BULLETIN MATTERS

D851 warned readers that this issue would concentrate of libertarian municipalism, the ideological point of view from which Howard Hawkins wrote his article in that issue, "Libertarian Municipalism, Workers' Control, and the Cooperative Commonwealth." We begin, fittingly with the word from the source, "Libertarian Municipalism, An Overview," was written in its original form as the introduction to Readings in Libertarian Municipalism and was later issued separately as a small
We have it here in the expanded version with an addendum by Murray Bookchin, the author and originator. He wrote the new version for the benefit of neophyte libertarian municipalists, who are misinterpreting the concept. It is taken from the December issue of Green Politics (PO Box 111, Burlington, VT 05402).

Jack Ceder provides an extended criticism of LM, which was published in the first issue of Regeneration (PO Box 24115, St. Louis, MO 63130). Note that this and other comments on LM were written before the publication of the clarifications in the addendum.

Next Curtis Price requests information about pamphlets dating back to the 1960s published by Solidarity, one of the longer lasting libertarian socialist groups in Great Britain. Then we have a criticism of LM by Robert Sekula, who questions whether every community will be dedicated to personal freedom and the eradication of hierarchy and authority. Monroe Prussack deplores the failure of the SIP to dissociate itself from Leninism and his thoughts about LM and the LCN.

In an open letter, Internationalism, the U.S. branch of the International Communist Current (ICC), denounces what it regards as the DB's recent support of ecologism and potential desertion of Marxism and abandonment of the working class. The article also appears in the current issue of Internationalism (PO Box 258, New York, NY 10018).

In the next article, I hope I get some of Internationalism's fears to rest. It points out similarities and differences between LM and LS, finds them less than earthshaking, and recommends that libertarian socialists cooperate with libertarian municipalists in the Left Green Network.

Next Mike Lepore reports on the cutting edge of socialist agitation and invites us all to participate. Larry Gambone criticizes what he regards as the unfair review of Any Time Now that appeared in DB51. His letter clearly requires an answer but there was no space in this issue. It will appear in DB53. And finally Laurents Otter is reminded by current events of the conflict between mercantile and industrial capitalism.

It seems proper to warn DB readers of a decline in printing quality, notably the lines that appear gratuitously in the text. These result from a problem with the "drum," which developed because of my ignorance of copiers. They won't go away, but they probably won't get worse. Curing the problem requires a "drum transplant," which is somewhat less expensive than a liver transplant.

In the meantime, we again solicit your articles and letters to this forum. Please single space and use a dark ribbon and narrow margins (The typed line would ideally be seven inches long).

FINANCES: Things are looking up financially for the DB, although we are still a bit in the red.

Contributions: Monroe Prussack $10; Laurents Otter $3.00; anonymous $1.00; Samuel Leight $22; Ed Wizek $20; N. Morgan $5.05; Tom Dooley $16; Heinrich Fleischer $7; Ed Staun $2; John V. Craven $7; James... Cont'd on p. 8
Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview
by Murray Bookchin

Perhaps the greatest single failing of movements for social reconstruction—I refer particularly to the Left, to radical ecology groups, and to organizations that profess to speak for the oppressed—is their lack of a politics that can carry people beyond the limits established by the status quo.

Politics today means duels between top-down bureaucratic parties for electoral office, that offer vacuous programs for "social justice" to attract a nondescript "electorate." Once in office, their programs usually turn into a bouquet of "compromises." In this respect, many Green parties in Europe have been only marginally different from conventional parliamentary parties. Nor have socialist parties, with all their various labels, exhibited any basic differences from their capitalist counterparts. To be sure, the indifference of the Euro-American public—its "apoliticalism"—is understandably depressing. Given their low expectations, when people do vote, they normally turn to established parties if only because, as centers of power, they can produce results of sorts in practical matters. If one bothers to vote, most people reason, why waste a vote on a new marginal organization that has all the characteristics of the major ones and that will eventually become corrupted if it succeeds? Witness the German Greens, whose internal and public life increasingly approximates that of other parties in the new Reich.

That this "political process" has lingered on with almost no basic alteration for decades now is due in great part to the inertia of the process itself. Time wears expectations thin, and hopes are often reduced to habits as one disappointment is followed by another. Talk of a "new politics," of upsetting tradition, which is as old as politics itself, is becoming unconvincing. For decades, at least, the changes that have occurred in radical politics are largely changes in rhetoric rather than structure. The German Greens are only the most recent of a succession of "nonparty parties" (to use their original way of describing their organization) that have turned from an attempt to practice grassroots politics—ironically, in the Bundestag, of all places!—into a typical parliamentary party. The Social Democratic Party in Germany, the Labor Party in Britain, the New Democratic Party in Canada, the Socialist Party in France, and others, despite their original emancipatory visions, barely qualify today as even liberal parties in which a Franklin D. Roosevelt or a Harry Truman would have found a comfortable home. Whatever social ideals these parties may have had generations ago have been eclipsed by the pragmatics of gaining, holding, and extending their power in their respective parliamentary and ministerial bodies.

It is precisely such parliamentary and ministerial objectives that we call "politics" today. To the modern political imagination, "politics" is precisely a body of techniques for holding power in representative bodies—notably the legislative and executive arenas—not a moral calling based on rationality, community, and freedom.

A Civic Ethics
Libertarian municipalism represents a serious, indeed a historically fundamental project, to render politics ethical in character and grassroots in organization. It is structurally and morally different from other grassroots efforts, not merely rhetorically different. It seeks to reclaim the public sphere for the exercise of authentic citizenship while breaking away from the bleak cycle of parliamentaryism and its mystification of the "party" mechanism as a means for public representation. In these respects, libertarian municipalism is not merely a "political strategy." It is an effort to work from latent or incipient democratic possibilities toward a radically new configuration of society itself—a communitarian society oriented toward meeting human needs, responding to ecological imperatives, and developing a new ethics based on sharing and cooperation. That it involves a consistently independent form of politics is a truism. More important, it involves a redefinition of politics, a return to the word's original Greek meaning as the management of the community or polis by means of direct face-to-face assemblies of the people in the formulation of public policy and based on an ethics of complementarity and solidarity.

In this respect, libertarian municipalism is not one of many pluralistic techniques that is intended to achieve a vague and undefined social goal. Democratic to its core and nonhierarchical in its structure, it is a kind of human destiny, not merely one of an assortment of political tools or strategies that can be adopted and discarded with the aim of achieving power. Libertarian municipalism, in effect, seeks to define the institutional contours of a new society even as it advances the practical message of a radically new politics for our day.

Means and Ends
Here, means and ends meet in a rational unity. The word politics now expresses direct popular control of society by its citizens through achieving and sustaining a true de-
nocracy in municipal assemblies—this, as distinguished from republican systems of representation that preempt the right of the citizen to formulate community and regional policies. Such politics is radically distinct from statecraft and the state—a professional body composed of bureaucrats, police, military, legislators, and the like, that exists as a coercive apparatus, clearly distinct from and above the people. The libertarian municipalist approach distinguishes statecraft—which we usually characterize as "politics" today—and politics as it once existed in pre-capitalist democratic communities.

Moreover, libertarian municipalism also involves a clear delineation of the social realm—as well as the political realm—in the strict meaning of the term social: notably, the arena in which we live our private lives and develop our social relations. As such, the social realm is to be distinguished from both the political and the statist realms. Enormous mischief has been caused by the interchangeable use of these terms—social, political, and the state. Indeed, the tendency has been to identify them with one another in our thinking and in the reality of everyday life. But the state is a completely alien formation, a thorn in the side of human development, an exogenous entity that has incessantly encroached on the social and political realms. Often, in fact, the state has been an end in itself, as witness the rise of Asian empires, ancient imperial Rome, and the totalitarian state of modern times. More than this, it has steadily invaded the political domain, which, for all its past shortcomings, had empowered communities, social groupings, and individuals.

Such invasions have not gone unchallenged. Indeed, the conflict between the state and the one hand and the political and social realms on the other has been an ongoing subterranean civil war for centuries. It has often broken out into the open—in modern times in the conflict of the Castilian cities (comuneros) against the Spanish monarchy in the 1520s, in the struggle of the Parisian sections against the centralist Jacobin Convention of 1793, and in endless other clashes both before and after these encounters.

Today, with the increasing centralization and concentration of power in the nation-state, a "new politics"—one that is genuinely new—must be structured institutionally around the restoration of power in municipalities. This is not only necessary but possible even in such gigantic urban areas as New York City, Montreal, London, and Paris. Such urban agglomerations are not, strictly speaking, cities or municipalities in the traditional sense of those terms, despite being designated as such by sociologists. It is only if we think that they are cities that we become mystified by problems of size and logistics. Even before we confront the ecological imperative of physical decentralization (a necessity anticipated by Frederick Engels and Peter Kropotkin alike), we need feel no problems about decentralizing them institutionally. When François Mitterrand tried to decentralize Paris with local city halls a few years ago, his reasons were strictly tactical (he wanted to weaken the authority of the capital's right-wing mayor). Nonetheless, he failed not because restructuring the large metropolis was impossible but because the majority of the affluent Parisians supported the mayor.

Clearly, institutional changes do not occur in a social vacuum. Nor do they guarantee that a decentralized municipality, even if it is structurally democratic, will necessarily be humane, rational, and ecological in dealing with public affairs. Libertarian municipalism is premised on the struggle to achieve a rational and ecological society, a struggle that depends on education and organization. From the beginning, it presupposes a genuinely democratic desire by people to arrest the growing powers of the nation-state and reclaim them for their community and their region. Unless there is a movement—hopefully an effective Left Green movement—to foster these aims, decentralization can lead to local parochialism as easily as it can lead to ecological humanism communities.

But when have basic social changes ever been without risk? The case that Marx's commitment to a centralized state and planned economy would inevitably yield bureaucratic totalitarianism could have been better made than the case that decentralized libertarian municipalities will inevitably be authoritarian and have exclusionary and parochial traits. Economic interdependence is a fact of life today, and capitalism itself has made parochial autarchies a chimera. While municipalities and regions can seek to attain a considerable measure of self-sufficiency, we have long left the era when self-sufficient communities that can indulge their prejudices are possible.

Confederalism

Equally important is the need for confederation—the interlinking of communities with one another through recallable deputes mandated by municipal citizens' assemblies and whose sole functions are coordinative and administrative. Confederation has a long history of its own that dates back to antiquity and that surfaced as a major alternative to the nation-state. From the American Revolution through the French Revolution and the Spanish Revolution of 1936, confederalism constituted a major challenge to state centralism. Nor has it disappeared in our own time, when the breakup of existing twentieth-century empires raises the issue of enforced state centralism or the relatively autonomous nation. Libertarian municipalism adds a radically democratic dimension to the contemporary discussions of confedera-
tion (as, for example, in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia) by calling for confederations not of nation-states but of municipalities and of the neighborhoods of giant metropolitan areas as well as towns and villages.

In the case of libertarian municipalism, parochialism can thus be checked not only by the compelling realities of economic interdependence but by the commitment of municipal minorities to defer to the majority wishes of participating communities. Do these interdependencies and majority decisions guarantee us that a majority decision will be a correct one? Certainly not—but our chances for a rational and ecological society are much better in this approach than in those that ride on centralized entities and bureaucratic apparatuses. I cannot help but marvel that no municipal network has been emergent among the German Greens, who have hundreds of representatives in city councils around Germany yet who carry on a local politics that is completely conventional and self-enclosed within particular towns and cities.

Many arguments against libertarian municipalism—even with its strongconfidential emphasis—derive from a failure to understand its distinction between policy-making and administration. This distinction is fundamental to libertarian municipalism and must always be kept in mind. Policy is made by a community or neighborhood assembly of free citizens; administration is performed by confederal councils composed of mandated, recallable deputies of wards, towns, and villages. If particular communities or neighborhoods—or a minority group of them—choose to go their own way to a point where human rights are violated or where ecological mayhem is permitted, the majority in a local or regional confederation has every right to prevent such malfeasances through its confederal council. This is not a denial of democracy but the assertion of a shared agreement by all to recognize civil rights and maintain the ecological integrity of a region. These rights and needs are not asserted so much by a confederal council as by the majority of the popular assemblies conceived as one large community that expresses its wishes through its confederal deputies. Thus policy-making still remains local, but its administration is vested in the confederal network as a whole. The confederation in effect is a Community of communities based on distinct human rights and ecological imperatives.

If libertarian municipalism is not to be totally warped of its form and divested of its meaning, it is a desideratum that must be fought for. It speaks to a time—hopefully, one that will yet come—when people feel disempowered and actively seek empowerment. Existing in growing tension with the nation-state, it is a process as well as a destiny, a struggle to be fulfilled, not a bequest granted by the summits of the state. It is a dual power that contests the legitimacy of the existing state power. Such a movement can be expected to begin slowly, perhaps sporadically, in communities here and there that initially may demand only the moral authority to alter the structuring of society before enough interlinked confederations exist to demand the outright institutional power to replace the state. The growing tension created by the emergence of municipal confederations represents a confrontation between the state and the political realms. This confrontation can be resolved only after libertarian municipalism forms the new politics of a popular movement and ultimately captures the imagination of millions.

Certain points, however, should be obvious. The people who initially enter into the duel between confederalism and statism will not be the same human beings as those who eventually achieve libertarian municipalism. The movement that tries to educate them and the struggles that give libertarian municipalist principles reality will turn them into active citizens, rather than passive "constituents." No one who participates in a struggle for social restructuring emerges from that struggle with the prejudices, habits, and sensibilities with which he or she entered it. Hopefully, then, such prejudices—like parochialism—will increasingly be replaced by a generous sense of cooperation and a caring sense of interdependence.

**Municipalizing the Economy**

It remains to emphasize that libertarian municipalism is not merely an evocation of all traditional antistatal notions of politics. Just as it redefines politics to include face-to-face municipal democracies graduated to federal levels, so it includes a municipalist and confederal approach to economics. Minimally, a libertarian municipalist economics calls for the municipalization of the economy, not its centralization into state-owned "nationalized" enterprises on the one hand or its reduction to "worker-controlled" forms of collectivistic capitalism on the other. Trade-union control of "worker-controlled" enterprises (that is, syndicalism) has had its day. This should be evident to anyone who examines the bureaucracies that even revolutionary labor unions spawned during the Spanish Civil War of 1936. Today, corporate capitalism too is increasingly eager to bring the worker into complicity with his or her own exploitation by means of "workplace democracy." Nor was the revolution in Spain or in other countries spared the existence of competition among worker-controlled enterprises for raw materials, markets, and profits. Even more recently, many Israeli kibbutzim have been failures as examples of nonexploitative, need-oriented enterprises, despite the high ideals with which they were initially founded.

Libertarian municipalism proposes a radically
different form of economy—one that is neither nationalized nor collectivized according to syndicalist precepts. It proposes that land and enterprises be placed increasingly in the custody of the community—more precisely, the custody of citizens in free assemblies and their deputies in confederal councils. How work should be planned, what technologies should be used, how goods should be distributed are questions that can only be resolved in practice. The maxim “from each according to his or her ability, to each according to his or her needs” would seem a bedrock guide for an economically rational society, provided that goods are of the highest durability and quality, that needs are guided by rational and ecological standards, and that the ancient notions of limit and balance replace the bourgeois marketplace imperative of “grow or die.”

In such a municipal economy—confederal, interdependent, and rational by ecological, not simply technological, standards—we would expect that the special interests that divide people today into workers, professionals, managers, and the like would be melded into a general interest in which people see themselves as citizens guided strictly by the needs of their community and region rather than by personal proclivities and vocational concerns. Here, citizenship would come into its own, and rational as well as ecological interpretations of the public good would supplant class and hierarchical interests.

This is the moral basis of a moral economy for moral communities. But of overarching importance is the general social interest that potentially underpins all moral communities, an interest that must ultimately cut across class, gender, ethnic, and status lines if humanity is to continue to exist as a viable species. This interest is the one created in our times by ecological catastrophe. Capitalism’s “grow or die” imperative stands radically at odds with ecology’s imperative of interdependence and limit. The two imperatives can no longer coexist with each other—not can any society founded on the myth that they can be reconciled hope to survive. Either we will establish an ecological society, or society will go under for everyone, irrespective of his or her status.

Will this ecological society be authoritarian, or possibly even totalitarian, a hierarchical disposition that is implicit in the image of the planet as a “spaceship”? Or will it be democratic? If history is any guide, the development of a democratic ecological society, as distinguished from a command ecological society, must follow its own logic. One cannot resolve this historical dilemma without getting to its roots. Without a searching analysis of our ecological problems and their social sources, the pernicious institutions that we now have will lead to increased centralization and further ecological catastrophe. In a democratic ecological society, those roots are literally the “grass roots” that libertarian municipalism seeks to foster.

For those who rightly call for a new technology, new sources of energy, new means of transportation, and new ecological lifeways, can a new society be anything less than a Community of communities based on confederation rather than statism? We already live in a world in which the economy is “globalized,” overcentralized, and overbureaucratized. Much that can be done locally and regionally is now being done—largely for profit, military needs, and imperial appetites—on a global scale with a seeming complexity that can actually be easily diminished.

If this seems too “utopian” for our time, then so must the present flood of literature that asks for radically sweeping shifts in energy policies, far-reaching reductions in air and water pollution, and the formulation of worldwide plans to arrest global warming and the destruction of the ozone layer be seen as “utopian.” Is it too much, it is fair to ask, to take such demands one step further and call for institutional and economic changes that are no less drastic and that in fact are based on traditions that are deeply sedimented in American—indeed, the world’s—noblest democratic and political traditions?

Nor are we obliged to expect these changes to occur immediately. The Left long worked with minimum and maximum programs for change, in which immediate steps that can be taken now were linked by transitional advances and intermediate areas that would eventually yield ultimate goals. Minimal steps that can be taken now include initiating Left Green municipal movements that propose popular neighborhood and town assemblies—even if they have only moral functions at first—and electing town and city councillors that advance the cause of these assemblies and other popular institutions. These minimal steps can lead step-by-step to the formation of confederal bodies and the increasing legitimation of truly democratic bodies. Civic banks to fund municipal enterprises and land purchases; the fostering of new ecologically oriented enterprises that are owned by the community; and the creation of grassroots networks in many fields of endeavor and the public will—all these can be developed at a pace appropriate to changes that are being made in political life.

That capital will likely “migrate” from communities and confederations that are moving toward libertarian municipalism is a problem that every community, every nation, whose political life has become radicalized has faced. Capital, in fact, normally “migrates” to areas where it can acquire high profits, irrespective of political considerations. Overwhelmed by fears of capital migration, a good case could be established for not rocking the political boat at any time. Far more to the point are that
municipally owned enterprises and farms could provide new ecologically valuable and health-nourishing products to a public that is becoming increasingly aware of the low-quality goods and staples that are being foisted on it now.

Libertarian municipalism is a politics that can excite the public imagination, appropriate for a movement that is directed in need of a sense of direction and purpose. The papers that appear in this collection offer ideas, ways, and means not only to undo the present social order but to remake it drastically—expanding its residual democratic traditions into a rational and ecological society.

ADDENDUM
This addendum seems to be necessary because some of the opponents of libertarian municipalism—and, regretably, some of its acolytes—misunderstand what libertarian municipalism seeks to achieve—indeed, misunderstand its very nature.

For some of its instrumental acolytes, libertarian municipalism is becoming a tactical device to gain entry into so-called independent movements and new third parties that call for “grassroots politics,” such as those proposed by NOW and certain labor leaders. In the name of “libertarian municipalism,” some radical acolytes of the view are prepared to blur the tension that they should cultivate between the civic realm and the state—presumably to gain greater public attention in electoral campaigns for gubernatorial, congressional, and other state offices. These radicals regretfully warp libertarian municipalism into a mere “tactic” or “strategy” and drain it of its revolutionary content.

But those who propose to use tenets of libertarian municipalism for “tactical” reasons as a means to enter another reformist party or function as its “left wing” have little in common with the idea. Libertarian municipalism is not a product of the formal logic that has such deep roots in left-wing “analyzes” and “strategies” today, despite the claims of many radicals that “dialectics” is their “method.” The struggle toward creating new civic institutions out of old ones (or replacing the old ones altogether) and creating civic confederations is a self-formative one, a creative dynamic formed from the tension of social conflicts. The effort to work along these lines is as much a part of the end as the process of maturing from the child to the adult—from the relatively undifferentiated to the fully differentiated—with all its difficulties. The very fight for a municipal confederation, for municipal control of “property,” and for the actual achievement of worldwide municipal confederation is directed toward achieving a new ethos of citizenship and community, not simply to gain victories in largely reformist conflicts.

Thus, libertarian municipalism is not merely an effort simply to “take over” city councils to construct a more “environmentally friendly” city government. These adherents—or opponents—of libertarian municipalism, in effect, look at the civic structures that exist before their eyes now and essentially (all rhetoric to the contrary aside) take them as they exist. Libertarian municipalism, by contrast, is an effort to transform and democratize city governments, to root them in popular assemblies, to knit them together along confederal lines, to appropriate a regional economy along confederal and municipal lines.

In fact, libertarian municipalism gains its life and its integrity precisely from the dialectical tension it proposes between the nation-state and the municipal confederation. Its “law of life,” to use an old Marxist term, consists precisely in its struggle with the state. The tension between municipal confederations and the state must be clear and uncompromising. Since these confederations would exist primarily in opposition to statecraft, they cannot be compromised by state, provincial, or national elections, much less achieved by these means. Libertarian municipalism is formed by its struggle with the state, strengthened by this struggle, indeed defined by this struggle. Divested of this dialectical tension with the state, of this duality of power that must ultimately be actualized in a free “Commune of communes,” libertarian municipalism becomes little more than “sewer socialism.”

Many heroic comrades who are prepared to do battle (one day) with the cosmic forces of capitalism find that libertarian municipalism is too thorny, irrelevant, or vague to deal with and opt for what is basically a form of political particularism. Our spray-can or “alternative cafe” radicals may choose to brush libertarian municipalism aside as “a ludicrous tactic,” but it never ceases to amaze me that well-meaning radicals who are committed to the “overthrow” of capitalism (no less!) find it too difficult to function politically—and, yes, electorally—in their own neighborhoods for a new politics based on a genuine democracy. If they cannot provide a transformative politics for their own neighborhood—a relatively modest task—or diligently work at doing so with the constancy that used to mark the more mature left movements of the past, I find it very hard to believe that they will ever do much harm to the present social system.

Indeed, by creating cultural centers, parks, and good housing, they may well be improving the system by giving capitalism a human face without diminishing its underlying unfreedom as a hierarchical and class society.

A bouquet of struggles for “identity” has often fractured rising radical movements since SDS in the 1960s, ranging from foreign to domestic nationalisms. Because these identity struggles are so popular today, some of the critics of libertarian municipalism invoke
"public opinion" against it. But when has it been the task of revolutionaries to surrender to "public opinion"—not even the "public opinion" of the oppressed, whose views can often be very reactionary? Truth has its own life—regardless of whether the oppressed masses perceive or agree on what is true. Nor is it "elitist" to invoke truth, in contradiction to even radical public opinion, when that opinion essentially seeks a march backward into the politics of particularism and even racism.

Critics of libertarian municipalism even dispute the very possibility of a "general interest." If, for such critics, the face-to-face democracy advocated by libertarian municipalism and the need to extend the premises of democracy beyond mere justice to complete freedom do not suffice as a "general interest," it would seem to me that the need to repair our relationship with the natural world is certainly a "general interest" that is beyond dispute—and, indeed, it remains the "general interest" advanced by social ecology. It may be possible to co-opt many dissatisfied elements in the present society, but nature is not co-optable. Indeed, the only politics that remains for the left is one based on the premise that there is a "general interest" in democratizing society and preserving the planet. Now that traditional forces such as the workers' movement have ebbed from the historical scene, it can be said with almost complete certainty that without libertarian municipalism, the left will have no politics whatever.

A dialectical view of the relationship of confederalism to the nation-state, an understanding of the narrowness, introverted character, and parochialism of identity-movements, and a recognition that the workers' movement is essentially dead—all illustrate that if a new politics is going to develop today, it must be unflinchingly public. In contrast to the alternative-cafe "politics" advanced by many radicals today, it must be electoral on a municipal basis, confederal in its vision, and revolutionary in its character.

Indeed, in my view, libertarian municipalism, with its emphasis on confederalism, is precisely the "Commune of communes" for which anarchists have fought over the past two centuries. Today, it is the "red button" that must be pushed if a radical movement is to open the door to the public sphere. To leave that red button untouched and slip back into the worst habits of the post-1968 New Left, when the notion of "power" was divested of utopian or imaginative qualities, is to reduce radicalism to yet another subsurface that will probably live more on heroic memories than on the hopes of a rational future.

April 3, 1991; addendum, October 1, 1991

This article was originally published as the introduction to the Social Ecology Project's Readings in Libertarian Municipalism, a collection of writings on the subject.

(This DB reprint is from the October, 1991, issue of Green Perspectives, PO Box 111, Burlington, VT 05402.)

Cont'd from p. 2

Garner $7; Ben Doganiero $14; Curtis Price $3; Mark Shipway $10; Grand Rapids Discussion Group $10; G.P. Maher $20. Total $161.83. Thank you, comrades.

BALANCE December 28, 1991 [deficit] $42.16 (corrected)

RECEIPTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributions</th>
<th>$161.83</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subs and sales</td>
<td>103.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$262.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISBURSEMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postage</th>
<th>$95.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>$41.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postage due</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO Box rent</td>
<td>35.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$226.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BALANCE February 28, 1992 [deficit] $5.45

Fraternally submitted,

Frank Girard

for the DB Committee
A Critique of Libertarian Municipalism

The purpose of this article is to offer a socialist criticism of Libertarian Municipalism (abbreviated LM in the sequel), which is hegemonic within the Left Green Network (LGN). The concept of LM is the focal point of the LGN Principles and a proposed program of the LGN. It seems that it is conceived by its supporters to be the center about which everything else revolves or is subordinated to.

As expressed in the LGN Principles, LM is described as follows:

"....we want to restructure political institutions along lines that will replace the centralized state with a confederal participatory democracy. Our goal is base democracy, in which public power at all jurisdictional scales is determined by community assemblies, such as town meetings, that are open to all citizens. Confederations of these community assemblies will coordinate public policy from below. Representatives to the larger scales of confederal self-government will receive ongoing instructions from the base assemblies and will be subject to immediate recall by the base." (92)

"Global corporations and centralized state enterprises should be broken up and replaced by individual and family enterprises, cooperatives, and decentralized publicly-owned enterprises. Basic industries and services would be socialized through municipalization into community ownership and control, not nationalized into bureaucracy. Confederations of communities would own larger facilities regionally, and confederations of regions would coordinate the economy from below at still larger jurisdictional scales." (92)

Other pillars of LM according to Murray Bookchin, LM's leading theoretician are:

"Policy is made by a community or neighborhood assembly of free citizens; administration is performed by confederal councils composed of mandated, recallable deputes of wards, towns, and villages." (vii)

"How work should be planned, what technologies should be used, how goods should be distributed are questions that can only be resolved in practice." (viii)

To begin with my first specific problem with LM is over the concept of community assembly. After reading the basic LM
writings this concept is not at all clear to me. It would be instructive to have a clear, concrete, hypothetical example to clarify it. Apparently these assemblies are to be substitutes for direct voting in elections. If so, then there several problems. The first is that voting in mass assembly puts size restraints upon the assembly if any meaningful democratic participation is going to be realized. For example it would be ludicrous to govern a big city in this way. What are reasonable size limits? Secondly, within a mass assembly there have to be time constraints on speakers. In fact only a few people can speak, thus vitiating democratic principles. Obviously increasing the size of the assembly decreases the democracy. Mass assembly may have of its virtues in personal, face-to-face involvement but also has severe limitations.

Another problem we have with LM is its applicability to big cities. Obviously LM was designed to deal with bite-sized communities. But how does LM handle a megapolis like Los Angeles? The best they can say is that it should be broken down, it can be broken down, but this will take a very long time.(47) The trouble with Los Angeles is that it is nearly an indivisible whole. How does one break it up into meaningful smaller units? For example, there are industrial areas where many enterprises are located, employing many thousands of workers who do not live near their workplace but scattered throughout the huge city area. How can you break up the industrial area into neighborhoods when no one lives there? To divide LA into LM style neighborhoods would require at least 10,000 of them. Does this mean that 10,000 communities would own and control the enterprises that serve them or employ its citizens? If so then LA seems dangerously close to being a nation-state and its municipalization would mean a nationalization, and a big bureaucracy. What is going to prevent a bureaucratization in a local government this big.

LMN members have apparently accepted this assembly business from its militant, revolutionary rhetoric even though they haven’t the foggiest idea of how it’s supposed to work. It is true that some questions have to be left for practice. I for one don’t consider the questions relating to the unclarity of LM and its applicability to big cities to be in the wait-untill-later category. These questions need to be dealt with more seriously now.

I agree in principle that communities should be run democratically through a face-to-face, everyday democracy but not necessarily in the exact form proposed by LM. Moreover I agree that a community based democracy such as proposed by LM is essential to confront the the even-worsening ecological crisis. However I have much more substantial objections with LM. These deal with the role and importance of the working class, the alleged scope of LM, the relation of LM to the economic sphere and the way in which the workers run the workplace.

My biggest problem with LM is that it doesn’t specify how enterprises and institutions are to run internally.
Apparently they don't consider this question important enough to address, a question falling under the rubric "to be resolved in practice".

What say do workers within a school, factory or governmental office have on their working conditions? What is the decision making process? Do workers choose their supervisors and management committees? How are pay rates determined? These are important questions which should not be brushed aside. We can't expect a blueprint but at least some specific principles or guidelines on how these questions can be resolved in practice. A maxim like "from each according to his or her abilities, to each according to his or her needs", which Bookchin proposes, is insufficient as such a guideline.

Is there going to be internal democracy within the workplaces in the LM vision, or not? If not, then it certainly contradicts LM's general stance towards hierarchy and dominance. If so, why don't they say so? In contrast to the LMers my basic position is that workplace democracy cannot be handed over to the workers indirectly from the outside by any politicians or LM style assemblies. Essentially it has to won in the workplace through struggle by the workers themselves.

Another question LM is not too clear on is the relationship between enterprises. Bookchin decries the fact that worker-controlled enterprises during the Spanish Civil War competed against one another and became bureaucratized. So in the LM vision the enterprises are supposed to cooperate. Yet how? What sort of planning is to take place? What are possible safeguards against competition and bureaucratization? LM is very vague on these questions.

It seems to me that enterprises administrated from above by assembly mandate would have a strong tendency towards bureaucratic degeneration. In fact the healthiest antidote to bureaucratization would be workers' democratic control of the workplace.

I find LM's ideas on assemblies replacing election-style voting unclear, unconvincing and of questionable value. But what I find totally unacceptable is LM's subordinatization of the economic sphere to its brand of community democracy and its related neglect of workplace democracy. I think we can all agree that we need both community and workplace democracy. The problem is to somehow relate the two. As of now the LM scheme is deficient in this regard.

LM is an attempt to democratize all of society starting from the community, and as such it is one-dimensional. It is instructive to compare LM with another one-dimensional approach: Deleuzian (or Socialist Industrial Unionism), as represented by the Socialist Labor Party and various of its offshoots. In this scheme the workers are to organize within the workplaces into revolutionary unions for the purpose of not only fighting oppression but of providing the organizational framework for running the new socialist
society. In the socialist society the workers are to democratically elect their management committees and determine working conditions. Moreover workplaces are to be integrated into a democratic pyramid of governmental planning bodies. There is to be no competition between enterprises, as there is under syndicalism which MB harshly criticizes. (viii, 43, 82) One of the serious problems with Deleuzianism is that it subordinates community issues to its economic structure in sort of a perverted mirror image of LM. Another problem was that it was rigidly applied in a very sectarian organization.

According to Marxist theory the workers are supposed to the revolutionary agent. But as history has shown the marxist expectations have not been satisfactorily realized, at least not yet. In his writings it is clear that Bookchin sees no significant value in workers' struggles; he has given up hope that the workers can be a real revolutionary force in the workplace. He has unfortunately thrown away the baby with the dirty water. And his ideas of LM are permeated with this attitude or belief.

Instead MB has enthroned the citizen as the revolutionary agent. The following citations of Bookchin illustrate this.

"In such a municipal economy ....... we would expect that the special interests that divide people into workers, professionals, managers, and the like would be melded into a general interest in which people see themselves as citizens guided strictly by the needs of their community and region rather than by personal proclivities and vocational concerns."(viii)

"For once, it is possible of conceiving of majoritarian forces for major social change, not the minoritarian movements that existed over the past two centuries of proletarian socialism and anarchism." (82)

"Libertarian municipalism is a politics that can excite the public imagination, appropriate for a movement that is direly in need of a sense of direction and purpose."(ix)

I am skeptical that LM's citizen can be the driving force of the revolution, but since my expectation about workers have not yet been realized, let's be open to the idea that LM might work after all although in a limited but significant way. Supposing that LM is successful in generating forms of real community democracy, we can safely assume that it will be done in the context of a general social and economic crisis which implies that workers in the workplace will also be in ferment and struggling for new ways of doing things. Hence the success of LM also implies a concomitant movement in other areas of life too, including the workplace. So LM can't exist in a vacuum and exclude workers struggles but must complement them.

There is another aspect of revolution which needs attention: that is that the ruling class is not going to sit idly by while an anti-capitalist revolution unfolds, whether it be a
LM style revolution or not. The ruling class will respond as it has always done with repression running the gamut from cancelled elections to physical liquidization of the opposition. How do we confront this repression? Moral force is not enough. Armed struggle is obsolete and counterproductive. There is, however, a powerful source of resistance and that is the ability of workers to occupy and run the essential industries during a revolutionary crisis. If the workers were organized to do this it would provide a force which far surpasses any force that can be mustered by any assemblies or electoral parties. So this provides another reason why independent revolutionary, workers' organizations are essential and can't play second fiddle to any LM strategies.

Now what should be done? The revolution is not one-dimensional; it must involve all aspects of society. In particular, it must involve both the community aspect as well as the workplace with neither subordinate to the other. The job of revolutionaries and in particular of the LGN is to forge a synthesis of the community and workplace, taking the best from the various approaches. In this spirit we look forward to the LGNers' response to this critique and to a corresponding meaningful dialogue within LGN.

References: All quotes are taken from Readings in Libertarian Municipalism (April 1991), The Social Ecology Project, P.O. Box 111, Burlington, 05402. The numbers in parenthesis refer to the page number. Most of the readings have also appeared elsewhere.

Dear Comrades;

For hopefully one last time, a call to enter your musty vaults of aging revolutionary literature: does any DB reader have the following materials available for copying? The materials are needed for consideration as possible reprints...

1) "REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION"—Solidarity Clyde-side pamphlet from late 60's; This was a collection of articles reprinted from "SOLIDARITY" (National) Vol.1, nos. 4, 5, and 6.

2) "CAPITALISM AND CONSCIOUSNESS"—Another "Solidarity Clyde-side pamphlet from the same era containing articles by J. Evard published in "SOLIDARITY" SCOTLAND, Vol.2, nos. 3 and 4 and in "SOLIDARITY" (National) Vol.3, no.10. Also contained an article by P. Cardan on "Working Class Consciousness" originally published in "Solidarity" (National), Vol.2, nos. 2 and 3.

Please write: Curtis Price, 1101 St. Paul St. #2002, Balto., MD., 21202
"ECO-POLITICAL SOLUTIONS FOR SOCIAL PROBLEMS: Some thoughts on a Left Green Network."

Rural communities and up-scale urban enclaves in Arizona are dominated by strong puritanical and punitive ideologies. Many older, white citizens are in remarkable accord with social and political ideals that condemn dissent, deviant behavior, political alternatives and even equalitarianism. These ideals are deeply rooted in long-held religious, patriotic and racial ideologies. The "red neck" factor is more visible in the west, but all across the country it is a major obstacle to a libertarian revolution.

In a decentralized structure these intolerant ideals may persist and form enclaves of tyranny on a municipal scale. Can class consciousness and liberation from authoritarianism come to individuals who have been socialized to hate? Great shifts in public opinion (as, for example, with capital punishment) have been documented in the past. A substantial re-education effort will be needed to achieve revolution.

The Green Movement has considerable potential to mobilize cooperation among the general population. Despite its single issue foundation, it taps nearly universal concerns, adding the emotion of urgency:

1. The environment continues to deteriorate despite everything done so far to preserve it and despite minor success in isolated areas.
2. Environmental deterioration touches the lives of all people.
3. Environmental pollution and exploitation can be linked directly to the capitalist profit motive.
4. The U.S. has enjoyed a post-scarcity lifestyle for a considerable period. (Though for the working class and marginalized groups that is now rapidly vanishing.)
5. Americans have more affinity for nature and lifestyle than politics.

Anarchism (more generally: liberation socialism) is an obscure and greatly misunderstood concept among the masses. But this may lend it advantage— it is easier to re-educate from a position of ignorance. With the discredit of Stalinism and what may soon become the collapse of large-scale capitalism, liberation socialism could become the, as yet untied, "Third Way" for the U.S. In its more grass roots or theoretical underpinning, it has the potential to become the prevalent philosophy of the next century.

Interestingly, conservative forms of anarchism (libertarian capitalism) also appear to be waxing. A more pessimistic view would not rule out some brand of fascist totalitarianism in our future. It really could go either way at this point.

If the country embarks upon some extended reformism, as has happened in the past, multiple issues will have to be addressed. Most socialists believe that crime would hardly exist after the abolition of capitalist exploitation and inequalities. If there is to be a transition period before society is completely decentralized, criminology and penology must be addressed during this period.

There is a great need for a new marxist theory of criminology based upon liberation socialist principles and repudiating the Stalinist and Maoist practices associated with highly bureaucratized societies. How would dissent and deviant sub-cultures be liberated in a decentralized confederation of municipal assemblies? Would some theory of jurisprudence exist in order to liberate the weak from the exploitation of the strong (the classic critique of Anarchism)?
It is clear that the structures of the man-made social environment have had a profound effect upon the natural environment. Left Greens must eventually consider the reverse effect. How will ecological humanist strategies influence the particulars of the social environment? A number of traditional social issues may still need to be addressed in a democratic and cooperative commonwealth:

1. A marxist-based theory of criminology is needed.
2. The abolition of prisons, jails and capital punishment is an obvious corollary of decentralism.
3. A radical psychological paradigm must replace treatment methodology.
4. A radical, positivist sociology should guide social policy decisions.
5. The goal of a liberated, multi-cultural society should be preferred to traditional liberal egalitarianism or communist homogeneity.

In a new society, most of these issues will be hold-overs from the past. Part of the answer to these questions will be found in the alteration of property concepts, violence, accumulation fetish, power lust and religious morality—all the subtle values that enter into the socialization of maturing individuals. But it may be naive to believe that a post-competitive society will be entirely free of predator and prey. Will we tolerate the predator-prey relationship among people because it is a valuable part of the natural ecology?

Socialists of every flavor, cooperating to support a Left Green Network, can only further all our goals and perhaps avoid a fascist reaction to the troubles that appear to be ahead. To traditional socialists who tend to focus on culture, politics and society, eco-politics may seem to be the exploitation of a single issue. But one has to consider that saving the whole earth, the habitat of all human, animal and plant life we know of, is a mighty important issue.

--to further discussion,
ROBERT SEKULA, prisoner
State Prison, Winslow, Arizona

Cont'd from p. 31

variety, whatever that is? The fine words about liberty, equality, fraternity, freedom and all that are just fine words to attract the idealists among us. [God! I hate to be the one to disillusion you, Howard!]

The most encouraging aspect of LM is its emphasis on organizing the revolutionary assemblies within the community. They are analogous to the revolutionary industrial unions (RIUs) of the political and non-political American syndicalists—the IWW and the DeLeonists. In fact, one might argue that they resolve the problem of political vs. economic action that split the IWW in 1906. Like the RIUs, the community assemblies will serve as the schoolrooms of revolution, and at the right moment they will supersede—replace—the old capitalist political machinery just as the RIUs will replace the industrial hierarchy in production.

3. Power: I think most LS groups would agree with HH that labor organization of the past century, whether in the form of labor parties or labor unions, has been futile. Until recently, our ruling class has seen that it is cheaper to buy us workers off with higher wages and to coopt (buy) our political and union leaders than to fight us. But as the economic and environmental conditions for revolution

Cont'd on p. 22
Dear readers,

The twentieth century has shown that Marxists had to adapt their tactics to attract new recruits. When Leon Trotsky an active revolutionary had hoped for revolution on working people who rebelled against their bosses. Today, in the absence of many strikes, the followers of Marx and DeLeon look to active environmentalists and those who oppose wars for possible recruits. Because of conditions, DeLeon appealed primarily to working people for support, but with the diminished militancy of the working class, the revolutionaries today seek support from many who oppose the status quo. Capitalists as well as workers take the same issue with the status quo on many issues. It is unprecedented that a revolutionary movement can succeed by trying to attract new members. There is no record of a working class political party succeeding in a revolution to socialism. Wouldn’t it be better for Marxists to find roots in history that could make us believe that we have a vital role?

Before the battle of Lexington and Concord that started the American Revolution there was no revolutionary party. People who were against British rule and wanted equality for American colonies kept together through correspondence. British rule was not acceptable and harmed the economic interests of many colonies although relatively few were committed to oppose it. Because England was forced by conditions to exploit the colonies more, opposition in the colonies became more widespread and intense. The fighting in Massachusetts spread to the other colonies because correspondence enabled the colonists to unite against England. Only after the fighting started did Thomas Paine and his mighty pen explain the meaning of events and convinced the patriots to stick it out for independence.

Similar conditions exist today for the working class as existed for the patriots in their successful revolution to a capitalist republic. The economic interests of the capitalists and the working class conflict according to Marx. He also revealed that capitalism can not avoid revolutionary economic crises that put a strain upon the system that makes people ask vital questions. When the showdown came in the colonies, there were leaders to organize the resistance although they were loyal British subjects when there was peaceful protest. Let us ponder if we Marxists should associate through correspondence and association till the public shows it is ready for socialism because the economic crises has become unbearable. At that time we will be in position to supply necessary Marxist and DeLeonist education for social change.

It is with misgivings that I reflect upon the Socialist Labor Party’s acceptance of Lenin on several issues. When Lenin was quoted by various people that he read some major works of DeLeon and approved of them, the S.L.P. rewarded Lenin by comparing him to DeLeon. It was boasted in S.L.P circles that if Lenin continued and Stalin had not taken over, the Soviets would have been transformed into a democratic industrial union government. Apparently all political parties including the S.L.P. must sell themselves to the public. If the S.L.P. and other DeLeonist parties had succeeded in making its education known to large segments of the population, they would have gotten desired results. However, the rampant misinformation and confusion about scientific socialism revails that working class parties are not successful under capitalism.

That does not mean that Marxists and DeLeonists should not encourage association. It is implied in our principles. Instead of the association being a political party we should be content to be a Committee of Correspondence as existed in pre-revolutionary war
days in the colonies. That method would enable us to reason our
differences and seek comfort and strength from association with
others who care about our future. As national and world events con-
tinue to evolve our unique Marxist philosophy should provide us
with opportunities to be of service to the public. As individuals
we would not identify socialism with hot political issues like
being against capital punishment, being for unlimited immigration,
pro abortion, militant environmentalism etc. People will have no
reason to regard our advocacy of socialism as a ploy to promote
causes that now have more acceptance than socialism. The current
revolutionary crises of capitalism will induce rejection of this
system by the public somewhere along the line of a deteriorating
economy. It is for us to reveal that society is fortunate to have
us around to contribute our best.

The roots of the coming revolution to a democratic industrial
union government to me is the faith that Christ will come again as
he said and redeem the world as well as each individual. Marx
His coming in the present capitalist system induce each of us to
love everyone else?

If Lenin were to return he would be enraged at how little the
boost parts of the bible. He did not believe that it is through
the expression of each individual through his experience, conscience
and understanding can come the respect, unity, concern for each other,
clarity and strength required for a successful revolution to socialism.

Monroe Prussack

Dear readers

The article by Howard Hawkins in The Nation was a good updating
of Marxist science. My xxxxxx criticism is that he did not cover
two vital points. In the first place he ignored the harm Leninism
did to the revolutionary socialist movement. By going beyond Marx
in his regard for religion Lenin made atheism a cardinal point in
a socialist indoctrination. In violation of Marx's analysis of the
role of religion in class ruled society, Lenin assumed that the
Soviet Union was classless and therefore did not require religion.
People who defied that twisted logic were punished in various
degrees. In the second place the article did not touch on the
law of value and its significance to Marxists. The Communist Man-
ifesto that he referred to included that the capitalist system is
on trial for its life during a business depression. Howard Hawkins
could be blinded to the reality of the socialist revolution if he
does not see that the inevitable collapse of capitalism will create
an economic and social vacuum that people will fill if given a vision
dof a new society. Up to now I believe that Daniel DeLeon enables
us to see the light of the future.

People who are aware that capitalism like the social systems
that preceded it are not for ever have not succeeded in creating
socialism through political organization. Furthermore we have not
spread widespread education about socialism. The popular error now
is that socialism is dead along with the Soviet Union. Our failure to
establish socialism or to build a strong socialist movement can
be a lesson for us if we become a fraternal organization instead
of a political and industrial organizations. We then will be better
able to reveal that the people make the revolution—not an elite—and
that our ideas can be understood only in a revolutionary crises
that threatens to bring everything to a halt.

Fraternally yours,

Monroe Prussack

The following comments are a response to the content of Discussion Bulletin No. 50. We strongly disagree with this recent turn and call upon you to reconsider before it is too late.

Turning Point for Discussion Bulletin: Red or Green?

With disappointment, and some surprise, we read Discussion Bulletin No. 50 (Nov.–Dec. 1991). In that issue, the Discussion Bulletin makes clear its new orientation—to enter into the Greens and to attempt to influence and recruit among the radical "ecology movement." Similarly, that other journal of ex-DeLeonist, "libertarian socialist" politics, Workers Democracy, has turned green becoming re-born as Regeneration, a Journal of Left Green Thought. This turn toward ecologism is a move away from the terrain of the proletariat, the only revolutionary class, toward an "inter-classist" and reformist movement which is safely contained within the camp of the ruling class, the terrain of capitalism.

Discussion Bulletin No. 50 advocates joining the Left Green Network which was created on the basis of a political orientation developed by anarchist Murray Bookchin, as a means to influence and recruit elements drawn to ecologism and other partial struggles. The Left Green Network in its turn has targeted the Greens USA, a bourgeois political tendency, emulating the likes of the Greens in Germany who have had electoral successes on the terrain of the ruling class. The Greens USA is in no way a political formation of the working class but rather is an instrument of the ruling class for capturing elements opposed to aspects of capitalism (whether its treatment of the environment, or women, or blacks, etc.) and channel their opposition in a "safe", bourgeois political terrain.

How can the comrades of Discussion Bulletin and Workers Democracy enter into a such a movement which, at best, considers the working class as just another oppressed group, one among many if you will...just like racial minorities, religious minorities, oppressed nationalities, women, gays, whites and trees...which should not be oppressed any more.

The dilution of the struggle of the workers into a cesspool of inter-classist dissent is an abandonment of marxism. For marxists, there is a fundamental recognition that the working class is not merely an exploited class, but is by its nature the only thoroughly revolutionary class in the world today. It is the working class which can only liberate itself by abolishing exploitation and ending the historic division of mankind into classes. The working class has a unique role to play in history and remains exceptional among all the suffering segments in society today.

We had thought that the DB was a political formation coming from DeLeonism that was interested in examining the revolutionary positions with an open mind. But marxism can not be limited to an academic interest. Revolutionaries must confront the ongoing events in the life of society and apply the historic lessons of the class struggle using the methods of marxism.

But DB has been stalled at the starting gate for some time now. In the last few years, the Discussion Bulletin has repeatedly avoided clarifying and debating its positions on current major world events affecting the working class and its struggle, including the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the growing impact of social decomposition on the working class and the prospects of revolution, the implosion and break-up of
the USSR, and the Persian Gulf War.

Too much effort has been addressed to academicist readings and critique; too frequently backing down from a commitment to review the positions espoused within the political milieu on the major historical events of the present period. For example, following the Persian Gulf War DB proposed to publish the various positions published within the political milieu on the war in the Persian Gulf. While it was a serious weakness not to publish contributions on the Gulf crisis during the long months of build-up and bourgeois propaganda campaigns, the ultimate decision not to focus the pages of DB on the war because of the supposed similarity of positions expressed was a serious failing for a group which claims to be committed to foster serious debate and discussion within the political milieu.

Today it appears that DB and similar "libertarian socialist", DeLeonists want to overcome an isolation from the working class linked to their failure to actively intervene in the struggles of the class, by joining into a larger "movement" even if it is off the terrain of the proletariat and is in service of the ruling class.

Discussion Bulletin is at a turning point as it contemplates entering the Left Green Network. Whether Discussion Bulletin wishes to recognize it or not, it is poised on the edge of abandoning marxism and the working class. Rather than plunge into the camp of the ecologist wing of capitalism, the comrades of the milieu around the Discussion Bulletin as well as Workers Democracy would better serve the future of the working class and the cause of socialist revolution by taking up the tasks of active intervention in the political life of the working class: really taking up the lessons of the history of the revolutionary class struggle; denouncing the pernicious role of the labor unions which are today nothing but tools of the enemy class; defending the revolutionary positions of marxism.

The ICC has criticisms of the positions of Daniel DeLeon, but we have always recognized him as a revolutionary who was committed to the vital role of the political struggle. The anarchists within the IWW expelled DeLeon precisely because of his commitment to revolutionary political activity.

The anarchist/libertarian elements who have impelled the founding of the Left Green Network are not committed to the political struggle. The radical mumbo-jumbo they use in their writings calling for "eco-feminism", "radical municipalism", "bio-regionalism" and "confederal participatory democracy" must not be allowed to obscure the fact that anarchism offers no course to liberating mankind from the dangers posed by capitalism. It is marxism which clearly expresses the political struggle of the working class which can liberate mankind.

Trotskyism's entry into the social democracy in the thirties (the so-called French turn) is an historic example that DB should ponder before entering the Greens movement. The Trotskyists had earlier recognized that the social democracy had gone into the camp of the bourgeoisie, with support of the various national imperialisms during the First World War and in their support for the crushing of the revolutionary movement in Europe. Nonetheless, because Trotskyism saw the opportunity to easily find an audience with more workers and to recruit within social democracy, they entered into that bourgeois political formation. This was an important step in the degeneration of Trotskyism, which betrayed the working class during World War II, by supporting one imperialist bloc against the other.

To the comrades of this "libertarian socialist" milieu, including the Discussion Bulletin, we issue an appeal:
Don't go from the swamp to the land of the enemy class...Clarify political positions within the context of active intervention on the proletarian terrain.

--Eric Fischer, for Internationalism,
US section of the International Communist Current.

LIBERTARIAN SOCIALISM AND LIBERTARIAN MUNICIPALISM

To most readers of "left" literature, anarchists and socialists are on opposite sides of the ideological fence. The Discussion Bulletin (DB), however, places the fence in a different location. In our statement to "non-subscribing readers" we speak of the DB having "as its purpose to serve as the forum of a sector of political thought that places the great divide in the "left," not between anarchists and Marxists but between capitalism's leftwing of radicals, vanguardists, and social democrats and the real revolutionaries of our era: the non-market socialists, by whom we mean a political spectrum that runs from syndicalists and communist anarchists to world socialists, DeLeonists, council communists and left communists."

Since that was written seven or eight years ago, libertarian municipalism has developed as a major element in the anarcho-communist strand of libertarian socialism. Its ecological orientation speaks to one of the greatest concerns of our time, and as a result it has achieve a high degree of prominence in the left. Although its spokespersons maintain the traditional anarchist hostility to the Marxian elements in libertarian socialism, it has all the characteristics of a member of the DB's political spectrum.

The purpose of this article is to show that libertarian municipalism, this most dynamic element in communist anarchism, has enough in common with the rest of libertarian socialism to enable members to co-exist and cooperate in such neutral organizations as the Left Green Network.

This can best be shown by comparing the two. Libertarian municipalism (LM) is relatively easy to define because it is based on the theoretical work of one person, Murray Bookchin, whose social ecology writings and workshops have created many supporters over the past twenty years. Libertarian socialism (LS) is a bit more difficult to define because it includes so many divergent and often hostile groupings. Among these are the Wobblies (IWW), various DeLeonist groups, anarcho-syndicalists, anarcho-communists, Socialist Party of Great Britain and allied groups in the U.S. and Canada, and councilists like Wildcat/Subversion. (I hasten to add that many members of these groups would vehemently deny being "libertarian socialists".) From the above, it should be clear that unlike LM, LS is not a unified ideology; quite the contrary, in fact. The groups I include are often mutually hostile, still fighting the battles that separated them decades ago.

But as readers will see from the comparisons between LM and LS below, it is possible to infer a remarkably coherent set of principles that they hold in common.

1. The economic system: Both LM and LS call for abolishing capitalism and replacing it with a new economic system based on social ownership
of the means of production. The new system is envisioned differently but seems to me to be similar in practice. LM calls for municipal ownership of production, which I assume means social ownership on the municipal level; LS just calls for social ownership, which does not limit it geographically. The difference here seems to be a matter of emphasis with the LM limiting ownership (and thus control) to the local community. LS, while arguing that social ownership means ownership by the whole of global society, would also limit control to the local workplace. Both seek free access to goods and services as a major aim of the social revolution.

2. The state: Both call for the abolition of the state. Here again there are differences: LM would replace the state with local government based on communities small enough to make decisions in town meetings. That element in LS who advocate a socialist industrial union or syndicalist system would have comparable local (shop floor/department) assemblies in the workplace.

3. Transition period: Because both believe the change must occur in people's minds before the revolution, neither sees the need for a transition period to socialism. LM sees the process of struggle against the hierarchical domination of the nation state and the realization of the need for local control as providing the education that enable citizens to function in the new society they will build. LS sees this education being carried on by the local shop-floor assembly of the industrial union as a part of the consciousness raising created by the economic crisis that will precipitate the revolution.

4. Motivating force for revolution: LM sees this as a slowly developing demand by the people for democratic control of their lives and with it a growing realization that capitalism and its state are incompatible with such a demand. LS, on the other hand, sees the revolution arising largely from material causes and most especially the growing economic deprivation and insecurity. In time and with the agitation of socialists, the working class will see that their material interests will best be served by abolishing the system.

5. Ecology: LM was developed by Bookchin as an environmental anarchist response to capitalism. Consequently one of its major emphases is the importance of balancing human activity and the natural world.

LS, on the other hand, came into existence around the turn of the century as a revolutionary response to social democratic reformism. Although pollution, especially in industrial areas, and the problems of soil erosion have been recognized, the idea that society must limit agricultural and industrial growth has not. In fact, since the working class's principal motive for revolution is the premise of goods and services in excess of needs, LS has not thought in terms of limiting production to achieve ecological balance. Quite the contrary; the artificial limits imposed by capitalism's market demand would be removed and society would expand production to satisfy human needs. Pollution is not ignored but is regarded as simply another capitalist problem that socialism can solve.

In terms of the ecology, then, LM presents a much needed perspective on the shape and direction of the new society. I might add that the question of ecology will grow in importance as revolutionaries begin
to face the question of whether socialism will come before capitalism exhausts the earth’s resources and pollutes it beyond recovery.

6. Class struggle: For LS, class divisions arise from the ownership of productive property. The social evolution of our species from communistic hunters/gatherers to the present industrial society was mirrored by class divisions that saw the non-owners’ condition pass from slaves and serfs to our present status as wage workers. The class struggle, then, is between the tiny minority, the capitalist owners of the means of production and the great majority who own no productive property and must rent themselves out at a wage to the capitalists. The struggle is over the division of the product between workers and capitalists.

LM sees the cause of the great division in human society as hierarchy: the domination by one group of the other. In keeping with LM’s tendency to minimize the influence of economic factors in society, it sees hierarchy as arising historically from such other factors as the domination by the old (or at least the older people) in primitive tribal society and then the domination by the masculine and physically stronger over the women and weaker males. Ownership of the means of production, then, derives from domination, not the reverse, as LS would have it. The struggle may, according to LM, have economic aspects, but basically it is a struggle for freedom—a struggle to escape domination and hierarchy.

7. Revolutionary Act or Revolutionary Process: Both LM and LS reject the sort of minority coup d’etat/seizure of power/guerrilla war/insurrection that appeals to Leninists and has passed for revolutions in the recent past: the action of a minority of revolutionary workers or peasants led by an elite vanguard a la the Bolshevik party, Mao’s Red Army, or Latin American Castroite guerrillas. Both LM and LS see that a truly free and workable post-revolutionary society requires that the great majority of the people change their thinking to favor the revolution. Both LM and LS believe that change will take place in the new spontaneous social organizations: the workplace-based revolutionary unions of LS (the anarcho-syndicalists, DeLeonists, and IWW, who see the principal force toward change as economic) and/or the community assembly/town meetings of LM, which sees the motivating force as concern for the environment and the struggle against domination and hierarchy.

Both see these new organizations arising outside organized society as spontaneously arising extra-legal assemblies outside the governmental framework. They become the schoolrooms of revolution as the oppressive, anti-social nature of capitalism becomes increasingly obvious. And not only that; it is the people in the workplace and community assemblies reaching for power to right wrongs, to save themselves and their families from the destruction that seems assured by the continuation of capitalism, who accomplish the revolution—finally reaching the stage where they replace capitalism’s economic and political (state) forms of organization.

Besides the differences noted above, we should add the following:

1. While LS generally—but not universally—accepts Marx’s historical materialism and his analysis of capitalism, LM tends to identify Marxism with Leninism and especially the Marxist-Leninist and
Trotskyist political sects that helped destroy SDS and the New Left around 1970.

2. LH, while not anti-technology, is definitely opposed to industrial growth. But circumstances may force LS to come to the same view.

3. LS, pointing to the highly integrated industrial basis of production, favors the centralized control of production by the workers who would elect recallable representatives to higher bodies. LH favors the decentralization of production to the extent that is possible. But at the same time, recognizing the impossibility of putting all production on a municipal basis, it calls for confederation of municipalities, which also pre-supposes some sort of representation in higher bodies.

4. Another major difference is the post-revolutionary control of industry. LH would have control vested in the community; LS in the workers in each industry.

Questions and Conclusions

Can Libertarian Municipalism and Libertarian Socialism co-exist and cooperate in neutral organizations? To me the answer is yes. In fact, I'd advance the point still further: The differences between LH and LS are no greater than between various elements we already consider part of our political sector.

Will LH welcome the information that they have been adopted as a part of non-market, libertarian socialism? Probably not. Will libertarian municipalists welcome libertarian socialists as participants in the Left Green Network? Again, probably not. The LGN is the result of groundwork by libertarian municipalists who will almost certainly regard us as interlopers. On the other hand, though, if the LGN is to be truly a network and not degenerate into an LH sect, non-libertarian municipalists must be, and indeed are, welcomed. And as a sector of political thought, libertarian socialism is much closer to libertarian municipalism than the radicalism and leftism of most LGN members.

Frank Girard
Dear members and friends of the Industrial Union Party:

I'm an IUP supporter, writing to you at the request of Mr. Sam Brandon, the general secretary of the party. We are trying to make a mailing list of people who are interested in the use of home computers in the socialist movement.

If you DON'T have a home computer, but may someday be interested in owning one, or learning how to use one, feel free to write to me for any sort of technical advice. I'll be happy to reply to you individually. For the beginners, I will answer any questions in plain English, not in a technical jargon.

Non-owners may also contribute valuable suggestions for the use of computers. To think of good suggestions, you don't need to know precisely what a computer is. Just think of it as a way to store typewritten information and send it to other people.

Let's compare ideas for the use of these tools in socialist education. For example, how might words and charts on a computer screen best explain the principles of Industrial Union Administration? What is the best way to draw these charts entirely out of typewriter characters?

If you DO have a home computer, there are several possible ways to make use of it in the cause of socialism. I will mention some of these uses.

One of the first things we want to do is to promote the use of online services, sometimes called bulletin board services (BBS's). These are services that transfer information among individuals in different geographical areas. To do this, your computer must have an optional attachment called a modem. A modem allows your computer to plug into a regular telephone line.

You will also need a communications program. This is the software that tells your computer how to dial a phone number, and communicate with the computer or network on the other end of the line.

The cost of using an online service begins at around $5 per month, but some are very expensive. The cost also depends on your geographical area. In many cases there is no charge from the telephone company, even for nationwide and international communication. Your expense is not entirely a sacrifice for the socialist cause, because these services also provide much information for your personal use, such as news, entertainment, education, and professional advice.

We are particularly interested in one feature of these services - their bulletin boards (BB's). These are like electronic "letters to the editor" columns, related to specific subjects, and open to the public. They are variously called BB topics, forums, or special interest groups.
(SIGs). We are interested in holding BBS discussions on the benefits of socialism, and the industrial union program.

We are already discussing capitalism versus socialism, Marxist theory, etc. on the Genie system, which is probably the most inexpensive BBS ($4.95 per month in most parts of the U.S.). These discussions are accessible to over 200,000 subscribers in 65 countries. There is no censorship of controversial issues. If you may be interested in joining the discussions, write to us and we will send you the details.

Online services also feature electronic mail (e-mail), usually for no additional charge. E-mail allows us to communicate instantaneously, and avoid the cost of postage stamps. Some e-mail systems allow you to transmit not only messages and documents, but also software programs. (If you are already a subscriber to an online service, please notify us, and give us your e-mail address.)

In addition to these commercial BBS's, there are also amateur BBS's which people usually run as hobbies. The first was created in 1978; today there are about 2000 in the U.S. Many will allow the general public to connect to them for free. Many are also interconnected by a network, allowing worldwide e-mail. If you wish to know whether there are amateur BBS's in your local area, we can determine that for you.

In addition to ongoing discussions, one of our goals should be storing important literature in computer files. Such literature would include, for example, the works of Marx, Engels, and De Leon, and eventually periodicals. This would allow the literature to be widely distributed by mailing diskettes or transmitting it over telephone lines. These documents can also be stored in the file libraries provided by online services, for free distribution worldwide.

Such "electronic books" have several advantages. Storage space is minimal. Readers can use wordprocessors to search the literature for certain words, names, or phrases. Writers and students can copy quotations into their essays.

Please let us know if you have any useful information stored in wordprocessor files, or if you want to do some original writing, and are willing to share it with others. Also let us know if you own (or can borrow) a scanner, which is an electric eye that can read a printed page directly into a computer. The alternative to using a scanner is to type the text manually.

If you know anything about computer programming or communications, I hope we can combine our technical experience.

So whether you wish to participate in this new field, or to ask us questions, or offer your suggestions, we hope to be hearing from you!

For the Industrial Union program for socialism,

Fraternally yours -

Mike Lepore
HR # 1 Box 3471
Stanfordville, NY 12581
Dear Frank,

Usually, in my opinion, you give pretty fair reviews of things, so it comes as a surprise to me how you have misinterpreted the positions taken in *Socialization and Revolution* (ATN, Fall 91). Far from "questioning the likelihood of revolution", I have only concluded that revolutions of the violent insurrectional kind, of which the French and Russian Revolutions are archetypes, would be unlikely to occur in established parliamentary systems - a viewpoint coming from a study of insurrections, both successful and unsuccessful. For such an event to come about, there must exist a "conjuncture of social, political and economic crises within a governmental system too rigid to respond with the necessary reforms." Democracy, by its flexibility, makes such revolutions unlikely, and as if proof of the pudding, no democracy has ever had even so much as an attempt at violent revolution.

What's more, I clearly state that "violent revolution may be out of the picture but this...does not put the concept of revolution out of the picture." Then comes an attempt to sort out the confusions which surround the word "revolution". The popular sense of the word is that of the archetypal image, the storming of the Bastille, or the Winter Palace etc., but there is another and that is the way of social science - "For social science a revolution is only the change from one socio-economic system to another." Sometimes these revolutions take centuries, but still the changes are profound. Even then I allow for an possible quick overturning of a social system, again, based upon the existence of particular conditions, i.e., "At some point, the ancien regime is really and truly finished, hollowed out by the new forces which have arisen. It is necessary to give the corpse a quick burial."

What I am attempting to do is strip away some of the ideological presumptions of the far left and attempt to relate theory to what is actually going on in society. There is a concept of Hegel's which served as a good antidote to the unrestrained ideologizing, so loved by leftists. If something does not already exist, at least in embryo, the desire for such an occurrence, event or thing remains abstract - a Kantian "ought", a utopia. In order for socialism to exist, it therefore must already exist, in the IWW sense of the "new within the shell of the old." Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the socialism of groups such as the SPGB or SLP, who see it as a doctrine to be imposed upon society after enough people have been converted to the faith. This is not Marxism but Christianity. Anarchists such as Kropotkin and Proudhon, on the other hand, were always more responsive to developments within society, rooting their views of socialism in the mutualist and federalist practices of the workers. Many socialists seem to be of the opinion that society is fundamentally evil, a manicheism which forces them to dwell only on the negative, regressive aspects of existence - avoiding the very factors which make their goal a real possibility.

I have been attempting in the ATN articles to discuss this embryo of socialism, which, like the classical anarchists, I find in the mutualism and solidarity of working people and the various struggles and organizations they take part in. But there is more to the subject than that. When you read Marx and Engels you will find the future "free associations" charted out even within the heart of the capitalist system.

The capital... is here directly endowed with the form of social capital (capital of directly associated individuals) as distinct from private capital, and its undertakings assume the form of social undertakings as distinct from private undertakings. It is the abolition of capital as private property within the framework of capitalist production itself. *Capital* Vol 3, p.436

(In reference to joint stock companies) This result of the ultimate development of capitalist production is a necessary transitional phase towards the re-conversion of capital into the property of ... associated producers. Ibid p. 437

This is the abolition of the capitalist mode of production within the capitalist mode of production itself and hence a self-dissolving contradiction, which prima facie represents a mere phase of transition to a new form of production. Ibid p. 438
The co-operative factories represent within the old form the first new sprouts of the new ... (showing) how a new mode of production naturally grows out of the old one ... The credit system is not only the principal base for the gradual transformation of capitalist private enterprises into stock companies, but equally offers the means for gradual extension of co-operative enterprises on a more or less national scale. The stock company, as much as the co-operative, should be considered as transitional forms from the capitalist mode of production to the associated one... Ibid p 440

... transforming large private concerns into limited companies - has been the order of the day for the last 10 years and more ... there is scarcely a cotton mill left in private hands, nay, even the retail tradesmen is more and more superceded by "co-operative stores" ... Thus we see that by the very development of co-operative production the capitalist is superceded as much as the hand loom weaver... Engels, "Social Classes,Necessary and Superfluous"

... joint stock companies, trusts and state property shows how unnecessary the bourgeoisie are... All the social functions of the capitalist are now performed by salaried employees ... At first the capitalist mode of production forces out the workers. Now it forces out the capitalists... Engels, "Socialism, Utopian and Scientific"

Well, enough of that. I think you get the point - this is where I got the notion of the "socialization of capital" from in the first place. (It's got a damn fine Marxian pedigree too.) Capital, through the class struggle, competition, the decline in the rate of profit, the credit system etc., is forced to become ever less private in nature - The Old Mole digs deep within the system. Capital in its private, 1850 sense, exists only on the margins, for all intents and purposes, capital is corporate, state, co-operative and institutional. If, in fact, capital is less and less private it can only mean that ownership or control involves more people, hence there is nothing particularly remarkable about the statement that capital is "subject more and more to the will of the population."

Let's talk theories, let's look at facts. Consider capital in 1850. A business was owned by an individual or family and virtually everything about it was up to the choice of the owner. Private property held absolute dominion. (When the 10 Hours Bill was passed Marx was overjoyed, for this was the first time workers had restricted the hand of private property) Now look at the situation today, (and in spite of the Thatcherite nonsense too) Any business is subject to a host of regulations and restrictions - health and safety rules, company pensions, unemployment insurance, environmental legislation, restrictions on work hours, overtime, fair hiring practices, laws regarding trade unions, maternity leave, statutory holidays, vacation pay etc. Most of this didn't even exist 50 years ago, let alone in 1850!

Consider co-ops and other forms of socialization. Here in Quebec, we have a credit union federation, the Caisse Populaire Desjardins, with hundreds of local, autonomous branches. The Caisse is the largest financial institution in the province, bigger than the banks and is worth some $43 billion in assets. Then there is the Caisse de depots, the provincial pension fund - at $40 billion, is an enormous block of investment capital. And we have the Quebec Fed. of Labour's Fond, which at $400 million is the biggest venture capital fund in the whole of Canada. There are also at least 40,000 people who live in housing co-ops and the 10,000 or so who belong to worker run and owned producer co-ops. Desjardins was founded in 1900, but only really became a going concern in the 1950s. The Caisse de depot was formed in 1954, housing and worker co-ops only started in the mid-70's. Things are a little more behind in the rest of Canada, but not that much. (12 million Canadians belong to a co-op) Furthermore, in spite of eight years of neo-liberalism, socialized capital in the form of co-ops, credit unions and pension funds has grown at a faster rate than the GNP. In fact, it has done so as far back as 1974. (which is as far back as I've bothered to check)

Perhaps Canada is only a special case with all this socialized capital. But I rather doubt it, for what I have read about other developed countries seems to show a similar direction. Just one example - in the United States, the arch-capitalist nation, one half of the stocks on Wall Street,
worth two trillion dollars, are held by worker's pension funds. This big move in the future is for workers to actually control those funds, imagine when they do.

One can, of course, overstate the case for the socialization process. This was done by some social democrats at the turn of the century, who saw the growing co-op movement, satification and industrialization as evidence of a peaceful evolution toward socialism. I don't hold this position, in the first place most "peaceful evolution" is the result of struggle and force and secondly, socialization shouldn't be equated with socialism. It is at best, socialism in embryo, and even that metaphor should only be applied to the higher forms of socialization such as co-ops and mutual aid societies. But neither should the process be ignored, as it has been for the past 80 years. Only through the concept of socialization can one really make sense of the Twentieth Century which has seemingly gone so wrong for both Marxists and anarchists alike. "Where is the revolutionary proletariat? Where are the revolutions in the developed world? The workers are no good, they are sell outs!" (These plaintive cries, are even heard in the Left Green document in the last DB) The answer, through the theory of the socialization of capital, is that working people through their struggles, have revolutionized society, transforming it deeply and fundamentally and will continue to do so, as long as the system exists, until it is finally and forever abolished. Furthermore, capital cannot exist without its growing dose of socialization - it is an impossible system in an impossible situation - it can only exist by destroying itself. Lastly, we are in the middle of a transition period from one socio-economic system to another. You wanna revolution, well, its all around you!

Don't get me wrong, its not a garden path. There are always strong counter-tendencies. The internationalization of capital is one. Another is the growth in the past decade of a new class of small entrepreneurs - a genuine re-privatization of capital, even if only in a minor way.

Enough of this for now.

Cont'd from p. 15

Larry Gambone

ripen, how do we organize? HH, seeing no other activity for workers than the traditional strike or general strike, which doesn't lead to revolution, simply writes off the workplace as a revolutionary arena.

He has forgotten the sitdown strikes of the 1930s. These so frightened the ruling class--and their labor lieutenants in the capitalist unions--that the settlements and new contracts outlawed it. What they feared was the next step beyond the sitdown: the revolutionary act itself: looking out the ruling class, taking over the industries, and running them for the benefit of society.

The power of our rulers lies in their ownership and control of productive wealth. When we take it away from them, they will be powerless, and so will be their puppets the politicians.

HH ends this section by arguing that "[B]y broadening the social forces that can be mobilized, a libertarian municipalist approach can sustain and institutionalize much more power against the state and capital than can a workers' control approach limited to the workplace."

Transitional Strategy: But HH doesn't carry the point above to the destructive end of arguing against the revolutionary organization of the workers as workers. In this strategy section he comes out four square for a strategy that combines the municipalist approach with the workplace organizing. He believes, as I do, that the two can supplement each other in both the pre-revolutionary period and as the organizations of the new cooperative commonwealth.

Frank Girard
There was great hope among radicals in Britain, the progress of the Jacobin years appeared to be completed, when the Great Reform Bill was enacted. "Old Corruption", it appeared, was finally laid to rest, the whole economic basis of Toryism had been swept away; & indeed for more than a dozen years the only opposition to the new Liberal ascendancy came from the Left (Chartists, early unions,) - from those who were still excluded from the political process.

Some suggested that a new stratum of capitalist producers had emerged as a ruling class; but these were soon corrected by the heirs of the Jacobins who explained at great length (& frequently in patronising terms;) that class division of society was only possible of the basis of hereditary land ownership; - as indeed they had been arguing for the previous forty years.

Indeed this analysis was apparently confirmed 20 years later. In many ways, in those early years of the 19th Century; - notably the enormous boom the railway-building boom gave the price of land, but also the fillip that was given banking, the vast expansion in shipping needed to carry the goods of the workshop of the world, (particularly with the invention of steam ships;) - the old Mercantilists had prospered more than the new capitalists. So in the 1860s the Tories swept back to power. Old Corruption stood once more enthroned.

Louis Napoleon, at about the same time, took power with the support of much of the aristocracy, & after disenfranchising a large section of the electorate. He did it is true, for a time support the Risorgimento - or at least its more conservative leaders - which made the Tories look askance at this evidence of residual Jacobin expansionism, & gave hopes to some of the Jacobin epigoni. But in the early 1860s, after an economic crisis, Map. II. was forced to put the French finances into the control of the Rothschilds & abandon interest in Italian politics. From then on his policies & behaviour were of the purest Mercantilist "rectitude".

In the USA, the country that had first arisen from the republican upsurge of the 18th Century; the Democrats - the party of the industrial producers - found themselves allied to southern slave-owners; while the Republicans - the American Mercantilist Party - (partly for racist reasons ("slavery leads to miscegenation"), partly to preserve the unity of the state as a mercantile whole, but only rarely for reasons of humanitarian principle were about to enforce abolition.

For all right thinkers - whether land-owning Tories, or unreconstructed Jacobins - the issue was clear. There was no new ruling class. The dominance of Capital, in the 1830s & 40s, had been at most an aberration, probably an illusion. Capital could now be clearly seen in its proper place as the mere handmaid of Mercantilism.

Remind me, hasn't something reminiscent of this happened recently, & didn't something happen in 1871?
ABOUT THAT COOPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH: SOME THOUGHTS ON HOWARD HAWKINS' VIEW OF A NEW SOCIETY AND HOW TO GET THERE

Commenting in DS51's "Bulletin Matters" on Howard Hawkins', "Libertarian Municipalism, Workers' Control, and the Cooperative Commonwealth," I described the article as slaying some of the cows we libertarian socialists hold most sacred. Perhaps it would have been more accurate to have described HH's action as "attempted slaying," or even aggravated assault and mayhem. Certainly the attack is not mortal, although it does inflict some flesh wounds. And the sacred cows of LM are also vulnerable, a fact attested to by other articles in this issue. But far more important than the differences between libertarian municipalism (LM) and libertarian socialism (LS) are the similarities as described elsewhere in this issue.

We can begin by pointing out that HH has a view of the new society (the Cooperative Commonwealth) remarkably like ours. Consider the adjectives he uses to describe it: "democratic, socially owned, cooperative, and ecological," as well as this sentence in the first paragraph, "...it goes without saying that all Left Greens (i.e. libertarian municipalists) believe that the people should control the day-to-day operation of their workplaces."

[At this point I should probably define who "we" are. By we I mean the political and anti political syndicalists--in the US, the IWW/IMA and the DeLeonists--and other libertarian socialists. HH places the libertarian municipalists in the ranks of anarcho-communism.]

His criticism of what he calls the "workerist" revolutionary model, by which he means the syndicalist/class struggle model, is based on several points. One of these is the idea that workers do not constitute the majority of the population. In fact, he would argue that the class-based analysis is wrong on the face of it simply because industrial workers make up only a diminishing minority of the population. While he would agree that low-paid non-industrial workers are also an important segment of the population, he would argue that workers still aren't a majority, nor do they see themselves as having the same interests. (For the LS position on this matter see number 2, "The Revolutionary Subject," below)

He cites the "people" approach of LM as superior in respect to these four basic questions:

1. Democracy -- What institutional framework best enables people to take direct control of society, uproot all forms of hierarchy, and discover their common interests?

2. The Revolutionary Subject -- What social sectors are likely to become radicalized and take militant action?

3. Power -- What social sectors and forms of action have the potential power to overthrow capital and the state?

4. Transitional strategy -- What forms of organization and action best prefigure and build toward the new society?

1. Democracy: Here LS runs into a problem immediately. Our
assumption has always been that the revolution would mean that
government over people [the political state in all its forms] would
be replaced by government over things [the process of production]. In
other words, political government in geographical areas would cease to
exist: the only government would be that in the industries and
services. But HH raises a lot of questions that don’t seem especially
suited for shop floor debate or even discussion workers councils at
higher levels. Perhaps he is right and we do need a community
government to furnish information on the desires of people not in the
work place.

It would be well to caution LM, though, that community assemblies, no
matter how democratic they may be, are political bodies. Won’t they
tend to acquire very quickly the organs (police) to enforce the
decisions of the assembly as well as executive and administrative
bodies to run things between meetings? And how would these be
different from any level of the political state under capitalism,
especially since HH envisions regional and bioregional assemblies?
Despite the difficulties cited above, I do think that the cooperative
commonwealth needs some kind of community representation. But exactly
what if anything is needed will be decided in practice after the
revolution. Today the question serves only to divide us.

2. The Revolutionary Subject: HH poses the question, “Which is more
likely to become revolutionary—the working class or the people?” The
LS criticism of his conclusions must be preceded by a criticism of the
question and a point he seems to ignore: The people are the working
class. The capitalist class is the tiny minority who own the
productive wealth and rent workers by the hour and the day to do the
labor on the land and in the factories, mines, offices. The wealth we
produce is theirs. The working class is not just those of us who work
in factories, but rather all of us who don’t own the means of
production and thus can’t live except by renting ourselves out for a
wage or salary. Those economists and sociologists who prefer the non-
Marxian terms rich, middle class, and poor mean by middle class just
about everyone who has a job and by poor the low paid and part-time
workers and the unemployed and welfare recipients.

What he calls the “decomposition of class structure” is actually the
pauperization of the working class (or the people if HH prefers). The
deindustrialization of the US and Canada that has replaced higher wage
production jobs with low wage service jobs together with the reign of
terror initiated by the capitalist state a decade ago with the Patco
strike. But what is rapidly developing is a working class that has
nothing to lose.

His next error lies in his assumption that the motivation for
revolution will be economic among workers but non-economic among “the
people.” The fact is that all popular rebellions have an underlying
economic basis—and usually a very strong one. This misconception may
have its roots in the capitalist media’s explanation for the overthrow
of eastern state capitalist (communist) regimes as the action of
people who are thirsty for the joys of democracy. The fact is of
course that all those revolutions resulted from economic causes. The
communist ruling class was forced to cut food subsidies and thus
lowered the standard of living of the workers.

The fact is that people don’t fight for democracy, even the grassroots
Cont’d on p. 15
THREE CATALOGS

The following three catalogs (all anarchist) reached PO Box 1564 since the last issue. We regard providing information on the rather hard to get publications of our political sector an important service for our readers and, we invite readers to send other catalogs.

A DISTRIBUTION, P.O. Box 021835, Brooklyn, NY 11202. A Distribution "is a volunteer collective dedicated to the distribution of anarchist and other significant fringe literature...." Besides an excellent listing of British periodicals, its catalog has 22 pages of listings classified under such headings as "New Titles" (several pages of items I haven't seen listed elsewhere, "Classics," "History," etc.

PERENNIAL BOOKS, Box B14, Montague, MA 01353. "Perennial Books seeks to make available Anarchist and libertarian materials--especially materials difficult to acquire." And it is true to its word with a good selection of titles including a used book section with several out-of-print items.

PIRATE PRESS, Black Star, PO Box 446, Sheffield, S1 1NY England. Pirate Press recently published in pamphlet form Bob Jones Left-Wing Communism in Britain 1917-21, which appeared originally in DB37. It contains some interesting material on the British SLP during this period. (I'm not sure of the price--try L1 [$2].) Other authors include Bakunin, Bob Black, Malatesta, Chaz Bufe, and Bernieri.

--fg