has led to the rapid growth of the productive forces under capitalism, also prevents them from being used in a rational way to benefit the whole of humanity. This will be the task of a new society: COMMUNISM.

The era of capitalism is coming to an end. The continued existence of capitalism threatens the survival of humanity. The crisis of capitalism is propelling the world towards economic and ecological catastrophe, and towards nuclear annihilation in war between rival capitalist states.

World Crisis

The most important result of the crisis is the declining quality of life, in almost every country, of the vast majority of the population. This is happening at the same time as one of the greatest technological revolutions in the history of humanity. This contradiction shows the bankruptcy of the capitalist system.

In the underdeveloped world workers assemble the latest computer technology in sweatshops whose conditions would have shocked Marx and Engels; while the majority of the population there sinks towards starvation and destitution. In the industrialised world, despite the automation of industry, the pace of work increases while wages stagnate or fall. Unemployment leads to "third world conditions" in our cities. In the so-called "socialist" countries there are rationing and lengthening food queues - except for the ruling elite.
World Class Struggle and the Myth of National Liberation

This experience of the working class and disposessed masses throughout the world has produced world-wide struggle against the effects of the crisis. The necessity for this struggle is the best disproof of the various false nationalist solutions to the crisis.

The struggle continues in the "liberated" countries of the underdeveloped world. National liberation is no solution to the crisis there. In the 19th century some liberation struggles led to the creation of new nation states which played a dynamic role in the development of world capitalism. This is no longer possible. Today, the new rulers may achieve a measure of political independence from the great powers, but they can never free their country from the grip of the world economic crisis. For the working class in these countries "liberation" simply means exchanging one set of bosses for another - the new ones as violently opposed to working class struggle as the old ones.

The struggle continues in the countries of the Russian bloc, such as Poland. The so-called socialism in these countries is simply state capitalism. The Russian bloc is not only just as capitalist as countries in the West, it is also just as imperialist. Despite their conflict of interest with the ruling class in the West, the Russian rulers form part of the same class, and are just as much our enemies.

In the West the struggle continues under Labour Party and "Socialist" governments just as much as under conservative ones. Across the world, left-wing governments attack the working class just as much as right-wing ones. The socialism which the left-wing parties claim to stand for is in fact state capitalism. Nationalisation of industry is a state capitalist measure which offers no benefits whatsoever either to the workers employed there or to the working class as a whole.

State Capitalism

Nothing could be further from the truth than the idea that state capitalism equals socialism, or a step towards it. There are as many left wing versions of state capitalism (such as Stalinism) as right wing ones (such as Nazism), as well as "democratic" ones (such as Roosevelt's "New Deal" in pre-war America, or present-day Scandinavia).

In mixed economies, nationalisation - like privatisation - has been a common method of carrying out wholesale industrial restructuring. In 19th century Europe, nationalisation was used to help develop "infrastructure" (railways, post, credit...). In Russia after the defeat of the revolution, the class which owned the economy was faced with conditions inherited from the defeat of the working class revolution. Large scale private capitalism was politically ruled out. State capitalism provided the means by which this "underdeveloped" country was able to catch up in capitalist development with the world leaders. After World War 2, the Russian model of bureaucratic state capitalism was exported to Central Europe by means of military...
conquest. It was also adopted as a political model of development by many "Third World" national liberation movements.

In western Europe nationalisation played an important role in the reconstruction of economies devastated by the war. It ensured that capital was invested where it was most needed. At the moment, however, the priority is to increase competition in the labour market, and privatisation is proving an efficient means to this end.

In the Russian bloc, there are superficial differences with the West. Most capital is owned by the state, there is no free market in labour, and the poor have the "right to work". Fundamentally, though, the conditions of life for the working class are the same. Capitalism still exists, because workers sell their labour-power and consequently are dispossessed of the means to freely create the conditions of life. Just like in the West there is a ruling class which lives off the surplus (in the form of surplus value) produced by the workers. In Russia this class consists of a central Party elite which owns the state.

In practice state capitalism is rejected whenever, for example, there are strikes against nationalised industries or "socialist" governments, or when there is rioting or looting in "socialist" countries. Nevertheless, the idea that state capitalism is or could be beneficial to the working class is still a powerful force holding back the class struggle. Despite the fact that "socialist" and "communist" parties continually attack the interests of the working class, the belief that they are "workers' parties" is still very strong. Advances in the class struggle, if they are to happen, will bring working class people more and more into conflict with these parties, and with the far left organisations. The latter either "critically" support the mainstream left or else they crave more extreme versions of their policies for managing capitalism (such as nationalising everything, or self-management).

Frontism and Anti-Fascism

We are opposed to all capitalist front organisations, such as CND. We are also opposed to the anti-fascist fronts which seek to channel peoples' resistance to fascism and racism into support for capitalist democracy, which maintains the very system which is responsible for these evils. We stand for independent working class direct action against racists. The idea of a front of workers with "progressive" capitalists against "nasty" ones was used by the left to mobilise the working class into the holocaust of the Second Imperialist World War.

Nationalism and War

The nation state is the political organisation of capitalism. Under communism nation states will disappear. As communists we oppose every attempt to rally the working class to the cause of nationalism whether in the name of "national liberation", the "defence of freedom and democracy" or the "defence of socialism". We call on the working class to oppose all wars between rival capitalist states by taking up and
Intensifying the class war against capitalism in all its forms: against all governments and bosses, black and white, "socialist" and conservative. We call for mutinies in the armed forces of all warring states, and for united action of working class people in uniform on both sides against both their ruling classes.

Bosses throughout the world are united in their ferocious opposition to our struggles. The working class must unite against them.

Religion, Sexism, and Racism

Nationalism is only one of the many reactionary forces which at present divide and weaken the working class.

Religion arose as a means for individuals to find some order in what otherwise appeared to be an inexplicable and irrational world. The development of science and industry means that the world can now be explained without resort to mysticism. But the capitalist ruling class, like others before them, has institutionalised religion. Irrational respect for religious authority is used to gain obedience to an equally irrational social system.

Many of the most barbaric atrocities, carried out for reasons of "faith" and/or reactionary self-interest, are publicly justified in the name of religion. Numerous forces within the ruling class have not been slow to ferment and capitalise upon religious frenzy. Islamic or Judaic fundamentalists, Sikh or Hindu zealots, sectarian rampages from Belfast to Beirut, Christians bombing U.S. abortion clinics: the examples are endless.

Racism has deep roots in the colonial history of capitalism. Much of the wealth of early capitalism was founded on the enslavement of black people. In modern times, in times of economic boom, immigrant labour is used to perform the most menial and low paid work. In times of crisis racial minorities are the first to suffer its effects.

Across the world religious and racial divisions are maintained and exploited by the ruling class to set working class people against each other.

Sexism. The sexual division of labour and the general oppression of women existed in class societies prior to capitalism. However, as with racism, these divisions have been maintained and incorporated by capitalism for its own ends.

The very word "family" has its origins not in some image of domestic bliss but is from the Latin word "famulus" meaning a household slave. Under capitalism the family unit becomes a unit for the production and reproduction of the labour force, where the role of the woman is to "service" the male worker by looking after the home and children. This usually happens even when she has to go to work as well.

It is the institution of the family wage which make women economically dependent on the male "breadwinner". When in work, women are treated as second class wage-slaves in much the same way as immigrant workers
throughout the world. They are a surplus pool of cheap labour to be shunted in and out of the workforce to suit the needs of capital. The man is made responsible for wife and children by effectively making them his property. The work ethic—and even scabbing—are justified by the male "having the family to think of." Everyone has their place in capitalist normality.

The maintenance of oppressive sex roles contributes to the sexual misery which reflects and reinforces the general lack of real community under capitalism. The family is one of the prime institutions for reproducing these roles in male and female children. Women are subject to widespread discrimination and sexual harassment including rape and the threat of rape. Gay men and women are discriminated against insofar as they present a threat to "family values" and sexual "norms".

It is not some "unity of the oppressed" across class barriers which will end oppression. All these oppressions are an integral part of class society and can only be ended with its abolition. This does not mean that these oppressions will automatically start to be fought when the class struggle advances in other areas of society. They must be actively fought now both because of their effect on our daily lives and because they prevent the working class unity necessary to overthrow capitalism.

Dear Discussion Bulletin,

I think the debate over the controversy between ecology and working class radicalism is exaggerated. My own background in both syndicalism and ecology go back just as far. I have always seen the struggle for self-management and ecology as part of the same thing. As workers we do not want to control our own workplaces just to do things the same way as the capitalists, but to improve the quality of life. Now days that just can't be done without taking into account our natural environment.

I find the tendency of the so-called "greens" to distance themselves from the rest of the left as being hypocritical. If you consider most of the non-environmental demands of the greens (demilitarization, curbs on multinational corporations, alternative culture, ending sexism and racism, decentralization of power, etc.), they have all been taken from the traditional socialist or anarchist agenda. Most greens have personal backgrounds in the left, for example Petra Kelly was active in civil rights as a student in the U.S. before helping to found the Green Party in W. Germany. Very few greens or other ecological radicals actually began as political conservatives, probably no more than can be found amongst the left in general.

Rather than being "beyond left or right" as many greens claim, they are often just social democrats trying to find a larger base of support: the middle class, farmers, small business, etc. Take away the ecological rhetoric, the green party program is the modern version of the radical populists at the beginning of this century. I don't mean this as a put-down, just a reminder that the "greens" are not the entirely new politcal
phenomenon they like to portray themselves. Indeed some gr. in the U.S. feel it is necessary to remind the rest of the movement where their roots are, so they have formed a new group the "Left Green Network".

The claim by some of these former socialists and anarchists that radicals can safely ignore working class concerns because "the proletariat is shrinking" is simply nonsense. The hundreds of thousands of workers losing their jobs in the auto, steel, and manufacturing industries don't turn into yuppie stock-brokers. Instead they get by on lower paid service jobs, often part-time or temporary, or on welfare. While it may be true that the current workforce is less class-conscious than previous generations, it doesn't alter their dependent and subservient economic condition. For working class radicals this creates an obvious dilemma, however, defining the problem out of existence is escapism, not a solution.

Nor is there any real concrete evidence to suggest that people are somehow more likely to be radicalized if approached with neighborhood or "bioregion" issues. My own experience in the ecology movement suggests it ain't necessarily so. Just as workers can put their own jobs ahead of environmental concerns, many environmental protests are the result of "NIMBY-ism" (i.e. Not In My Back-Yard). For example many communities around the country are having a hard time finding sites for landfills (not to mention hazardous waste dumps) because of neighborhood protests. Most of these protests never go beyond outrage at lowering property values in that one neighborhood. "I don't care where it goes as long as you put it somewhere else." Nevermind geological considerations, like aquifer contamination. Nevermind requiring changes in consumer habits or industrial processes. Just don't mess with middle class property values. Dump it in the lower income neighborhood (their property value wasn't much to begin with) or in rural areas or undeveloped land (i.e. wilderness). Class may be a meaningless abstraction to many green theoreticians, but it isn't to the bureaucrats and politicians.

I would like to see a little less of this "more revolutionary than thou" argument between ecological and working class radicals, and more cooperation. Community protests, recycling projects, and "green" lifestyles are fine, but the best place to stop pollution is at the point of production. If you can enlist working people into environmental defense, a whole new front can be opened up in the struggle, from simple ecological whistle-blowing all the way to "greenban" work stoppages against environmentally hazardous industrial projects. But to bring in the working people, ecologists need to be a little more sympathetic to the problems of working class economic survival. An alternative has to be offered which harmonizes the one side with the other. Isn't this what "social ecology" is all about?

Jeff Stein, P.O. Box 2824, Station A, Champaign, IL 61820
Dear Discussion Bulletin:

Well, here I am doing just what I promised I wouldn't waste time doing: answering an answer to my DB 40 contrib. I have to confess to Bob Black that what I wrote was intended largely to be satirical. Clearly there are two possible reasons for his failure to perceive this, and one of them could certainly be my limitations as an ironist. So let me translate the essence outright and say that 1) Black's invective is very wearying, especially the "Prussian Censorship" slur against Frank Girard, whose hospitality Black boorishly takes advantage of, and 2) I personally think Frank could improve the quality and usefulness of the bulletin by omitting repetitious and tendentious drivel (I have reason to believe that Frank believes that such does exist).

I suppose I should apologize for the "Bob Black, Esquire" label, but I have to find out why. Is Black a) not a lawyer, b) upset because lawyers are in bad repute and I pass the information along, or c) disturbed because I am literally associating myself with bad guy Chez Bufe? (I confess to having read Bufe's "Listen, Anarchist!" which I thought was great and am chagrined that I have subconsciously plagiarized Bufe.) I hate to feed into Black's paranoia, but I honestly am not trying "to work up financial pressure to silence" him. Fact is, a lot of Black's stuff is perceptive, informed and useful; I'd just like to see the part that's not get used for something else. (An acute observer would note that by these standards, Frank would censor hell out of this letter. But aside from his weapons in these matters, Frank is deeply beholden by virtue of the promise he extorted from me to write a review.)

Having come this far, I cannot refrain from observing that much of the contentiousness in the DB is simply due to semantic problems. That is, terms are used and argued about without much attention being given to their meaning (I suppose this tyranny of words is what induced Stuart Chase to write a book on the subject). One example is the question of "market," "money," etc. If Marxist terminology is the criterion, goods are not commodities unless they are produced with a view to profit, and exchange is not a market if commodities are not involved. The question really boils down to whether, under socialism at any stage, the exchange of useful products of human labor, with or without tokens, is some sort of a crime (the SPGB fetish). I don't necessarily recommend SLP Marxist terminology; after all, the choice of a particular ideological framework for discussion can lead to problems trying to deal with concepts that have arisen since the framework was designed. But surely, we need to know what someone means when he/she says "market."

Again, we see Mike Gunderloy jousting with Jon Bekken over whether it is possible to have a world without work. Perhaps by "work," Bekken simply means any kind of labor, satisfying or otherwise, and perhaps Gunderloy means alienating toil, in which
case, they may agree. Perhaps Bekken, thinking in terms of the scarcity phase of syndicalism, feels that some dirty work will always need to be shared, and perhaps Guneroy believes that some individuals need not contribute productive labor. They should enlighten us.

Well, gosh. Here I've carried on as if someone cared, and in a couple months I'll get to see my name in print. Just like the old days when I used to write to Thrilling Wonder Stories...

Ben Perry

Ernest Mann, proponent of a moneyless economy based on volunteer labor and unlimited free access to what is produced, has published a book entitled "I Was Robot". It deals with his escape from the rat race and his suggestions to others for living happier lives. The book is available for $7.95, postpaid, from:

Little Free Press
Rt. 1, Box 102
Cushing, MN 56443

I have to admit that I am skeptical about Ernest's plan, because of my experience with human nature. I think there are many more people who want unlimited free access to what is produced than people who are willing to put in volunteer labor. Under Ernest's plan, people would be willing to work free because they would only do things that were interesting for them (similar to Bob Black's ideas about a workless economy). But I'm afraid we'd have an excess of ballerinas, cat ranchers, and zine editors and not enough plumbers, nurses aides, food producers, factory workers or custodians. Under Bob's plan, these last functions aren't really necessary. Under Ernest's, there are people who would be willing to do them voluntarily. I disagree with Bob, and I think Ernest is being over optimistic - there wouldn't be nearly enough workers in these areas to meet demand. If we could make wages more equal, then people would get equal value for the productive labor they put in. I think we need to get everyone a 32 hour week doing things that need to be done, and then the increase in leisure time would give people more time to do what interests them. Many people are still required to work more than 40 hours a week. Of course the best, in my opinion, would be a cooperative economy of employee owned, non-hierarchical, voluntarily socialistic enterprises. People would be paid, according to the hours they put in, with universal rationing coupons (otherwise known as "money"). Then each individual could use their share of the social product in the manner they feel is best. If they want to live cheap, they can work less hours. If they want to see Europe, or donate money to a less developed region, they'll need to work more. But everyone who puts in their 32 hours should be able to provide themselves and their families with basic necessities, and have something left over for their leisure activities.

Ed Stamm
Moderate Anarchist Affinity Group
P.O. Box 1402
Lawrence, KS 66044
Organise for Revolution

The need for a socialist revolution presents itself to those of us who see it with an urgency which demands organised activity. If capitalism was fit for the historical scrap-heap one century ago, then now, as the twenty-first century approaches, the horror inherent within the profit system (both private and state capitalist) are explosive. Winning our fellow workers to the movement for the revolutionary transformation of society from PRODUCTION FOR SALE AND PROFIT to PRODUCTION FOR USE is the first task facing socialists (under whichever label we may go about the struggle).

Reading the Discussion Bulletin, the consistency, openness and tolerance of which is a credit to the principled integrity of Frank Girard, it is heartening to see that discussion about the abolition of wage slavery is not dead in the USA. This discussion must be motivated by one purpose: How do we build a principled movement which can put revolutionary socialism onto the political map in the USA? (Infantile egotism of the sort contributed of late by Bob Black is a disgraceful diversion from the question.)

So, how do we build a movement? It seems clear to me, as a socialist from Britain (SPGB member) that the solution lies in sustained propaganda activity. Our ideas must be spread in a united fashion. For such propaganda to be successful, the thoroughly authoritarian and undemocratic SLP must be discarded. There is no room in the movement for socialism for leadership outfits.

I urge class-conscious workers in the USA to consider the principles of the Socialist party of Great Britain. (Write to 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN, Britain, mentioning the Discussion Bulletin, and free literature will be sent to you.) Consider what we have to say, and look also at the newly formed journal of the World Socialist Party of the USA (P.O. Box 405, Boston, MA 02272), which adheres to the same principles and policy.

One criticism of the SPGB/WSP may be predicted. It will have to be conceded that we understand the economics of capitalism and that we stand for a clear-cut socialist alternative. Nobody will doubt that we have consistently steered clear of the blind alley of reformism, sticking singly to the revolutionary objective. (Unlike the SLP in Britain which advocated reform of capitalism.) The democratic structure of our movement stands in direct contrast to the absurdities of the SLP, dominated by intellectual cosh-boys who expel those who dare commit the crime of open discussion. The SPGB and WSP are genuinely democratic. Furthermore, our strategy for revolution is democratic. There will be no socialism without a majority of socialists. There lies the predicted criticism. The SPGB/WSP stand for political revolution, to be sure, but are we clear on the question of economic organization? My own answer to the question of how workers must economically as well as politically organise for socialism is not far away from that of Daniel De Leon. (In my biography of him I have offered a criticism of his ideas about the administrative function of unions after the revolution, but I see little to argue with in his
The Socialist Party and Economic Organisation

Upon the formation of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, in 1904, its membership immediately took up the matter of—to use a phrase well known on the other side of the Atlantic—"The Burning Question of Trade Unionism". In point of fact, the whole question of the necessity of economic organisation relative to Socialism was comprehensively discussed at a series of specially-convened meetings of the party. This should indicate that the original members of the Socialist Party were fully alive to the importance of the subject if Socialism was to be considered as a vital force, and brought within the sphere of practicability. Here we return to this subject again to enable workers more interested in Socialism to understand our position from what we ourselves state, rather than from the misrepresentations of our opponents.

In the first place, it may be necessary to point out that we regard Socialism not as a purely political theory, nor as an economic doctrine, but as one which embraces every phase of social life. Still, every form of human society has its economic basis; either this or it must perish. The production and distribution of the wherewithal to live is a fundamental condition of all social as well as all individual existence.

Hence, the future society of Socialism cannot be an exception to this rule. But the quest for Socialism must proceed upon the well-practised principle of thought and action from the known to the unknown; in other words, we are compelled to act upon the raw material at hand, in the form of human society as it is, and as all past historical and social development has shaped it.

Capitalist society, and all that it entails, gives us the necessary pre-conditions for the formation of Socialism. It has massed together vast populations of property-less wealth-producing who uneasily experience exploitation through enslavement, besides economic insecurity. Not only this, capitalism has raised gigantic means of wealth production—which capacity to sustain human kind can, and will, be enormously expanded once they are freed from capitalist control.

The problem at the outset is how to get rid of the capitalist system. The present writer, like every other Socialist, as an individual, knows that it is utterly impossible to evade it out of existence (he would if he could!) and so at present does the whole Socialist Party. It may seem unfortunate to many people, but it is, nevertheless, the fact that the task of removing capitalism and replacing it with Socialism is one which must be undertaken by the great mass of the workers themselves. The primary work of the Socialist now is, therefore, propagandist in character.

The power over the means of life which the capitalist class has, is vested in its control of the political machinery. Ownership of the world's economic resources is certainly an economic factor, but that ownership, if challenged, will find its means of enforcement by and through the State political machine, which, as everybody should know, includes the armed forces, the Army, the Navy and the Air Forces, etc.

Of course, an elaborate legal machinery exists whereby claims on private property are settled among the capitalists themselves, but behind the Judicature and the Legislature stands the means of enforcing the decrees. The political arm of capitalism rules the economic body of the system in the final analysis: which reveals the chief reason why the capitalist class concern themselves so much about political action; they realise that in this field their economic interest finds its ultimate, if not immediate, protection. Thus, the political
organisation of the workers for Socialist purposes is thrust upon us as a primary and imperative necessity.

The Socialist Party, in aiming for the control of the State, is a political party in the immediate sense, but we have an economic purpose in view, namely, the conversion of the means of living into the common property of society. Therefore, the question necessarily arises whether an economic organisation acting in conjunction with the political is vital to our task. We have on more than one occasion pronounced ourselves in agreement with the need for such an organisation, and in so doing have flatly denied the charge that the Socialist Party of Great Britain is "nothing but a pure and simple political party of Socialism." Our standpoint has been that in the present stage of Socialist thought, where the great bulk of the workers are non-Socialist in outlook, the attempt to lay down the form of economic organisation for Socialism is both idle and utopian. The workers' political organisation must precede the economic, since, apart from the essential need of the conquest of the powers of government, it is on the political field that the widest and most comprehensive propaganda can be deliberately maintained. It is here that the workers can be deliberately and independently organised on the basis of Socialist thought and action. In other words, Socialist organisation can proceed untramelled by ideas other than those connected with its revolutionary objective. But on the economic field to-day the position presents a somewhat different aspect. Here we already have the trade unions, which are a necessity to the workers under the present system, from the standpoint of their dire need to resist the pressure of exploitation, besides gaining whatever concessions are obtainable in the sale of their labour power. It must be understood that the price of the commodity labour-power, or what is commonly known as wages, together with hours of working and all the other questions connected with the workers' employment, are not a matter which is settled by chance or the automatic working out of some indefinite economic law, but is one which is largely to be accounted for by the degree of resistance made by the workers from time to time. Hence, the greater the extent to which they combine on the economic field the more the workers present the capitalist with a situation which the latter cannot afford to ignore. The Socialist Party, therefore, supports and encourages such organisation by the working class, and one of our first public pronouncements on the question read as follows:—

The basis of the action of the trade unions must be a clear recognition of the position of the workers under capitalism, and the class struggle necessarily arising therefrom; in other words, they must adopt the Socialist position if they are going to justify this existence at all. Does this mean that the existing trade unions are to be smashed? That will depend upon the unions themselves. Any action on the part of the unions in support of capitalism, or tending to sideline the workers from the only path that can lead to their emancipation should be strongly opposed, but, on the other hand, trade unions being a necessity under capitalism, any action on their part upon sound lines should be heartily supported.

Where we raise the question whether the trade unions will be broken up in the event of accepting the Socialist position, this can be taken to mean that we do not urge, neither do we anticipate, that the struggle on the economic field would be surrendered, rather would it be intensified and more intelligently conducted because of the Socialist basis of the unions. As the trade union movement stands to-day it is still craft and sectarian in outlook, still mainly pro-capitalist, even where the workers are organised on the basis of industry. Our own experience of some of these latter unions is that they are little more than a confederation of craft unions, each section regarding its own immediate interests as the most important; real working-class interest and understanding is conspicuous by its absence. In fact, whilst we are writing this there comes to hand a letter from an American reader in which our attention is drawn to a similar state of things in U.S.A. We are told that in the United Mineworkers of America, "the diggers' interest is primary and other groups, such as fan men, boiler men, hoist men, etc., being very much in the background. In the mines the scale (wages) is drawn up, less than the rates paid in other industries for like work." Whilst we have no means of checking the statement of our correspondent, we can well understand such a situation existing. Apart from other influences the failure to understand the class position plays a big part in the many anomalies which arise among the organised workers, hence the need for Socialist propaganda among them is of paramount importance. But they have yet to learn the real nature of capitalism besides understanding the process by which the common interest of humanity can be effected through Socialism. The social ownership of the means of life must be understood to mean exactly what it implies, namely, that the interest of society as a whole is of primary importance. It is for this reason, apart from others that we need not now dwell upon, that we have opposed those industrial unionists of the De Leon school. These people have insisted that organisation by industry should be the basis of the economic organisation for the establishment of Socialism, or, to use their own phrase, "industrial unionism is the embryo, the undeveloped form of future society." We have insisted that such a form of organisation would divide the workers on the basis of the industries in which they were engaged, with the inevitable consequence that the industrial in-
Fellow Workers,

Perhaps I was too curt in rejecting the "Abolish Work" perspective, as FW Gunderloy contends (DB 42). Gunderloy draws a distinction between "work" and "productive activity," as does Bob Black. I'm not sure just what we are supposed to do. The distinction is still going to have to mine for coal, if we are to have the means for running blast furnaces and other heavy industry (and, of course, to ward off death-by-freezing in many parts of the world). Eventually I am sure that we would convert many coal-burning facilities to more-benign technologies; but in the meantime we must make use of the existing industrial plant as best we can. Which is beside the point. Under industrial self-management, coal miners would take control of safety measures, would reduce their working hours, etc.; thereby dramatically improving mine safety and allowing them more time in which to live their lives. But work in the mines, while productive, will inevitably remain less-than-funfully-pleasurable.

The No-Work crowd seems to assume that if we change the name of something, then we have changed the reality. But if I'm digging coal, running an offset press, or harvesting fruit I'm doing work. I might take a certain pride, even pleasure, from doing the work well. But it will remain work, even if I choose to think of it as play. And should an accident happen on the job, calling it a ski accident won't change the reality one bit.

Gunderloy says we need to rethink "our notion that 'work' is somehow an essential human activity." But what does this mean in practice? Surely he does not mean to suggest that we can cease growing food, building and maintaining homes, communicating with one another (which today relies on a massive technological infrastructure which must be actively maintained if it is to remain serviceable), caring for the ill and infirm, etc. Someone, after all, is going to have to run that turret lathe he finds so distasteful.
So I apologize, I guess, if I have been too flip in dismissing the anti-work perspective. But what am I supposed to make of it? How am I supposed to seriously consider the ideas of those who believe we can survive without working, or alternatively that if we just stop calling work work its basic reality will have somehow been transformed. Neither position makes any sense whatsoever, so far as I can see. If I'm wrong, perhaps the anti-work crowd could explain just how it is that we're supposed to survive without working.

Yours for industrial freedom,

Jon Bekken
Box 1403, Conway AR 72032

REVIEW by Ben Perry


Steve Coleman has written an excellent biography of Daniel De Leon (1852-1914), foremost figure of the American Socialist Labor Party. It lacks the detail and probably the amount of research that went into Daniel De Leon: The Odyssey of an American Marxist, but it also happily omits Seretan’s curious Wandering Jew interpretation. In fact Coleman declines to be involved in any “tedious psychological investigations” or matters “best left to computer dating agencies...” Coleman, a member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, clearly cannot endorse the SLP’s Socialist Industrial Union concept, but his objectivity in dealing with De Leon is admirable. The historical link between the SLP and SPGB is so strong and their common rejection of reformism so similar, that one can only regret that this kind of non-sectarian analysis by an adherent to one of these groups seems so unusual.

Although it may lack Seretan’s depth of detail, this biography is organized better and has the advantage of newer data. The chapter dealing with James Connolly I found especially illuminating. The inability of these two talented revolutionaries to work together is a story as old as the nineteenth century and as new as a polemic in the latest Discussion Bulletin (except one can generally omit “talented” in the latter case). Coleman may have been wise in not attempting any psychological investigations, but it would surely be useful if we could know why Connolly got so bent out of shape by Bebel’s Woman under the table which would not even be PG-rated today, or why De Leon, a pseudo-ex-Catholic, detected papal intrigue in the strangest places.

There are few actual typos, but there are a number of minor errors that could have been eliminated if the author had run this by someone knowledgeable. Ernest Bohm of the STLA has probably been confused with one of the Bohm brothers who appeared later. Rudolf Katz, for some reason, is initially called “Frank,” which causes the index to get screwed up. The “Philadelphia Tageblatt” may have been exciting reading, but of course it was the Tageblatt.
More important, I have to question the author's adoption of the SLP position that the 1899 split was basically over the question of reformism versus revolution. Reading the documents of the day fails to show that this was, overtly anyway, an issue. In fact, when the dissidents joined with the Social Democratic Party to form the Socialist Party in 1901 they clearly took with them a lot of anti-reformist sentiment. At the SF unity conference, 1325 votes out of 6683 were registered against the adoption of immediate demands. That twenty percent was the beginning of the SF left wing which Arnold Petersen always pretended never existed. The cause of the split is more complex. The German trade union (and some shopkeeper) element, which in 1889 had extra-legally thrown out the old National Executive Committee and its national secretary, tried to do exactly the same thing again, because they resented the party's opposition to working within the AFL, and they also opposed De Leon's Marxist dictum that issues like taxation should not be of any concern to workers.

My other problem with this De Leon biography is the same one I have with all other De Leon biographies, favorable and unfavorable. Overridingly important as De Leon was in SLP history, he was not the party itself, and his figure has been overdrawn. Too often, biographers refer, perhaps as a kind of shorthand, to a party action as purely a De Leon decision. The splitters in 1899 disliked De Leon intensively but their documents complained about the "administration faction," consisting of De Leon, Hugo Vogt, Lucien Sanial and perhaps Henry Kuhn, in which De Leon was "the first among equals." When the SLP promoted De Leon to sainthood, Vogt and Sanial who quit the party in 1902 were demoted to demon and lapsed communicant (Kuhn became a worshipper). To his contemporaries, De Leon was only slightly larger than life. As late as 1907 and 1908, the party National Executive Committee supported De Leon on occasion by only bare majorities.

But these faults (as I see them) cannot outweigh the considerable merit that this book has as not just a biography, but a retelling of the attempt to establish a movement whose sole purpose was the restructuring of society by and for the exploited. If this part of radical history interests you and your curiosity outweights your commitment to the Petersen or IWW fables, get a copy.

(Cont'd from p.2)

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Fraternally submitted,
Frank Girard
Dear Discussion Bulletin Comrades,

It is never too late to follow a discussion: this letter refers to an article published in DB n° 35, May 89, p 21, written by Paul (Sheffield Direct Action Movement/IVA) with the title "Anarchosyndicalism & Councilism".

To be more precise it aims to clarify the following specific point of this article (top of p 23):

"...An example of this progression away from the 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 Echanges et Mouvement, a "non-organisation" which makes no attempt to take part as a group in the class struggle. Why just comment on it......"

As a former member of Socialisme ou Barbarie, of ICO and presently participating in Echanges, I think I am allowed to bring some corrections to these assertions I incline to consider as the result of a lack of information rather than of a deliberate distortion.

1) Socialisme ou Barbarie was not properly a 'councilist group'. This group split from Trotskyism on a criticism of Russia as a workers' State. It never refers to the German-Dutch councilist communism though after 1956 the events in Poland and Hungary it came to consider the importance of workers councils as a mean of struggle and of organisation of a socialist society. I can add that the attempts to close contacts with the Dutch councilist communists failed completely (see some correspondence in S ou B, mainly the exchange of letters with Pannekoek) and were only kept between individuals; the gap even widened when S ou B evolved to non-marxist positions even rejecting the concept of class struggle (which brought in the early 60's another split and the departure of the group Pouvoir Ouvrier). If you want to trace some influence in the early years of S ou B you have to refer to some American radicals (some having left the Trotskyism in the same period (Johnson-Forest tendency) or some left sociologists like Wright Mills or later Marcuse) and not at all to Wattick which was completely ignored in S ou B.

2) The split in 1956 which gave birth to ILO (transformed later in ICO when it was dropped by the intellectuals in 1962) was not at all between partyists and anti-partyists (an organisation had to be built to house all the people rushing then to the group after the coup d'Etat of De Gaulle and everybody agreed with this need to build something else) but on the form of this organisation: either a centralised organisation with the rule of the majority imposed on the minority, or a federalist organisation of more or less autonomous groups. The 'minority' of S ou B split on this last position and ILO was supposed to promote industrial or local groups to become part of this federalist organisation. The nature of this federalist organisation of autonomous groups evolved from some kind of political group concept to workers groups concept (the transformation of ILO becoming ICO was the expression of this evolution). It was not the result of discussions but
the shaping of a de facto situation. These workers groups (settled in factories or offices ) did not claim a formal link to ICO but ICO members were involved actively in them not hiding at all their closer link to ICO.

3 ICO was not a councilist group though it had good relationship with council communist groups (Spartacus then Act and Thought in Holland , Cahiers pour le Socialisme de Conseils in France, Mattick in the USA ). But it had also good relationship with Solidarity in Great Britain and worked in close collaboration with the anarchist french group Noir et Rouge; some of the most active members in ICO were even more traditional anarchists. If I want characterising what was ICO in this period ( from 62 to 69), I will quote the first half of the last but one paragraph if Paul’s text (p 24 ):

'...What the AANU-R believed and what Anarcho-syndicalists 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...

If you read ICO platform you could see there was no reference to councils but a strong emphasis on the workers building themselves their struggles and their organisations . We always refused the contradiction of most of vanguardist groups (and of the DAM movement ) to assert on one hand that the emancipation of the working class is not the task of a trained political elite and on the other hand the need of 'a workers'organisation which can make a synthesis...in order to develop more fully...'. This refusal was the core of differences with groups like the anarchosyndicalists , the situationists or later Revolution Internationale (which became ICO after working two years in ICO).

4 Echanges et Mouvement did not fold the ‘anti party ICO because it was unwilling an organisation , to form... a "non-organisation" which makes no attempt to take part as a group in the class struggle.' In the aftermath of may 68 the political turmoil did not spare ICO . Its disintegration gave birth to different groups most of them politically orientated, anarchist , neo-bordiguist,councilist. It was impossible to come back to the formula of workers groups as ICO had become a collection of local and often political groups torn into irreducible political differences. It would be too long to give a detailed report of what happened in these critical years. Echanges et Mouvement was the attempt not at all to organise something else on a different basis than ICO but to rescue the national and international network of contacts built during the 15 years of ICO. As we were very few , scattered in France and in different countries , as we refused the bluff of the hyperactivism to get the pretence to be a big organisation, it would have been preposterous to go ahead with something like ICO: we had to think why the development of class struggle in France had put an end to ICO . We tried to link the role of a group to the evolution of capitalism and to the consequent evolution of class struggle and its form of organisation, without any preconceived theory like the 'need of a workers'organisation '. Some others went exactly the opposite way 'after twenty years of 'activism' they have not gone that far because class struggle has gone a very different way.

5 I don’t want to discuss the positions of the DAM in its 'commitment
to the building of an anarcho-syndicalist union in Britain: it is not the object of this letter though, developing some points in my clarification. I somewhat discussed the DAM positions. Three pages to answer six lines is largely enough; I always was reluctant to fill groups' papers with polemic which is not uninteresting but limited to the leftist political ghetto. I only want to add one thought suggested by the rather contemptuous remark about Echanges and the class struggle: 'They just comment on it'. What else the DAM does when their organisation makes a synthesis of day to day class struggle with the fight for a free society? I think there is a slight difference; not on the way these comments are distributed (after all it is not that essential and the product of circumstances) but on the way we consider these comments for us an element of discussion (what it is always not withstanding the intents), for the DAM the only answer to what they consider beforehand as the 'need', the 'demands' from the working class.

P.S. Echanges et Mouvement
BM Box 91
London WC1 N 3 XX
U K

Dear Comrades,

In DB41 Comrade Zerzan stepped back a pace from advocating that society pull the switch on industry. Now we can assume that if he and his comrades had their way "...industrialism would [not] vanish in an instant...." He even speaks approvingly of experiments in agriculture that harmonize food production with the needs of Mother Earth. So now we have it: Zerzan and his fellow primitivists do see a period of winding down of industrialism—in his words, "...possible movement toward a qualitatively different world, perhaps one that wishes to go further to the feral, where, most likely, the compensation of having many children will no longer be needed."

It seems to me that the next step is to put the horse in front of the cart. This winding down is not going to be done under the capitalist system, even a kinder gentler capitalism run by leftists, radicals, and other nice guys dedicated to greenness and good sense. As Zerzan knows if he has read Marx, industrial expansion is built into capitalism as an economic imperative, a part of the profit system; it must expand or die. So, even more immediately important than opposing industrialism is the need to overthrow the system that promotes it. The helpless concern for the environment that the entire population is now beginning to share can be translated into action to reverse the course of industrialization only by a society in which the entire population makes economic decisions instead of just the ruling class and its political puppets.

I am not suggesting that Zerzan should stop agitating for a deindustrialized world; I am just suggesting that he devote some space to pointing out the need to abolish capitalism the father of industrialization.

Frank Girard

* * *

Dear Comrades,

In his article "In Defence of the Communist Left" in DB41, Comrade
ER questions the allegation in the DB’s “Review of Periodicals” department that five periodicals published by the International Communist Current (ICC) and a couple of groups derived from it differ from others in our political sector in that they suffer from the Leninist malady of “dictatorship of the party.” ER’s argument is based on these facts: (1) Lenin’s pamphlet *Leftwing Communism: an Infantile Disorder* was directed at the ideological ancestors of the ICC, the Dutch and German left communists. (2) The DB may be bowing to the prejudices of libertarians among its readership.

As to the first, I don’t have a copy of *Leftwing Communism* at hand, but I don’t recall that Lenin reproached his opponents of that day for not advocating the dictatorship of the party. And, also, I’m less than certain that the ICC can claim a very close ideological descent from the leftwing communists like Gorter, Pannekoek, and the KAPD. As to number two, I think I might better be accused of yielding to my own libertarian socialist prejudices in deciding to “asterisk” these publications.

What was involved in the decision was my own perceptions derived from reading ICC publications and also from an exchange the DB had with Internationalism, the U.S. branch of the ICC, a couple of years ago. In a letter published in DB25, Internationalism described what it considered ideal working class organization: a revolutionary organization consisting of militants who are in advance of the rest of the working class and whose function is to provide leadership to the “unitary groups, which would consist of mass movements engaged in the class struggle.

My answer published in DB27, but not in *Internationalism*, as I had understood it would be, made the following points:

As for the “unitary organizations,” the mass revolutionary organizations you see as distinct from the revolutionary organizations of militants, the idea seems to me to be divisive and elitist. I think everyone in the DB’s libertarian socialist sector would reject as a Leninist perversion the idea that I gather from your proposal, namely, that the workers who first become revolutionaries will become members of the revolutionary party of militants and the leaders ("...point out the general line of march."), of the working class masses to whom the idea comes later. This division between the leaders and the led stands in direct opposition to the view held by most readers of the DB that our class must act in response to its own class consciousness, not to the direction of militants who would “point out the general line of march.”

While I can’t put my finger on an ICC statement that asserts specifically that its militants would continue to provide guidance to the workers after the revolution, it is difficult to believe that it would disband on the day the revolution had been accomplished. In fact, one can infer from the fact that it envisions the working class as seizing the state and exercising its power instead of abolishing it that it would end up duplicating the course of the Bolsheviks in the USSR, regardless of the purity of its intentions.

In fact, the idea of seizing and using state power is typical of all politically oriented groups except the SLP and other DeLeonists. The latter, because they call for the immediate abolition of the state and the organization of society on an industrial basis, see the revolution as spelling the end of politics and hence the end of any
function for the party of revolution.
One more thing, all of these groups receive the DB in exchange for their publications and also, Comrade ER wrote to them pointing out the DB's 'asterisking' practice in referring to them. To date there has been no protest from any of them. We have to assume that silence gives consent. 

Frank Girard

Capitalism &... Cont'd from p.9
The Struggle Today

As the crisis deepens, the class struggle in Britain and other industrialised countries continues and is more and more faced with the need to intensify. This struggle is not just the day to day fight by employed workers over wages and conditions but involves a much broader section of the working class. The families of employed workers play a central role in the struggle against redundancies. The unemployed take to the streets. School students are rebelling. Ever-wider sections of the working class have been drawn into recent riots, and riots are becoming a feature of workplace struggle as well. All these struggles, whatever their immediate aim, are at the same time a struggle against the growing police repression by which the bosses hope to contain and defeat us.

We cannot predict which section of the working class will take the lead in future struggles. What is essential is that all these different struggles link up and unite in a single struggle to put an end to capitalism.

Trade Unions

One of the biggest obstacles to this happening is the trade unions.

The best that can be said about trade unions is that in the past they merely bargained for a slightly bigger slice of the cake for their members. But the unions' existence as 'mediators' depends on the continued existence of capitalism. They have never sanctioned struggles which might threaten the rule of the bosses.

In this period of economic crisis there is no more room for compromise and bargaining. Struggles are marked by increasingly open conflict between unions and their members. Militant workers are quite willing to defy their union leaders. But this is often linked to calls for 'rank and file control' of the unions. But it is not just the political power and privileges of the union leaders that makes the unions our class enemies. It is the inevitable result of the unions' acceptance of capitalism. Any rank and file organisation which remains within the traditions of trade unionism will sooner or later—usually sooner—go the same way as the existing unions. The unions as a whole are now part of the capitalist system, with the job of keeping order on the shop floor, selling our labour power to the bosses, and selling the bosses' austerity programmes back to us.

If all else fails, and these days it usually does, the unions tell us to "vote Labour" or "launch a campaign". In this way they help divert
Workers' continued acceptance of the unions and the traditions of trade unionism has been a major cause of the failure of recent struggles.

Trade union traditions are based on compromise, obedience to the rule book, and acceptance of capitalist legality. They reinforce the division of the working class into different trades, industries and regions. Based on the organisation of employed workers, trade unionism also reinforces the divisions between men and women, and between employed and unemployed. Union traditions limit the participation of the majority of workers in a struggle to the simple act of withdrawal of labour, while the leaders reach agreement on their behalf.

All this is the very opposite of what is required in the struggle for communism. (to be continued)
subject while eliminating the pages in which she criticizes other Marxist and non-Marxist attempts to explain the reproduction of capital. Certainly, the price is much lower than one could hope to find a copy here—if it is still in print, my copy from Monthly Review Press having been published in 1964. DB has one extra copy on hand and more expected by boat mail for $7 post paid.

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS RECEIVED

Within the Shell of the Old: Essays on Workers' Self-Organization, edited by Don Fitz and David Roediger; 108 pp., paper, $7.95 from Charles H. Kerr, P.O. Box 914, Chicago, IL 60660 or WD Press, P.O. Box 24115, St. Louis, MO 63130. This is a collection of seventeen essays, most of them presented originally as papers at the 1988 Conference on Workers' Self-Organization at St. Louis. They are classified under two headings: "People's History in the U.S.: Expanding the Traditions of Self-Organization" and "Self-Activity from the Shop Floor to a new Society." Each of these has an introduction, the first by Roediger, the latter by Fitz; the entire book is introduced by a four-page essay, "Visions of Emancipation: Daniel De Leon, C.L.R. James and George Rawick." The review blurb describes the essays as follows: "The authors, including such radical writers as Martin Glaberman, George Lipshiz, and Paul Buhle, follow Rawick [a radical labor historian to whom the book was published as a memorial] in refusing to separate the realities of the past from the possibilities of the future. Drawing on examples from Missouri to Manila, these selections show how workers' history has been made and is being made. They address such vital questions as the relationship between race and class, between a class's memory and its militancy, and between socialism and democracy. Most important, they affirm that, because of the ordinary and dramatic actions of working women and men, a better world is in birth." The book is well worth the reading as a history of both past and recent working class organizing. A project the next conference might consider is the role radicalism and leftism played in the cooption and/or destruction by the capitalist class of those "realities of the past."

Ecology and Socialism, by the Socialist Party [of Great Britain] 32 pp., wraps. 50p [$1] from Lit Dept., the Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN, England or WSP, P.O. Box 405, Boston, MA 02272.

The central thesis of this pamphlet is contained in the preface: "In our view, nature and the environment are being damaged today because productive activity is oriented toward the accumulation of profits rather than towards the direct satisfaction of human needs. Not only does the economic mechanism of the profit system function in this way but it can function in no other way. Profits always take priority both over meeting needs and over protecting the environment." The six chapters of the book: "The Biosphere," "Human Intervention," "Nature and Society," "Capitalism and the Environment," "The Ecological Imperative," " and "Production for Human Needs" all support the contention. Moreover, it is done in ways that could convince at least some of our "green" friends of the folly of green
intervention in capitalism's political system. I think this book could be very valuable to revolutionary socialists who are agitating within the green movement.

_I Was Robot (Utopia Now Possible),_ by Earnest Mann. 319 pp., paper; $7.95 from Little Free Press, Rt. 1, Box 102, Cushing, MN 56443. See review by Ed Stamm on page 12.

_The American Labor Movement: A New Beginning_, by Sam Dolgoff. 64 pp., wraps; Second revised edition, 1980. $5 from Libertarian Labor Review, Box 2204, Champaign, IL 61823.

The second revised edition of this collection of essays differs from the first in that it has a three-page introduction by Jon Bekken updating the book and fifteen fewer pages. The essays collected here were written over the years for a variety of anarcho-syndicalist publications, principally IWW. What I as a former member of the SLP found especially interesting is that most of the articles under the first two subject headings, "Ethics and American Unions" and "The Labor Party Illusion," which concentrate on the corruption and class collaboration in the modern union movement and on the role of the state, could as easily have appeared in the _Weekly People_ of the past few decades as in syndicalist publications.

In "Revolutionary Tendencies in American Labor," on the other hand, Dolgoff presents a highly contentious survey of revolutionary unionism from its beginnings. In the process he reads Debs out as a founder of the IWW, refers to De Leon as the "The insufferable Marxist bigot... the Stalin of the Socialist Labor Party...," and somehow manages to imply that the IWW was founded by anarcho-syndicalists rather than revolutionary unionist members and supporters of the SP and SLP, as was the case. His particular hostility toward De Leon is puzzling, especially in view of the fact that in the U.S. he can find consistent support for the kind of unionism syndicalists advocate only in the Marxist-DeLeonist SLP.

The final section, "Notes for the Regeneration of the American Labor Movement" occupies only sixteen pages of the book, and most of those are concerned with the difficulties of creating a labor movement that would be impervious to corruption. Dolgoff sees conventional union organization as a corruptible force that destroys the fighting spirit that has animated wild catters, P-9, and most recently the coal miners. The solution, confined to two paragraphs headed "Libertarian Organization," seems to leave out union organization as such, even the IWW, calling instead for "...close-knit federations of independent factory and workplace councils." These, he says, would reduce to a minimum the possibility of abuse of power since there would be no higher or lower levels of organization to exercise it or on which it could be exercised. Despite the partisan nature of the book, it is well worth reading, especially for this last section, which seriously engages the question of how our class should organize itself in the nineties.

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REVIEW OF PERIODICALS

Here we review what we regard as the periodicals of our political sector in rotation as space permits. Below is what we intend as an exhaustive list of such journals in the English language. If you have
ideas for additions—or deletions, for that matter—please let us know. Those titles followed by an asterisk are regarded as being in our political sector but suffering from the Leninist virus of “dictatorship of the partyism”:


LOVE & RAGE: 3 Prince Street Station, New York, NY 10012. Billed as "An Anarchist Newsmonthly," it has very recently begun publication and in so doing has bent a lot of anarchists out of shape. We do not have a copy and consequently have no information on size, price, format, etc. The information we do have comes from Anarchy.

MAKING WAVES; L.S.A., Box 146131, Chicago, IL 60614. Quarterly newsletter of the Labor Solidarity Alliance; 8 1/2 by 11, 8 pp., subs $1 cash. This issue, volume 1 number 1, encourages readers to use MW as a forum for their ideas on "important working class issues." Also articles on the Pittston strike settlement, police brutality in Chicago, and a newly founded Palestinian Labor Action Network.

THE MONTHLY MEANDER; 6 Arizona Ave., Rensselaer NY 12144; usually published monthly, as the name implies, 8 1/2 by 11, 5 pp., no price given. "Matters, billed itself as the "newsletter of evolutionary anarchists." The greater part of this issue, April-June 1990, is taken up by Ed Stamm's thoughts about his world, which begins in Lawrence, Kansas. Also in this issue are a number of letters in the same informal style as Ed's ponderings and, like his, providing individualistic views on topics that will interest all DB readers.

NEW UNIONIST; 821 W. Lake St., Suite 210, Minneapolis MN 55403; monthly, tabloid, 4 pp., subs $3 - 10 issues. Published by the New Union Party, a breakaway from the Socialist Labor Party, NU advocates the same socialist industrial unionism as the SLP, but its style is livelier and the topics more diverse. It also contains an active letters column. Articles in the August issue include "Layoffs Mount as Arms Spending Falls," "Ruling Class Interests Created Atomic Age with 1945 Decision to Drop the Bomb on Hiroshima, Nagasaki," "To Save the Environment, Change the Production System," "Oil War in Mideast," "Selling Water in the U.S. Southwest."

OPEN ROAD; Box 6135, Station G, Vancouver, BC, Canada; published irregularly, tabloid. OR is a publication of the direct action element of the anarchist movement. We have no recent issues.
THE PEOPLE; 814 Industrial Ave., Palo Alto CA 94303; fortnightly, tabloid, 8 pp., subs: $1 four-month, $4 one-year. TP, established in 1891, is the oldest continuously published English language socialist newspaper in the world. Like its publisher, the Socialist Labor Party (established in 1876), it advocates socialist industrial unionism, a sort of political syndicalism that owes much to the thinking of Daniel De Leon, editor from 1881 to 1914. The August 11 issue contains articles on “The Tax Controversy: A Working-Class Viewpoint,” “Poverty or Socialism,” “Injured Workers Being Blacklisted by Capitalists,” “Cynicism Spreading Among U.S. Working Class,” and articles on the SLP’s centennial and strikes in Nicaragua.

PROCESSED WORLD; 44 Sutter St., #1829, San Francisco, CA 94104; a project of the Bay Area Center for Art and Technology; published irregularly, 8 1/2 by 11, 40 pp. + cover, subs: $12 four issues. PW is a lively, attractive journal with a major emphasis on the electronic workplace. Number 24, Summer/Fall 1989, is the last issue I received and apparently the most recent published. The lead editorial calls for reports on workplace organizing and reports the findings of a reader survey that began, “Do you sell your life to buy your survival?” Six pages are devoted to responses, and there is an eight-page article on AIDS. Most of the rest—rather more than usual, I think—consists of fiction and poetry.

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