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IN THIS ISSUE

DB71 begins with a major article on anarchist theory by Christopher Day, who is associated with the
anarchist newspaper Love and Rage. The letter giving the DB permission to reprint Davis’s essay asked that we note that it was written in 1991. In it the author examines the current state of U.S. anarchism in which he finds three major tendencies and advances a strategy for the movement. Next, Terry Liddle, whose article from Flux, we reprint describes his view of an appropriate strategy for libertarian socialists.

Ken Ellis rejects the objectives of both anarchism and socialism, suggesting instead that we direct our energy to advancing one of Marx’s objectives: shortening the working day. The following article by John Zerzan and associates in AAA advances a plan for technological and industrial regress as the proper objective of revolutionaries.

The polemic/discussion part of this issue begins with Steve Szalai’s letter taking issue with my less than kind comment about the theoretical inferiority of the World, Socialist Movement’s insistence

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**ABOUT THE DISCUSSION BULLETIN**

The Discussion Bulletin is affiliated with the Industrial Union Caucus in Education (IUCE). It serves as the financially and politically independent forum of a relatively unknown sector of political thought that places the great divide in the “left,” not between Anarchists and Marxists but between capitalism’s statist leftwing of vanguardists and social democrats and the real revolutionaries of our era: the non-market, anti-statist, libertarian socialists. They are organized in small groups of syndicalists, communist anarchists, libertarian municipalists, world socialists, socialist industrial unionists, council communists, and left communists. The perspective of these groups with their rejection of capitalism’s wage, market, and money system as well as capitalist politics and unionism constitutes the only real alternative to capitalism in both its market and statist phases.

In the DB the often antagonistic groups that make up this sector can debate and discuss the issues that divide them, gain some understanding of their history and future possibilities and begin a process, we hope, of at least limited cooperation.

The pages of the DB are open to anyone in this political sector, the only limitation being that submissions be typewritten, single-spaced, and copier ready. We do no editing here. As to content, we assume that submissions will be relevant to the purpose of the DB and will avoid personal attacks.

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Introduction
This article has two parts. The first is a discussion of what I see as the main strategic currents within the anarchist movement. The second part is an attempt to articulate a modest strategy for the coming year that I think reflects the kind of united action that is possible amongst what I loosely define as the revolutionary anarchist tendency: a focus on anti-racist work. These two sections are a bit disconnected because I haven’t fully developed the thoughts I am attempting to express in the first part. This article is still rough around the edges and I would like to hear any comments people have on it.

1. Towards a Strategy for Anarchist Revolution

Talking About a Revolution
The anarchist movement faces an opportunity to become the most significant revolutionary tendency in North America. The authoritarian left has been dealt a devastating blow by the collapse of the Communist world. At the same time the grinding realities of authoritarian society continue to radicalize people, people who are looking for a way out of this situation. Every day people are coming to revolutionary conclusions about the nature of this society.

There are lots of reasons people don’t become anarchists. Perhaps the most important reason is that the anarchist movement in North America has so far failed to pose a credible strategy for achieving our goal of a free society. It is one of the main tasks of the anarchist movement at this point in time to develop a coherent strategy for anarchist revolution: a credible plan for getting from here we are to where we want to be.

The purpose of this article is to look at what are some of the main strategic tendencies in the anarchist movement, to analyse their strengths and weaknesses and to suggest how elements of these tendencies might contribute to a more coherent synthesis. I believe that each of these tendencies has essential elements to offer a more coherent and comprehensive strategy. I also believe that each of these tendencies has major flaws that prevent them from standing alone.

In some respects these strengths and weaknesses are interrelated: the flaws of one tendency have often spurred on the critical development of another tendency. The "lifestyle" features of a lot of counter institutions have pushed forward the development of class struggle anarchist politics. The class reductionism of a lot of syndicalists has compelled some anarchist to take the questions of national liberation more seriously. The vanguardist tendencies of a lot of armed-struggle groups has pushed some people into trying to build a real base of support in various communities by organizing co-ops or squatting buildings.

This dynamic is healthy as long as it pushes forward our understanding of the complexity of developing a coherent strategy for anarchist revolution. It becomes counter-productive when we allow these tendencies to ossify into rigid ideological
categories that people feel compelled to defend. Over time people come to various conclusions about tactics and strategy. Some things work and some things don't and we shouldn't be bashful about saying so. But we must also acknowledge that the anarchist movement we are a part of is relatively small, young and inexperienced: most of our conclusions are based on limited experience and should be viewed as essentially tentative.

The Main Strategic Tendencies in the Anarchist Movement

There are three main strategic tendencies in the anarchist movement that I think should be taken seriously. Obviously there are great many other currents of thought. It's not that I don't think these currents have important things to say, but that I don't think they even come close to posing a coherent strategy for revolution. There are various reasons for this. Some currents have devoted themselves largely to developing a critique of various other tendencies at the expense of putting forward their own positive plan of action. Other currents are frankly uninterested in "revolution," which is their perogative, but which also puts them outside the scope of this discussion. Others I would not pretend to understand because they strike me as so incoherent that I feel I must be missing something.

The three main tendencies that I would like to address are: what has come to be known as the class struggle tendency that ranges from the young rowdies of Class War to the old syndicalists of the IWW; the advocates of clandestine armed struggle who also tend to be more explicitly anti-imperialist in their analyses, the main expressions of this tendency are two Canadian magazines, Arise the Spirit and Resistance; and finally what I am calling the counter-institutional tendency which is the hardest to pin down and that is involved in projects ranging from back-to-the-land efforts to organizing co-ops and alternative book shops to opening squats.

Class War and Anarcho-Syndicalism

Perhaps the most prominent tendency in the anarchist movement is the broad tendency known as class struggle anarchism. Class struggle anarchism covers a broad range of tendencies ranging from the classical anarcho-syndicalists of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the Workers Solidarity Alliance (WSA) to the various groups influenced by England's Class War Federation.

What unites the various class struggle groups is their belief in the central role of the class struggle, that the basic division in society is along class lines, and the need to organize the working class to overthrow the capitalist state. How exactly the working class should be organized and how it should overthrow the state are points of contention that distinguish the various tendencies.

The syndicalists hold up a strategy of organizing revolutionary unions that will eventually grow in strength and attract broad sections of the working class as members. These unions would wage struggles in various workplaces and try to broaden them to other workplaces, eventually leading up to a general strike of all workers. The general strike is the main
revolutionary tactic of the syndicalists who view the power of
the workers to deny their labor to the capitalists as the key to
overthrowing capitalism.

Class War is a newspaper and organization from England that
has influenced a great many younger anarchists in North America
with their raw, militant and humorous politics. Class War
basically tries to agitate deep feelings of class hatred amongst
the working class. They embrace riots, looting and other
spontaneous expressions of working class anger as the building
blocks of revolution.

The strengths of the class struggle groups are that they
seek to develop an overall analysis of society as the foundation
for their strategy and that they see building explicitly
anarchist organizations now as an essential part of the overall
process of the self-organization of oppressed people.
Furthermore, they understand that class offers people a way of
understanding their many experiences of oppression that tends to
unite people.

The main weaknesses of the class struggle groups is that
they tend to be class-reductionist and the organizational program
they have to offer the anarchist movement is therefore limited.
By class-reductionist I mean simply that they tend to reduce
complex political questions that involve a myriad of different
kinds of oppression to the question of class. Sexism, for
example, is seen not as an authoritarian system that has its own
logic, but as a tool of the bosses used to divide the workers.
As a consequence of this kind of reasoning, attempts by women to
organize autonomously around question of their specific
oppression as women are often treated as divisive and
simplistically denounced as "middle class feminism." The class
struggle wing of the anarchist movement often fails to see how
"the interests of the working class" are effectively defined by
the straight, white, male minority of that class because of the
power and privilege that is attached to being straight, white or
male in this society.

Similarly, national oppression is often treated as if it
doesn't exist. The efforts of colonized people to win self-
determination and expel the armed forces (or puppets) of the
imperialist countries is simply denounced as nationalism as if it
were comparable to the nationalism of the conquering imperialist
countries. The class struggle anarchists tend to call for unity
between the working classes of the imperialist countries and the
countries under imperialist domination without understanding that
no such unity is possible unless the workers in the imperialist
countries support the right of the imperialised countries to
national self-determination.

Armed Struggle and Anti-Imperialism

Another major tendency in the anarchist movement is what I
call the "Armed Struggle tendency" that is committed to
supporting clandestine armed organizations. This tendency seems
to be strongest in Canada and has been represented by a number of
Canadian periodicals: Open-_fist", assistance, and more recently
Arm The Spirit. These periodicals have reported favorably on the
actions of a variety of groups that are often denounced in the
capitalist press as "terrorists": the Red Army Fraction, Action Directe, GRAPO, the Ohio 7, Direct Action and others. Because of the intense repression that such groups face, the Armed Struggle tendency does not have any open organized existence. Its positions are expressed implicitly in the positive reportage of various actions and in building support for various prisoners captured by the state.

The two strong points of the Armed Struggle tendency are its commitment to anti-imperialism and its serious appraisal of the repressive power of the state. Generally speaking the Armed Struggle tendency shares a belief that the struggle of oppressed nationalities for self-determination is the main line of struggle against the existing order, that the privileges enjoyed by many white workers stands in the way of them becoming a force for revolutionary change, and that therefore white radicals should take up arms in solidarity with these struggles. A more sophisticated current acknowledges the radical potential of working class whites but upholds armed actions because they demonstrate the vulnerability of the system to attack and undermine its image of invulnerability.

Certainly the struggles of Native peoples, Blacks and other oppressed nationalities for their own liberation will play a pivotal role in any truly anti-authoritarian social revolution in North America. But that does not absolve white activists of the responsibility for building a mass revolutionary movement amongst white people that fights for the liberation of all people.

The side of the argument for armed struggle now is essentially a repetition of Che Guevara's ill-fated "Foco" theory that a small determined band of guerrillas could make their own social conditions by initiating the armed struggle. This theory is essentially authoritarian and supported only by the most self-serving interpretation of the events of the Cuban revolution (i.e. that it was made by the guerrillas independent of the solidarity of Cuban workers and peasants). It is a very seductive strategy for serious militants who are frustrated by the absence of a serious revolutionary mass movement. Of course audacious armed actions can change social conditions by confronting the powers that be with a political crisis as their inability to impose order is exposed. But whether or not such a crisis will give rise to the general empowerment of ordinary people depends more on an orientation towards building a mass movement than the clandestine actions of a small armed minority.

None of this is meant to write off the need to eventually militarily defeat the state. But we need to remember that "war is the health of the state" and the statist tendencies of military organizations have been historically overwhelming. A coherent anarchist military strategy must be based first in the arming of the people and the subordination of any specialized military structures to the mass movement. That is not to say that the revolutionary movement will never want to carry out clandestine actions or organize a clandestine armed wing, but rather that such actions must be based in a movement that is ready and able to support and defend such actions and to which such actions can be reasonably made accountable. There is a hell of a lot more to "the armed struggle" than urban guerillas blowing up corporate
and government targets. Far more important, from an anti-authoritarian perspective, should be organized resistance within the armed forces of the state and the organization of militias and other structures for self-defense by workers, women or other oppressed groups.

In contrast to the syndicalists who sometimes seem to believe that if the workers just seize the means of production in a general strike the armed power of the state will simply crumble without bloodshed, the Armed Struggle tendency is more realistic about the nature of our enemy the state. The Armed Struggle tendency understands that the fight against the system will involve setbacks and mistakes that will leave us vulnerable unless we build serious and secure organizations. That is to say that there will be lots of times we will take actions that leave us exposed to repression because we misjudge the level of popular support they will find. The state will take advantage of these situations to attack us. Furthermore the state is constantly engaged in efforts to spy on and disrupt our activities, and, in many cases, think it necessary, to murder or imprison us.

The Armed Struggle tendency also represents the most militant wing of the anarchist movement, it unites many of those who understand the need to build a secure fighting movement that is able to actually defeat the armed power of the state.

Counter Institutions and Dual Power

A third tendency that I see as a significant strategic current in the anarchist movement is what I call the "Counter Institutional tendency." This tendency is considerably more amorphous and wide ranging than the other two. It includes people who consciously see building "counter institutions" as a strategy for revolution and people who have gravitated towards such activity instinctively and generally uncritically.

Counter institutions can be co-ops and collectives, squats, publishing projects, record distribution projects, communes and all sorts of other projects. They are practical projects that can be organized, either legally or otherwise, today under existing conditions. When such projects are informed by a conscious strategy for revolution it generally runs as follows: The counter institution offers powerless people an opportunity for self-empowerment and thereby creates a "liberated zone" of sorts that can be expanded by enlarging the counter institution or by building new counter institutions.

The grand conception of the counter institution is that at some point it can challenge the authority of the state because it constitutes an effective form of "dual power" that gives people the opportunity to shift their allegiances from the state to more liberatory structures. Some advocates of counter institutions see them as slowly but surely nibbling away at the power of the state until it becomes impotent and irrelevant without any direct confrontation. Others see the counter institutions as eventually coming under attack, but, because they give people something meaningful to defend, they become the starting point for a struggle against the state that can hope to win.

The strength of the counter institutional tendency is that it has built real projects that have the real support of various
communities. Unlike the Class Struggle and Armed Struggle tendencies which are essentially betting on the future viability of their strategies the Counter Institutional tendency can point to real co-ops, real alternative community newspapers, and real squats as evidence of its relevance.

The big weakness of the counter institutional tendency is that it often underestimates the capacity of the system to coopt or recuperate challenges to its authority of this sort. Also because building counter institutions under existing conditions often proves to be too difficult there is tendency towards "lifestyleism": the idea that by "living right" (eating the right foods, wearing the right clothes, working the right jobs) individuals can erode the power of authoritarian institutions incrementally. Even when counter institutions "succeed" they tend to become de-politicized, and individual "lifestyle" decisions are substituted for organizing on a mass scale. Also counter institutions often tend to gloss over very real division of class, gender, nationality, sexuality and age that exist in society in order to view themselves as successful. So a co-op grocery that is run by white people and serves white people even though it is located in an African American city or neighborhood judges itself by a standard that focuses on its internal structure without seeing the authoritarian (white supremacist) nature of its relationship with the Black community.

Towards a Strategy

A coherent strategy for anarchist revolution can not be based on any single one of the three tendencies outlined above. The development of a strategy should begin by trying to synthesize the positive elements of the various tendencies and to discard the negative elements. That of course is only a beginning. We need to constantly be reevaluating our strategy as we test it in practice and as we encounter other strategic visions. The three broad tendencies I’ve outlined here are by no means exhaustive, and I am sure many will disagree with specific elements of my analysis. What I think is essential is that we discuss the question of strategy in a non-dogmatic way by acknowledging that so far nothing has really worked to build a mass revolutionary anarchist movement that can seriously challenge the existing order.

I think that we need a strategy that recognizes that there are a number of intersecting systems of oppression and that it is nonsensical to try to understand the struggle against the totality of oppression through one the prism of one division (whether it be class, gender, nationality or whatever). At the same time we need to try to understand precisely how these systems intersect so that we can try to build movements that tend to unite people against common enemies instead of dividing them against each other. Counter institutions, workers organizations and groups carrying out clandestine direct action all have their place in any comprehensive strategic vision, as do many other forms. But that doesn’t mean all things are equal and all tactics are equally valuable under all circumstances.

A coherent strategy needs to begin with a coherent analysis of the nature of the society we live in, its specific features
and how they came to be. What is the class make up of North America? How has the conquest of Indian lands and the enslavement of Africans shaped authoritarian social structures in North America? How does the role of the US as the dominant super power on Earth affect class and other social divisions in North America? How will changes in that status affect those divisions? What social groups have the least or most to lose by overthrowing the existing system? What groups have the knowledge and experience to credibly challenge the existing system? What popular ideas stand in the way of people seeing the possibility or desirability of an anarchist revolution? What social groups does the anarchist movement currently draw most of its support from? Why? How does that need to change?

In choosing tactics we need to be aware of the dynamic tension that exists between actions that can attract broad popular support and actions that attract the interest, and hopefully support, of those people who, at this time are most likely to be active or are most likely to view themselves as radicals or revolutionaries. There is a basic tension between actions that challenge the status quo in ways that it hasn’t been challenged before and actions that the largest possible number of people will feel comfortable participating in. To engage only in the most militant actions will tend to isolate us from the real lives of most people, while only carrying out the safest actions will mean capitulating to the status quo. A revolutionary strategy needs to be conscious of both the need to raise the level of militancy and the need to consolidate popular support for radical ideas.

These are only the most general comments about what is needed to formulate a strategy. Developing a strategy is a practical question. A strategy is meaningless if you can’t convince people to carry it out. During the 1970s lots of Marxist groups directed their members into various industries to organize the workers. This strategy had its strengths and weaknesses. But such a strategy would be ridiculous for the anarchist movement to embrace at this time, not because workplace organizing is wrong, but because most serious anarchist activists wouldn’t do it. A strategy needs to unite people by promoting a course of action that people will be willing and able to take up.

At the present there is probably no single course of action that can unite the diverse group of people who can be broadly defined as revolutionary anarchists. Under such conditions "the strategy" needs to be building projects that develop communications and trust between different groups and individuals to the point that they can collectively formulate a common strategy. At the same time it is important to try to develop a common focus that is inclusive of a broad range of actions so that we can coherently discuss our points of agreement and our differences. From November on, Love and Rage focused on the war in the Persian Gulf. We reported on actions that took place and opened the pages of the paper to a discussion of how anarchists should relate to the anti-war movement. By choosing to focus on a single issue we were able to maximize our impact. We organized a contingent to the January 26 March on Washington that was the most militant section of that action.
2. Elements of a Strategy

A strategy combines a general analysis of the situation we face with a tactical program: suggested actions to bring us closer to our goal. I would maintain that while the overall conditions that confront us make a great many people receptive to revolutionary and anti-authoritarian ideas, the anarchist movement is suffering from several weaknesses that stand in the way of reaching those people. I believe that we should focus our energies on struggles that tend to correct those weaknesses.

The anarchist movement in North America is currently largely young, white and middle class. It is disproportionately male in many areas but in other areas that has changed considerably. I think the popularity of anarchist ideas amongst youth is a very good thing. Most people who become radicalized do so when they are relatively young. While middle class values are very prevalent in the anarchist movement there is a significant section of the movement that comes from the working class. Additionally there is a section of the movement that clearly identifies the working class as its main focus, admittedly with no big organizational successes.

What I see as the potentially fatal weakness in the anarchist movement is its almost all-white composition, and worse its largely uncritical view of this state of affairs. The separation of white radicals from communities of color is, in my opinion, the main reason there is not a significant radical movement in the US and Canada. The main reason for that separation is, I believe, the unconscious white chauvinism of most white radicals. This is just as true of the anarchist movement as it is of any other radical current.

Often when largely white radical groups recognize that their composition is a problem they set out to recruit people of color. I certainly support the creation of authentically multi-nationality anarchist groups (I am referring here to various communities of color as "nationalities" instead of as "races" because I believe that is more accurate term), but I think such groups can't simply be built by trying to recruit people of color. Historically the tendency of such recruitment efforts has been to reproduce the colonial relations between white people and people of color within the group. Authentic multi-nationality groups must be built on a principle of respect for the self-organization and self-determination of the oppressed nationalities within the group.

The key to eventually creating a multi-nationality anarchist movement in North America is for white anarchists to seriously take up the fight against racism. Racism is constantly exploding as a major issue in practically every community in the US and Canada: the police routinely brutalize people of color, racist skinheads and other white supremacist groups are growing, Native peoples and Chicanos are involved in various land disputes. Anarchists should be taking up these struggles everywhere.

Right now the potential for an orientation towards anti-racist work is immense. Anarchists have played an important role in building Anti-Racist Action (ARA) groups around the US and anarchists could launch ARA groups in a lot of cities where there
are really no established anti-racist groups in place. The past several years has seen the growth of racist skinhead activity and racist actions on many college campuses. These developments have pushed many new people into anti-racist activity. It seems very likely that the Presidential election campaign in 1992 will focus on racial issues as George Bush seeks to exploit white opposition to affirmative action. Anarchists should take up anti-racist work now so that we are in a position to respond to the events that will accompany such a campaign.

There are a number of practical activities that I see as potential facets of a focus on anti-racist work: a speaking tour by anarchist anti-racist organizers, a study program on racism and the liberation movements of oppressed nationalities in North America, using the pages of Love and Rage to focus on anti-racist organizing and on a discussion of issues of race and nationality from an anarchist perspective.

In conclusion I think it is important to understand that choosing to focus on anti-racism doesn't mean abandoning our commitment to other work. It means deciding to focus on a particular area of work for the coming year as a way of developing our common politics. The degree to which people take up anti-racist work will often reflect local conditions and commitments that people feel they have already made to other struggles. It is important to understand that most every struggle we join in will at some point or another intersect with issues of racism and that by focusing on racism we will all be better able to address those situations as they arise.

If you would like to offer your comments on this article please send them to:
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 NYC 10012 USA

(From p. 2)

on elections to ratify a socialist revolution. Next the DDEC questions the need for the “community” representation in the SIU program, and I reply to both letters above as well as a comment by Ron Elbert in DB70. We have some additional debate on this for the next issue, including material from the De Leonist Review.

Next Curtis Price reviews a book on a subject with profound implications for the libertarian socialist movement: The Jobless Future. Hand in hand with joblessness, we in the U.S. have witnessed a lengthening of the working day. The same thing is apparently true in India. The group Kamunist Kranti has produced a discussion article on the subject, which we reprint here. We end with a poster about the Bay Area Rapid Transit sent to the DB by one of Black Bart’s associates who sees it as a blessed relief from what he characterizes as “the tedious paleontological minutiae of irrelevant political cultures.” As usual we end with notes, announcements, and short reviews.

Bulletin Matters

Our never-ending effort to improve the outward appearance of the DB received a big lift from a new 486 computer, with a new word processing program, which I am learning with much difficulty. My own internal computer is at least as out of date as the 286 I had been using.

(To p. 20)
Rethinking the Socialist Project

(From FLUX [No. 7]. Box A, The Rainbow Centre, 180 Mansfield Rd, Nottingham, England)

As a failure Socialism has been a spectacular success! Western social democracy has abandoned even a pretence to Socialism (the word did not appear in the last Labour Party General Election Manifesto) and in the former lands of "actually existing Socialism" in the East capitalism is back with a vengeance - there is a bitter irony to the sight of May Day demonstrators being beaten by Yeltsin's police in Red Square! Apart from the dwindling bands of the faithful who still cling to their illusions about Cuba or North Korea. Socialists have nothing to hold up as a model of a successful Socialist Society. On the other hand our opponents have all too many negative examples to prove that Socialism merely substitutes new tyrannies for old. It is time for a rethink!

First we must examine our past. For 170 years or so Socialism has described both a political philosophy and a movement. Is this experience just so much "weight of dead generations" or can anything be salvaged from it? Should we rigorously attempt to demythologise and deidealise the past, to try to discover objective truth in our own history, or do we have more important tasks? Do the ideas of the "great teachers" - Marx, Lenin, Bakunin, Kropotkin or whoever have any meaning, any use for today or are they so much ideological baggage and do we have to start from square one again? Can the existing movements - trade unions, parties, etc - be put back on a Socialist track or do we have to build new movements from the bottom up? How do we avoid repeating again and again the errors of the past? What, if any, guarantee is there that any future revolution will not suffer the "bureaucratic degeneration" of past revolutions?

Secondly, we have to look at our present. For the majority of working people, Socialism is something utterly alien to their daily lives. At most the participation in any political activity will be going out to vote every few years. Even the minority that at any moment in time may be engaged in struggle - a strike, a struggle in the community, a struggle against some form of oppression - may well not see the relevance of other struggles to their own or consider Socialism to be any solution to their problem. Indeed, very often attempts by Socialists to intervene in a struggle, particularly where this is done in a manipulative, underhanded way, are greatly resented. How then do we make Socialism relevant to the lives, thoughts, hopes and dreams of working people? How do we help those participating in struggle to go beyond the limits of their particular interest and develop an overall critique of bourgeois society? How do we do this in a non-manipulative, non-patronising, non-alienating way? Is our activity merely propagandist/educational and if not what is the proper relationship between propaganda and agitation?

Many of those in struggle see their struggle as directed against a particular form of oppression - racism, sexism, animal abuse, environmental damage, etc - not against the exploitation, the expropriation by the ruling class of the surplus value created by the proletariat, that is the essence of capitalism. They therefore identify themselves as blacks, women, animal rights activists, greens, fighting oppressors - whites, men, animal abusers, polluters - not as Socialists fighting capitalism as both a social system and a mode of production. For Socialists class must remain central - if we shed the concept that the "history of ... society is the history of class struggle" then it is all too easy to do down the road of the hopeless reformism taken by the "Marxism Today" wing of the late CPGB. But this should not stop us from working out a dialectic of oppression and exploitation and implementing this in our practice. We have to encourage and support every manifestation of revolt against the existing order but we must do so in a consciously Socialist way. Our methodology must always be rigorously scientific. This
necessitates a struggle against all forms of mysticism and mystification, against ideology.

Thirdly, we have to recapture a vision of the future. To be sure, Morrison's efforts to apply the theory of the Webbs to the running of the London County Council or the Fordism of Stalinist Five Year Plans fill more people with horror and revulsion rather than hope and excitement. We would perhaps do better looking at the ideas of a William Morris or a Kropotkin. But in looking to the future we can't afford to dwell in the past. The world in which we live is neither that of the Petrograd Bolsheviks of 1917 or the Spanish CNT of the 'thirties. Any attempts to apply mechanistically the experiences of the past to the present are more likely to end in tragic farce than glorious victory.

In working out a vision of the future, we have to transcend both workerism (surely, we want to abolish both social classes and alienated labour) and humanism. Our approach must be biophilic, we must recognise that we share the planet with other living creatures who have as much right to life, liberty and natural enjoyment as human beings do. Therefore, the Socialist economy of tomorrow must guarantee not only a democracy which is social and industrial as well as political but must also undo the ravages of industrialism and ensure that the satisfaction of real human needs does not damage or destroy the planet. Production must be geared to the creation of real wealth not what Ruskin call "illth". This means that many things taken for granted in bourgeois society such as the private motor car and cigarettes will have to go. Likewise the institutions which make up the political state will have to go and be replaced by mass democratic forms of self-organisation and administration such as workers' councils and neighbourhood communes. There must be a rapid and orderly transition from the dictatorship of the proletariat - the working class organised as the ruling class - to a classless, stateless society - libertarian communism. (Communism both as a word and more importantly as a theory and a movement of self-liberation must be reclaimed from those who have besmirched it with blood.) Likewise there must be a rapid transition from a system of distribution based on the socially necessary hour of labour to a world of free access. The false antithesis between work and leisure will also be rapidly abolished: with work ceasing to be mindnumbing drudgery and becoming a joyous process of creation; and leisure ceasing to be a mindless routine of the consumption of spectacular, useless and often health-threatening commodities. To display the contempt of free men and women for the fetishism of capitalism and its worship of the dead, we really will build public toilets out of solid gold!

We have to convince the vast majority of working people that Socialism isn't the old tyranny in new clothes, that it is both practical and desirable, indeed necessary, if our species and the rest of life on Earth is to survive never mind evolve into higher forms. We have to convince them that this is something worth fighting for and that the result of fighting will not be yet more defeats and betrayals. Our politics, our practice have therefore to be open and honest. We have to say what we mean and mean what we say. All the old concepts of Jacobin/Bolshevik vanguards and leadership, of leading the class through experiences like so many sheep have to go. Either the working class as a whole frees itself or it remains enslaved under old masters or new.

No one person, no one group has all the answers or even all the questions. Nobody has the monopoly on truth or the means of discovering it. In rethinking Socialism, Socialists must first learn how to communicate with each other as friends, equals and comrades rather than as protagonists of ever multiplying rival sects. Socialism has not really failed. Rather because so doing is very hard it has not really been properly tried. But if we are to be more than history's dust, try we must.

Terry Liddle
Dear readers:

Lately I have been thinking about the relative values of various ideologies. With regard to Marxist socialism, concentrating the means of production into the hands of the victorious proletariat after smashing a monarchy would be no problem, for the workers would then possess the force with which to concentrate the means of production into their hands. But, it has long been recognized that the same program would be impossible if attempted in a democracy, for, after winning a mere ballot box victory, the elements of force in the state remain in the hands of the capitalist class; and if the workers' program included concentrating the means of production into the hands of state, they would merely legislate them into the hands of the capitalist state, inaugurating state capitalism, as Arnold Petersen credited De Leon with having thought through. This contradiction in the Marxist program opened the door for other 'isms to vie for supremacy in the marketplace of ideas, such as Industrial Unionism, in spite of the fact that, as early as the era of the First International, Marx debunked the idea of unions being the basis of organization for future society as an unworkable Bakunin scheme. No doubt inspired by the vertical ownership model provided by monopoly capitalism, De Leon puffed up Bakunin's idea to accommodate industrial unions. Another major problem with anarchism is that, when pushed to the wall, the lower classes are far more inclined to smash the state that prevents meaningful involvement with the means of production, rather than beginning with a direct take-over of the means of production. The record of the anarchists in Spain in the 1870's is proof of this.

If both the socialist and anarchist solutions are of questionable value, the question then becomes 'what we should work for instead'. One reform for which Marx was unambiguous in his praise was a reduction in the length of the working day. In his lifetime, he saw the workday go from no limits to a 12-hour day in 1832, to a 10-hour day in 1847, and to strong agitation for an 8-hour day that was won in many countries early in this century. A good portion of Capital documented the effects of varying the length of the working day, both in theory and under the Factory Acts. In his Inaugural Address to the First International, Marx came close to declaring that the political economy of the working class consists of controlling their supply in the labor market:

... "This struggle about the legal restriction of the hours of labour raging the more fiercely since, apart from frightened avarice, it told indeed upon the great contest between the blind rule of the supply and demand laws which form the political economy of the middle class, and social production controlled by social foresight, which forms the political economy of the working class. Hence the Ten Hours' Bill was not only a great practical success; it was the victory of a principle; it was the first time that in broad daylight the political economy of the middle class succumbed to the political economy of the working class." ...

Even one of the S.L.P.'s pre-anarchist (before 1889) platform planks included reducing the length of the work-day to match the replacement of labor by technology. By nature, reducing the length of the work-week is neither anarchist nor socialist, but, in the near future, it will become mandatory that we implement a reduced work-week. In his new book entitled "The End of Work", Jeremy Rifkin predicted the end of the mass labor market within 40-50 years, human labor to be replaced by technology and automation. A recent article in Electronic Engineering Times predicted the end of all physical labor by 2086. A recent article in the San Francisco Chronicle claimed that the introduction of nano-technology into productive processes will make commodities 100 times cheaper but with 10 times the quality, which can only mean another great reduction in the amount of human labor required for production. We are witnessing the beginnings of the 'end of work' in the last part of this century. It wasn't too long ago that a big yuk-
yuk joke was: “You can be replaced with a computer”, but no one seems to be telling that joke today, probably because not too many others would laugh.

Imagine a scenario in which we kept the 8-hour day over the next few decades, in spite of the continued replacement of millions of workers by machinery that “moves of itself”, and it is not too hard to imagine the arrival of a day when relatively few people worked 40 hours a week, while many more people had no way to afford the commodities and services upon which most people depend. You can imagine the chaos. The rich would continue to be rich, and the state would be much more repressive than today, in order to ride herd over the unemployed. Are the jobless to go on the dole, go to jail, take up arms, join the crime wave, the revolution, or what?

In the Documents of the First International, Marx wrote that: “... in the militant state of the working class, its economical movement and its political action are indissolubly united.” What better way is there for workers to unite political and economic action than to redistribute what little work remains for humans to do among the whole class? Some workers might mistakenly think that a thirty-hour week would force them to give away a quarter of their pay to others whom they don’t know or care about, but it doesn’t quite work that way. If labor could hold back its services in an organized fashion, reduce the length of the work-week and raise overtime rates enough to make it much more expensive to employ people beyond 30 hours a week, we could stave our services from the labor market instead of glutting it, and thereby balance the diminishing demand for labor with a diminished supply. A reduced supply for the same demand would raise the price of labor, and wages would go up, instead of down.

A fully employed class could then scoff at minimum wage laws, welfare for the able, unemployment compensation, and other hand-aiders over the gaping wound of a labor market working exclusively for the benefit of the bosses. Both sides of the affirmative action debate should find a reduced work-week satisfactory, for everyone who ever wanted a job could then work for a living wage, and they wouldn’t need arbitrary laws that take jobs and opportunities away from one segment of the population and give them to another. Everyone would have the money to send themselves to whatever school they wanted to go, or would have more time to study while making a living. With everyone doing meaningful work for a few hours a day, the work of the state riding herd on those with nothing to do could diminish, the jails could slowly empty, crime would drop, etc. If we shortened the work-week even more than what it takes to put everyone to work, the upper classes would have fewer surpluses with which to bribe politicians, pay executives exorbitant salaries, get involved in financial scandals, create mega-monopolies, fuel the propaganda machine with ruling-class propaganda about lazy workers and welfare queens, etc.

What better way as well to begin to work for what Marx described as the ultimate goal of both anarchists and socialists, i.e., the abolition of class distinctions? With the work-week decreasing as human labor gets replaced by machinery, we could eventually get to the point where no one was forced by economic necessity to go to work, and with spare time for everyone to get educated so as to better participate in decisions, the state could die out and eventually be consigned to the museum of antiquities. For revolutionists who lust for nothing less than absolute power, this plan may leave a lot to be desired; but for evolutionists, it’s one of the most logical methods of pursuing class struggle.

2 Letter from Marx to Paul Lafargue, April 19, 1870, New World #153, p. 46.
3 Marx-Engels Selected Works, Volume 2, p. 16.
4 Social Demands, S.L.P. Platform, from the Workmen’s Advocate of October 26, 1889.

Ken Ellis / P.O. Box 5832 / Berkeley, Ca. 94705-0832
We have to:

- Mining
- Steel Production
- Pesticides and Fertilizer
- Farm Machinery and Equipment
- Agriculture
- Livestock
- Produce
- Food and Fiber Processing and Manufacturing
- Factory
- Chain Warehouse
- Restaurant
- Food Store
- Labor
- Energy
- Financial Services
- Transportation
- Consumer
HAVE TO DISMANTLE ALL THIS

The unprecedented reality of the present is one of enormous sorrow and cynicism, “a great tear in the human heart,” as Richard Rodriguez put it. A time of ever-mounting everyday horrors, of which any newspaper is full, accompanies a spreading environmental apocalypse. Alienation and the more literal contaminants compete for the leading role in the deadly dialectic of life in divided, technology-ridden society. Cancer, unknown before civilization, now seems epidemic in a society increasingly barren and literally malignant.

Soon, apparently, everyone will be using drugs; prescription and illegal becoming a relatively unimportant distinction. Attention Deficit Disorder is one example of an oppressive effort to medicate the rampant restlessness and anxiety caused by a life-world ever more shriveled and unfulfilling. The ruling order will evidently go to any lengths to deny social reality; its techno-psychiatry views human suffering as chiefly biological in nature and genetic in origin.

New strains of disease, impervious to industrial medicine, begin to spread globally while fundamentalism (Christian, Judaic, Islamic) is also on the rise, a sign of deeply-felt misery and frustration. And here at home New Age spirituality (Adorno’s “philosophy for dunces”) and the countless varieties of “healing” therapies wear thin in their delusional pointlessness. To assert that we can be whole/enlightened/healed within the present madness amounts to endorsing the madness.

The gap between rich and poor is widening markedly in this land of the homeless and the imprisoned. Anger rises and massive denial, cornerstone of the system’s survival, is now at least having a troubled sleep. A false world is beginning to get the amount of support it deserves: distrust of public institutions is almost total. But the social landscape seems frozen and the pain of youth is perhaps the greatest of all. It was recently announced (10/94) that the homicide rate among young men ages 15 to 19 more than doubled between 1985 and 1991. Teen suicide is the response of a growing number who evidently cannot imagine maturity in such a place as this.

The overwhelmingly pervasive culture is a fast-food one, bereft of substance or promise. As Dick Hebdge aptly judged, “the postmodern is the modern without the hopes and dreams that made modernity bearable.” Postmodernism advertises itself as pluralistic, tolerant forward, deliberately confused, fragmented, media-obsessed, illiterate, fatalistic, uncritical excessence, indifferent to questions of origins, agency, history or causation. It questions nothing of importance and is the perfect expression of a setup that is stupid and dying and wants to take us with it.

Our postmodern epoch finds its bottom-line expression in consumerism and technology, which combine in the stupefying force of mass media. Attention-getting, easily-digested images and phrases distract one from the fact that this horror-show of domination is precisely held together by such entertaining, easily digestible images and phrases. Ever the grossest failures of social policies can be used to try to narcotize its subjects, as with the case of violence, a source of endless diversion. We are titillated by the representation of what at the same time is threatening, suggesting that boredom is an even worse torment than fear.

Nature, what is left of it, that is, serves as a bitter reminder of how deformed, non-sensical, and fraudulent is contemporary existence. The death of the natural world and the technological penetration of every sphere of life, what is left of it, proceed with an accelerating impetus. Wired, Mondo 2000, zippers, cyber-everything, virtual reality, Artificial Intelligence, etc. and on and on, up and including Artificial Life, the ultimate postmodern science.

Meanwhile, however, our “post-industrial” computer age has resulted in the fact that we are more than ever “appendages to the machine,” as the 19th century phrase had it. Bureau of Justice statistics (7/94), by the way, report that the increasingly computer-surveilled workplace is now the setting for nearly one million violent crimes per year, and that the number of murdered bosses has doubled in the past decade.

This hideous arrangement expects, in its arrogance, that its victims will somehow remain content to vote, recycle, and pretend it will all be fine. To employ a line from Debord, “The spectator is simply supposed to know nothing and deserve nothing.”

Civilization, technology, and a divided social order are the components of an indissoluble whole, a death-trip that is fundamentally hostile to qualitative difference. Our answer must be qualitative, not the quantitative, more-of-the-same palliatives that actually reinforce what we must end
Re: Frank Girard comment in DB70 on the “theoretical inferiority” of the World Socialist Movement’s (WSM) requirement for proof (an election) of a socialist majority.

The legitimacy for the establishment of socialism will come from the general understanding that the vast majority wants socialism. The WSM, as well as the DeLeonists, see the election as establishing that legitimacy. The Left has always had a major problem in determining its support, and therefor has often plunged the working class (of whatever locale) into hopeless battles, not rarely resulting in the deaths and mutilations of part of that working class.

Frank seems to be suggesting that it would be reasonable for a section of the working class, without knowing its real support, to disown the capitalists at the factory gates. Let us assume, for arguments sake, that the capitalists were not pleased by this turn of events. The non-socialist government might feel obliged to support the capitalists claim to ownership. They might order the police or other coercive forces to return the factory to their rightful owners. Now we should, I think, assume that the coercive forces have also got some number of socialists in their ranks, perhaps even a majority.

These socialists would be hard-pressed to attack their comrades at the factory. But, what legitimate direction, such as knowing that a socialist majority existed and had chosen this moment for action, would they have? Maybe the majority of the coercive forces would not react to the government’s orders, but how many would take up arms against their colleagues who were following legally binding orders under these circumstances? The likely results are dead workers by the score, or hundreds, or thousands, or maybe many times that.

Instead consider that the capitalist class attempts to rob the working class of electoral victory, by vote-rigging or outright nullification of an election. Vote-rigging, given a real and significant majority of socialists seems unlikely to fool the masses, especially given that there would be socialists everywhere, at all levels of government. Now if an “expected” socialist electoral victory was nullified by the government, we, as socialists would not be unreasonable in translating that nullification into a victory (at least a majority). At this point, the socialist majority has achieved its popular legitimacy.

If socialists have to establish, outside of the state’s current procedures, an electoral process, it will nonetheless, assuming reasonable procedures are followed, establish that legitimacy. I think that given a real, substantial socialist majority, that won’t be required. Even if it is, it in no way devalues the approach of the WSM. Many like to think of us as a bunch of doctrinaire stick-in-the-muds who came up with this electoral approach and blindly expect the capitalist class to surrender just because the “socialists” won an election. We don’t. That election, in whatever form it takes, will establish the working class as the conscious and legitimate rulers of society and that class will take, by whatever definition of force is required, that power and thereby eliminate itself as a class.

As the end of the Marcos regime in the Philippines showed, popular legitimacy counts. It affects the general populace, and the coercive forces, favourably towards that popular movement.

That legitimacy will save the lives of some of the working class. For me, that’s good enough reason to justify our “theoretical inferiority” and “absurd” idea of waiting for election day. Do I think that workers will die, waiting for election day? Yes, and we can even give numbers. Just count the number of workers that die in capitalism every day. But that does not justify the callous disregard for the workers who are supposed to illegitimately (without proving to the working class as a whole, its majority) attempt to establish class ownership of the means of production.
This leads me to another point of disagreement with the DeLeonists. These workers occupying the factories etc. are supposedly doing it in the name of the working class, but the whole DeLeonist blueprint (which they generally seem to claim is not a blueprint - see DB70 page 3 / IUP) leads me to see the factories as being captured by nothing more than an effectively syndicalist group. This puts the control in the hands of the workers in that plant, for all intents and purposes, with some direction from regional and national worker-councils. Even DeLeonists note (DB70, starting on page 10) that they have not appropriately addressed the dichotomy of control between workers as "workers in industry" and people (in general) who must in socialism have control over their lives.

I have never understood why so many of those who claim to support a cooperative society, think that administering that society will be so difficult that we must lay out, in advance, the exact mechanisms of democratic decision making, at a time when the vast majority does not support socialism, and doesn’t get far enough past the evil human nature arguments, to seriously consider such future mechanisms.

The task today, regarding democratic mechanisms, is to ensure that within our current organizations, whatever mechanisms we choose, we are democratic. That takes more membership involvement than most of these organizations really have today. So we must limp along, until our memberships really decide to control the organizations, trying to be as democratic as we can, while still getting things done.

Maybe it points out the need for people to recognize that in a socialist world, where people are cooperating, we won’t have to have a meeting every 2 minutes to decide some inane course of action. Today, we manage as a working class to run capitalism pretty well (given what we are trying to run), in spite of the rules laid down to make sure we do the right things, in the right ways. Once general guidelines and agreed upon approaches are determined, workers must be relied upon (if socialism can work) to make the right decisions without always calling a meeting to ensure that supposed democratic forms are followed. Real democracy, as can only exist in a socialist world, doesn’t limit itself to forms, it means creating an environment in which the right decisions are made automatically, and that when somebody makes a mistake it can be corrected in a straightforward and rational manner.

Has anyone seen a proposal setting out the mechanisms of making decisions that does not imply that nobody is really capable, without supervision, of making decisions? Except for the WSM, most who call themselves socialists or anarchists seem to assume that a decision not made by some, often undefinable group in concert, must be a bad decision. You can call this society of never-ending-meetings "socialism" if you like, but it sounds more like a pain in the butt to me.

If the working class can establish socialism, society can run socialism without all of these horrible pre-defined mechanisms that “socialists’ want to foist upon it. We can pick and choose when a revolution is imminent, and after, without casting anything in stone.

Note that I maintain that proposals such as the variants of DeLeon’s SIU government, are blueprints that will be picked up by people as “the plan” and that they will have a right to expect “the plan” to be implemented if those blueprints (no matter how many times their proponents claim they aren’t blueprints) become the rallying point or the concrete example of the “new society.”

If you want a bunch of unsocialists to try to establish socialism, you spoon-feed the working class with new constitutions and blueprints and democratic mechanisms. If you want to really establish socialism, you educate the working class to understand what socialism means, what cooperation
means, and that the working class has built capitalism from the ground up and is quite capable of building socialism from capitalism up.

The left, and I have to include those with these magnificent plans in that group, cannot lead us to socialism, no matter how sincere, and how well thought out their plans appear to be. Socialists can educate non-socialists but that’s all. The options for practical democratic decision making are, despite the plethora of ideas bantered about, really quite limited. They will fall out of the revolution, because they will be built, without any master plan, democratically by the course of the revolution.

Re: Robin Cox’s assertion: ‘Since the “capitalist system” is an essentially economic construction, the focus of such reforms must necessarily be economic.’

Wrong. Capitalism includes all of the changing political appliances attached to it. It is the political power which maintains capitalism, not its economic power. The working class, if it had political power, could easily end capitalism. The current economic power of the capitalist class merely simplifies its maintenance of political power, because the working class is listening to what the capitalist class wants it to hear. Economic reforms and political reforms, distinguished by Cox, are not really all that much different. Neither alters the basic structure of capitalism, and indeed the “political” reforms are no more than ways of ensuring the continuance of capitalism. Socialism, on the other hand, is a basic change in economic structure which allows the elimination of the need for political power which is, apart from dictionary definitions, “merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another.” (Communist Manifesto, 1848, Marx, Engels).

Whether LETS schemes mushroom or not, is not particularly relevant. Such schemes on many different scales have existed many times in history. The ability for people to cooperate has no need for proof, just recognition. If a LETS scheme should fail, and I expect they do, does that then show that “our class” should lose “self confidence and the conviction that cooperation is a viable alternative to competition”? I think it shows that islands of socialism don’t make sense.

Maybe socialism can’t happen unless people are shown fully working examples of socialism. If that is true, then socialism won’t happen. If the working class cannot manage to engage in a little rational, and not all that abstract, thought, then we are wasting our time. I give the working class credit for the ability to manage that thought, and maybe if more did, the working class would rise to the challenge.

For Socialism,

Steve Szalai

(From p. 11)

Finances

DB70 “Finances” contained a gross error that appeared to clinch my reputation for innumeracy. Actually the accounting that appeared to make expenses total $40 more than those listed resulted from my failure to type in the $40 rent for the post office box while retaining the total that included it. The balance, less the $40 PO Box rent, should have been $103.67—or, according to the bank—110.68. I am including box rent in the May-June expenses.

Once more we have stayed in the black, in part because we have a new source of revenue. With DB71 we begin keeping track of a new form of income: that resulting from the sale of pamphlets. To bring order from the confusion that this new complication will entail, DB is seeking the services of a
Dear People.

This is in response to the Future article in Discussion Bulletin #70. The article originally appeared in issue #39 of People for a New System, published by the Industrial Union Party (IUP).

The Daniel DeLeon Election Committee is not ready to accept the IUP's new system of "A democratic partnership between our communities and industries."

Our impression of the IUP's "New System" is that socialist industrial unionism is inadequate to satisfy "community concerns" such as recreation, health, education, and environment. So besides socialist industrial union government, the IUP says there must be community government too. Their chart on pages 6 and 7 of DB illustrates this "new system" of dual government.

It seems to us that the Industrial Union Party should explain why we need community government in a socialist society as they see it in the Future article. That means, it seems to us, that they must show where and how socialist industrial unionism fails.

DDEC, P.O. Box 3744, Grand Rapids, MI 49501

Dear Comrades,

Both the De Leonist Review (DLR) and People for a New System (NS), working independently, concluded that one of the most frequently voiced criticisms of the Socialist Industrial Union (SIU) program—that it deprives people who are not engaged in production from any effective voice in decision making—deserved some thought and accommodation. Surprisingly, the articles in DB70 by the two DeLeonist groups has so far produced only one dissenting letter. Perhaps this lack of response by readers of the DB, a large fraction of whose readers are DeLeonists of one stripe or another, bespeaks a felt need.

The DDEC's opposition to the NS's version of this addition to orthodox Socialist Industrial Unionism doesn't seem to be based on any particular danger or drawback it sees but rather on the addition's being unnecessary: "They must show us where and how [socialist] industrial unionism fails." The NS doesn't really defend the change; in its text and—graphically—in the chart, it just explains one method by which people not engaged in production could be involved in the decision making in a genuinely socialist society: "The new system forms a partnership between our communities and our industries. It works like this: From our households and in our communities we determine our needs and wants. These are collated by elected local community councils and shared with communities that have similar local and regional needs and services." The article goes on to show how this information is shared with workplace councils and coordinated at various levels including national—but not global, as one writer has pointed out.

The De Leonist Review is much more concerned about the need for this major addition to the venerable SIU program. I would recommend that for an answer to its question, the DDEC as well as all other DeLeonists, read the DLR's rationale for the change, "Democracy—Political and Industrial: A Position Paper," on pages 10-16 of DB70.
While I am at it, I'd like to answer Ron Elbert's comment (page 30, DB70). Since neither world socialists nor industrial union socialists have had much luck in the electoral arena, neither has had a chance to do any mischief in the name of socialism, unlike the multitude of social democratic parties worldwide. I might add, though, that I regard the fixation—among both DeLeonists and world socialists—on the need to "legalize" the revolution as irrational. I agree with De Leon's statement that revolutions make their own laws.

And now to Steve Szalai's letter in this issue of the DB. As to the importance of legitimizing a socialist revolution and the danger of a revolutionary workers misjudging the level of their support, I'd like Steve to consider what we have seen of revolutions in the last few years as capitalism worldwide has become ever more shaky. Whether we are speaking of East Germany, the Baltic republics, Poland, Hungary and the other "Peoples Republics, the USSR, the Philippines, or Iran, the "governed" have withdrawn their consent, and rulers and ruling classes-despite their control of the coercive powers of government—realized that the game was up and fled. Try to imagine a more tightly controlled working class than that of East Germany; nonetheless, the state capitalist rulers beat a fast retreat and went into hiding.

What we socialist are watching—and trying to intervene in—is a class struggle. Just how it will work out and how effective our intervention remains to be seen. I seems to me that the best thing we can do as members of our class is to point out the capitalist cause of the problems that are causing discontent that verges at time on revolt and to point out a credible alternative, whether that is socialist industrial unionism or the ideas in the world socialist pamphlet Socialism as a Practical Alternative. And incidentally, I think the arguments and discussions of this kind are productive so long as we revolutionary, libertarian socialists realize that we are all on the same side.

Frank Girard

(From p. 32)

Place, Edinburgh, Scotland EH8 9PE.

"What is to be Undone?" or How to Spot a Vanguardist at Twenty Yards by Mitchel Cohen, A Red Balloon Collective Pamphlet, is Chapter Five of Zen-Marxism: Subjective Factors in Devising Revolutionary Strategy. It is a straightforward description of what the author regards as typical sectarian political behavior by Leninist as well as social democratic groups at demonstrations: selling their papers, looking for converts, and trying to run the show instead of marching like good guys. The other nine chapters, with titles like "Help, I'm Voting and I Can't Get Up!" and "The Shortcomings of Traditional Leftist Strategy" suggest something between a leg pull and serious politics, but a look at the footnotes settles the confusion. The intro and each of the ten chapters sell for $2.50 plus $1.00 for postage, a rather hefty price when you consider that chapter five has only twelve pages of text. Also available are short pamphlets with prices ranging from $1.75 to $.50 on a variety of other topics: A Call to Develop a Revolutionary Science, The U.S. and Biological-Chemical Warfare, The Working Class and Ecology, and many others, from the Red Balloon Collective, c/o Mitchel Cohen, 2652 Cropsey Ave., #7H, Brooklyn, NY 11214.

Some Thoughts on Organization, by Henri Simon, was published originally in 1979. Its author is associated with the journal Echanges, regarded as the main journal in English of the council communist tendency in our political sector, a tendency noted for its opposition—I hope I am getting this right—to organizational activity by revolutionaries. The publisher has reprinted the pamphlet because of the
Collective Action Notes is now on-line at: cansv@igc.apc.org and we would welcome contact and responses from other comrades, particularly items that might be appropriate for our dossiers on class struggle - Curtis Price

BOOK REVIEW: THE FUTURELESS JOB

Book Review: THE JOBLESS FUTURE
by Stanley Aronowitz & William DiFazio
University of Minnesota Press, 1994

This book isn't about no pork-chop. Its serious stuff. The authors contend jobs -- work as we know it -- is going away. They cite the tendency of new jobs to be part-time and/or temporary, and often at minimum wage. Official unemployment figures fail to measure the state of partial employment and those who have given up looking for work. The authors mention the thousands of layoffs at GM, IBM, Boeing, Kodak and Sears and that even "the older and most prestigious professions of medicine, university teaching, law and engineering are in trouble: doctors and lawyers and engineers are becoming like assembly-line clerks... proletarians" (p. 54). The authors comment "... we have yet to feel the long-term effects on American living standards that will result from the elimination of well-paid professional, technical and production jobs" (p. xi).

The mass of layoffs and the destruction of high-quality, well-paid, permanent jobs is produced by three closely related developments:

"First in response to pervasive, long-term economic stagnation and to new scientifically based technologies, we are experiencing massive restructuring of patterns of ownership and investment in the global market. Fewer companies dominate larger portions of the world market in many sectors, and national boundaries are becoming progressively less relevant to how business is done, investment deployed and labor employed. Second, the relentless application of technology has destroyed jobs and, at the same time, reduced workers' living standards by enabling transnational corporations to deterritorialize production... " and thirdly, U.S. corporations are locating not only low-skilled jobs, but also design and development activities in other countries such as India and China where labor is both skilled and cheap (p 8-9).

Their thesis may be synopsized: "All of the contradictory tendencies involved in the restructuring of global capital and computer-mediated work seem to lead to the same conclusion for workers of all callors -- that is, unemployment, underemployment, decreasingly skilled work, and relatively lower wages. These sci-tech transformations of the labor process have disrupted the
workplace and worker’s community and culture. High technology will destroy more jobs than it creates. The new technology has fewer parts and fewer workers and produces more product. This is not only in traditional production industries but for all workers, including managers and technical workers...” (p. 3).

Commenting particularly on computer programmers: “The specific character of computer-aided technologies is that they no longer discriminate between most categories of intellectual and manual labor. With the introduction of computer-aided software programming (CASP), the work of perhaps the most glamorous of the technical professions associated w/ computer technology programming -- is irreversibly threatened. Although the “real” job of creating new and basic approaches will go on, the without concupiscence of computer programmer may disappear just like that of the draftsman, whose tasks were incorporated by computer-aided design and drafting by the late 1980s. CASP is an example of a highly complex program whose development requires considerable knowledge, but when development costs have been paid and the price substantially reduced, much low-level, routine programming will be regulated to historical memory” (p. 21).

Arguing the above is the meat & potatoes of the book but chapters are given over to exploring aspects of these developments, particularly the commercialization of science and the university (i.e. the subordination of knowledge to serve profit-motives to the detriment of any other determinants).

Other chapters look at a city-planning office to study the effects CAD has had on the city-drafters and designers over the years; unions and their experience organizing “professionals” such as doctors, teachers and lawyers; the university tiered, tracked and tenure system; and recent writers on class (What!! Class you say??).

The authors devote a chapter to class analysis because - though soft-pedaling - they locate an important nexus of social change in a “New Class” of knowledge workers (after the work of Alvin Gouldner but with important qualifications), especially as the blue-collar worker and the service worker are replaced by automation. They acknowledge that members of the new class have “traditionally been the servant of corporate capital and the state.” But Aronowitz and DiFazio see that with the proletarianization of knowledge workers described in their book -- and while capital still depends on their labor -- the new class begins questioning their identification with an exploitative ruling elite.

Here the authors’ argument is weak. They say that computer programmers etc. constitute a new class, yet at the same time -- while describing its disappearance -- they are arguing that they really aren’t that much different from their blue and pink collar cousins. Why not look to those outside of production altogether -- the marginalized former factory workers, managers, operators, (and yes. even programmers) etc., unemployed, or barely employed in temp or part-time or minimum wage work, who have little or no take in the status quo -- as the “new class”? An interesting couple of pages in “The Jobless Future” traces the origins of “The War on the Poor”, taking of a changing perception particularly amongst “liberals and leftist intellectuals” which has seen the resurfacing of the English 16th century ideal that “moral character” is built by economic independence -- without consideration that a (growing) unemployable class has no hope of participating in a shrinking labor market.

In the last chapter, the authors suggest some “pathways” for the future, taking into account presuppositions of their book study. “In addition, our proposals assume the goal of assuring the possibility of the full development of individual and social capacities” (p. 343). Things they argue for: The need to reduce working hours; regulating capital to prevent capital flight; education as a right rather than a privilege (particularly poignant in “knowledge” times); a guaranteed income; a
new research agenda steered away from profit to human motives and so on. They argue that we need to go beyond "full employment" towards "no employment" — through the steps of shorter work weeks, redistributed work load, and so forth, and work to set things up so that such is possible.

Aronowitz and DiFazio's argument for a jobless future is convincing. It's recommended reading for those trying to get a handle on the changing workplace and its social fall-out. Their book also seems to have arrived into a spate of no-future-for-work commentary. There's the FutureWork list (see below). There is also Brecher writing in Z Magazine, a recent Business Week article on "Re-Thinking Work", a Fortune cover story on "The End of the Job", the Canadian book "Shifting Time" by Armine Yalnizyan, T. Ran Ide & Arthur J. Cordell, and the new book by Jeremy Rifkin, "The End of Work".

In the face of these observations and predictions, nothing is being done to address the social dislocation upon us (unless you count prison construction) when the agency by which humans obtain necessities — through sale of their skills and abilities — is going away. Even worse, as Aronowitz and DiFazio remark at the start of their book, a grand delusion is in operation "as experts, politicians, and the public become acutely aware of new problems associated with the critical changes in the economy — crime, poverty, homelessness, hunger, education downsizing, loss of tax revenues to pay for public services, and many other social issues — the solution is always the same: jobs, jobs, jobs" (p. xi).

St. Ack

(From p. 20)

comptroller.

Contributions: Richard Whitney $7; Ben Doganiero $4; Ken Ellis $2; Charles Bateman $3; Anonymous $27; Mike Ballard $3. Total $46. Thank you, comrades.

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Fraternally submitted,

Frank Girard
for the DB
I.

Accumulated labour, i.e. dead labour or labour that has already been performed has the capacity to make living labour productive/more productive. It can take the forms of knowledge, material goods or a combination of both.

Knowledge of animal movements, their strengths, weaknesses and habitats; bow and arrow; and archery are examples of accumulated/dead labour.

Knowledge of seeds-soil-seasons; improved-fenced land; and farming are accumulated/dead labour.

Knowledge of construction material-water flow; dams and canals; and irrigation are accumulated/dead labour.

Knowledge of geography-astronomy-winds and currents; ships-maps and compass; and navigation are accumulated/dead labour.

Knowledge of mechanics, elements, chemical-biological-nuclear processes; clock-steam engine-electric motor-nuclear reactor-computer; engineering-technology are accumulated/dead labour.

Hunters, gatherers, horticulturists-farmers, slaves, serfs, yeomanry-peasants, artisans-craftsmen, wage-workers have been and are living labour.

II.

The relationship between dead labour and living labour has been and can be friendly - complementary or antagonistic, as well as an admixture of the two. [explain]

In egalitarian social formations, the primary function of accumulated/dead labour is to help living labour improve its quality of life.

Knowledge, skill, tools and implements improved the lives of hunters/gatherers, cattle rearers and peasant/artisan communities in egalitarian social formations.

In hierarchical organisations with egalitarian pockets and roots the relationship between accumulated/dead labour and living labour while being predominately antagonistic also has visible complementary side [why?]. As hierarchy spreads its tentacles, the relationship between accumulated/dead labour and living labour becomes increasingly antagonistic and whatever complementarity remains is merely an incidental spillover. 

Any improvement in the living conditions of living labour is either incidental or it is a prerequisite for further exploitation of living labour.

Knowledge, weapons, cattle, land, metals, tools and implements in the hands of slave owners and feudals were the means to exploit and control slaves and serfs. Gains of independent artisans and peasants in slave owners society and feudalism were of secondary and minor significance.

To facilitate readability, we may sometimes use 'dead labour' instead of 'controllers of dead labour'. However, we do not intend to imply that dead labour has a volition or dynamics of its own.
Today science, machines, and technology are the means to exploit and wield over wage-workers and to increase that exploitation and control. The increase in spatial and social mobility of living labour; the questioning of patriarchal values, caste, religion; universal literacy; the possibility of better material life and more leisure for all; the increasingly felt need for a new egalitarian social formation are either incidental spillovers or they are a means to make exploitation and control over living labour more effective.

III.

The growth of accumulated/dead labour is dependent on the productivity of living labour which in its turn is dependent on the amount of accumulated/dead labour at its disposal or at whose disposal it is.

In hierarchic social formations living labour is at the disposal of controllers of dead labour. In these formations, increasing productivity of labour, increasing accumulation of labour, adds to the strength of dead labour vis-à-vis living labour.

This is reflected in the length of the working year and the working day of living labour. Confining our discussion to material production, we can say that the increasing strength of dead labour is clearly reflected in the lengthening of the working time of living labour. The increasing strength of dead labour is also reflected in the increasing intensity of work for living labour.

IV.

Under feudalism, where irrigation facilities were not available the working year for the serfs was 3-4 months but where the controllers of dead labour had dead labour in the form of dams and canals at their disposal, the working year of serfs was 6-8 months. This further increased the strength of dead labour. But for long a major portion of dead labour went into building forts, temples, pyramids and not much of it went into means of increasing productivity of labour and hence channels that could accelerate the amount of accumulated labour which is the strength of dead labour. As a result, the strength of dead labour vis-à-vis living labour increased but not at a rapid pace and so for a long time the length of the working year for living labour remained in the range of 3 to 6-8 months.

Long distance trade in particular increased the mobility and concentration of accumulated labour in certain pockets and led to a situation where it was in the interests of dead labour to make forceful attempts to increase the productivity of labour and lengthen the working time of living labour.

The 3-6 months working year was replaced by the 12 months working year for living labour in branch after branch of material production. Brute force was the means to discipline living labour in accepting the 12 months working year.

V.

Month long festivals soon became things of the past for living labour. As a corollary the hierarchic social formations associated with 3-6 months working
Besides stretching the year to the full, increasing strength of dead vis-a-vis living labour also focused on the working day.

The length of the day from day-break to sunset was increased by artificial light and living labour was forced to work up to 18-20 hours a day. Resistance from living labour mounted.

Science and technology along with force were employed as sharp weapons in the hands of dead labour in its contentions with living labour. Exploitation of living labour was increased by increasing the productivity and intensity of labour by the use of science and technology. In this way the exploitation of living labour was increased even when the number of hours of work in a day were being reduced due to the resistance offered by wage-workers.

Though beaten flat in the case of the working year, the struggle of living labour against lengthening of the working time has continued as it had to do.

A significant event in this struggle was the demand for 8 hours working day. Though coloured by patriarchal notions, living labour in the form of male wage-workers demanded and fought for wages that for 8 hours work per day would be adequate to rear a family. For those mobilised on this issue in Europe and the USA the family consisted of grand parents, parents and children with the wage-worker male/father as head and breadwinner for the family.

The struggle between the controllers of dead labour and living labour sharpened and it was sometime after the 8 hour working day demand had been raised that the working day of living labour reached a trough.

However, exponential growth in the amount of dead labour was made possible by unheard of increases in productivity of labour that science and technology brought about. This substantially increased the strength of the controllers of dead labour and then there began a major increase in the length of the working day of living labour. Besides brute force, illusions and deceptions also played a significant role in this stricide of dead labour to increase the length of the working day to unprecedented lengths.

The first and the most visible aspect of this was the transformation of 8 hour working day into an 8 hours shift/duty. Whenever and wherever the 8 hours was implemented -- knowledge-producing institutions, laboratories, factories and their transmission lines -- they all hailed this as a great victory for living labour. Wage-workers were being battered and ideology declared that they were on the march to victory.

The mounting scale of dead labour, the increasing strength of those who
controlled it. It was translated into the lowering of wages for workers. Lower wages made it impossible for a man to meet the expenses of the family with 8 hours work. Wage workers became selfish and economistic. Men started working overtime and doing part-time work after doing 8 hour shifts to meet the expenses of the family.

But no! Price rises and taxation and so forth would simply not allow them to make ends meet. Grandparents and children became a nuisance. Shouldn't motherly sacrifice for the family also extend to women working for wages to meet the family expenses?

Like month long festivals, grandparents were dumped into dustbins. Two children, one child, no child became the norm. Traditional patriarchal notions and ethics were then dealt another hard blow with women in ever increasing numbers becoming wage workers.

X.

The increase in the strength of dead labour vis-a-vis living labour is visible in the shrinking domestic unit and lengthening working day for its sustenance.

XI.

As the 20th century has progressed the working day for a domestic unit has become:

8 hours wage work of man +
8 hours wage work of woman +
6-8 hours of overtime/part time wage work of man +
4-6 hours of overtime/part time wage work of woman +
4-6 hours of wage work by children

= 30-36 hours

Even today there are only 24 hours in a day but the working day of living labour has become 26-36 hours duration.

Commuting time for work is besides these hours.

AND

Who can do without domestic work.

And leaders thunder for a 35 hour week! Jokers chime in with 4 hours a day.

XII.

This prolongation of the working day began in Europe and the USA and is taking place in front of our eyes in countries like India.

While the exploitation of living labour in Europe and the USA was increasing in leaps and bounds and the working day expanding beyond 24 hours, wage-workers there were being called the aristocracy of labour, sharers in the loot. In a similar situation, wage-workers in countries like India today are hailed the privileged ones and asked to sacrifice....

XIII.
lengthening and intensification of the working year and the working day is a consequence of the increasing strength of dead labour vis-a-vis living labour in hierarchic social formations.

This has taken place in zig-zags, twists and turns and at varying paces in the face of stiff resistance by living labour. But all the same, the result of the increasing strength of dead labour in hierarchic social formations has been and can only be this.

However, the struggles of living labour have not been futile and it is the result of those struggles that today we have no alternative but to pose the problem thus:

It is not more or less science and technology, further increases in labour productivity or reducing it to peasant-crafts levels; more efficiency and less wastage or less efficiency/more wastage; more or less planning that will provide a way forward for living labour.

Rather what is needed, and in fact the only way, is to turn upside down the relation between dead labour and living labour. DEAD LABOUR HAS TO BE CONTROLLED BY LIVING LABOUR. Making dead labour friendly, complementary and helpful to living labour is a necessity for the productivity of labour to be used for providing the means for a better material life and more leisure for all.

An egalitarian formation in place of the present hierarchic social formation is what’s needed. It is the means of getting out of this insane, increasingly misanthropic situation that living labour finds itself in.


Kamunist Kranti
Majdoor Library, Auto pin Jhuggi, Faridabad - 121 001, India.

(From p. 22)

light it sheds on the councilist idea of working class “spontaneity.” $1.50 from Collective Action, POB 22962, Baltimore, MD 21203

The Spectacle: A Skeleton Key, by Larry Law seems to be the latest step in the evolution of some ideas of the Situationist International or at least of one of the terms associated with it and with Guy Debord’s Society of the Spectacle. Published by Spectacular Times, it is number eight in a pocketbook series of small pamphlets, in this case 5¼ inches by 4 with twenty-four pages plus wraps. Its graphics and short quotations define or elaborate on the idea of the spectacle, for example Debord’s definition: “The Spectacle is not a collection of images but a social relation among people mediated by images....
The Spectacle in general as the concrete inversion of life, is the autonomist movement of the non-living... the liar has lied to himself.” 60p (about $1) from Spectacular Times, 94b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX, England.

--fg
Time spent getting to and from work is time stolen from us by bosses. And we’re not even getting paid for it! Soon the price to get to and from work is going up 15%! Cowardly and devious BART bureaucrats are planning to have the increase go into effect on April 1st, a Saturday—one of the days with the lowest number of riders. But mass actions on Friday, March 31st, and continuing on from that date, can be a major step in sinking the fare increase.

On Friday, March 31st
Everyone Ride For Free!

On April 1st BART Fares Are Going Up 15%:
Who’ll Be The Fool?
BART Workers & Riders Together,
Defy The Increase!
Let Employers Foot The Bill!

The 40% fare increase planned by BART management over the next 3 years is not an isolated event. It is part of an on-going war waged by the capitalist class against wage workers and the poor.

Everywhere we look we see examples of the rich shifting the costs of daily existence—and reproduction of the labor force—onto the working class: cutbacks in education, health, public assistance, public transit; lay-offs; wage and benefit decreases, massive university tuition increases... At the same time, we see a massive extension of the repressive powers of the state—more cops, more prisons, more people in jail in proportion to the general population than in any other country in the world.

The corporate media treats these developments as if they were caused by natural forces. Not true. They are the product of human constructed capitalist social-economic forces that can be changed and dismantled by human beings.

We live in a world dominated by capitalist social relations. Due to technological advances (particularly in telecommunications and shipping) capital is more mobile than ever before. The exploiting class that controls the economy is able to use this increased power as leverage to make more and more demands. If we don’t go along with their plans for making our lives worse (i.e. accept pitiful wages & benefits, lax environmental and safety regulations, low business taxes, and infrastructure subsidies) they tell us they’ll invest elsewhere. We’ve all heard it before.

Real power doesn’t come from the voting booth. Our only real source of power is through common action. This is becoming increasingly clear. The economy is capable of absorbing all forms of dissent that don’t actually impede its functioning. What the economy can’t so easily deal with is direct mass rebellion.

The bottom line is that employers and corporations in the Bay Area need BART so that wage slaves can get to work. IF WE REFUSE TO PAY, THEY’LL RUN THE TRAINS ANYWAY!

Contact Friends Of Black Bart at 2336 Market St. POB 17, SF 94114
NOTES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHORT REVIEWS

The Fifth Annual Conference on Social Ecology will convene on Friday, June 2 and continue through June 4 in New York City at Charas, 605 E. 9th St., (between B and C). Sponsored by the Institute for Global Ecology, the Bookchinist advocates of libertarian municipalism, it will present panels and discussions on Social Ecology & the Urban Alternative, Political Strategies, Radical History of the Lower East Side, Urban Environmentalism, and other topics. For information call: 718-963-4839 or write ISE Conference c/o Schlotterhausen, 220 18th St., Brooklyn, NY 11215.

The RSN (Revolutionary Socialist Network?) Conference was held somewhere in Britain on the 25/6th of February, 1995. The DB recently received a packet of articles and papers related to it and the groups that sponsored it from Collective Action Notes. Apparently three previous conferences have been held through the efforts of a group called the Bristol Marxist Forum. The contact person for the 1994 conference was Jeremy Clarke, 23 Monmouth Road, Bristol BS7 8LF, and for a “Regular Newsheet/Bulletin,” proposed at the 1995 conference, Dave Backwith, 16 Ditton Walk, Cambridge CB5 8QE. I hope readers in Britain will inquire about this conference and share the info with the DB.

The AK Distribution 1995 Catalog is bigger and better than its 1994 predecessor. With over eighty pages, it has transcended its roots as a catalog of strictly anarchist publications. We find four listings under Rosa Luxemburg, eleven under Dunayevskaya, one under Ben Perry, one under Marx and Engels, nine under Malcolm X, as well as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn 1, Glaberman 5, etc. $1 from PO Box 40682, San Francisco, CA 94140. British readers can obtain the U.K. version from AK Distribution, 22 Lutton