## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

DB73 will be arriving rather late. Normally we mail it on the first of the month, but the publication date has been set back by a lightning strike close to the house that knocked out the hard drive of my computer as well as the telephone. When the computer came back from New Jersey where it had been...
sent for repair, I found that the printer was also affected, and it too had to be sent away.

This appears to be a DeLeonism issue. It starts with a long article from the left communist paper Internationalism, (P.O. Box 288, New York, NY 10018) written in response to an article in the New Unionist (621 West Lake St., #210, Minneapolis, MN 55408) on the election of Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa and the benefits in terms of political democracy that workers there will reap. Internationalism, the U.S. branch of the International Communist Current (ICC), opposes capitalist democracy as a snare and a delusion for revolutionaries and blames Daniel De Leon for the position held by the New Unionists.

Although the expected debate on the revisions of DeLeonism published in DB70 has not materialized in the DB, recent issues of the DeLeonist Review, (P.O. Box 944, Station F, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4Y 2N9) have carried criticisms and the editor’s responses. The first of

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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DeLeonism and the Democratic Myth

The following response to Jeff Miller's reply to the ICC's criticism of the New Unionist for supporting the election of Nelson Mandela in South Africa as a gain for the proletariat appeared in Internationalism 88. In response to the ICC's charge that the NUP had fallen for the bourgeois democratic myth, Miller accused the ICC of distorting marxism and DeLeonism. We will take this opportunity to elaborate more fully on our criticisms of DeLeonism.

MARXISM AND BOURgeoIS DEMOCRACY

One of the underlying errors of DeLeonism is the failure to understand Marxism as a method of proletarian analysis which analyzes the conditions of proletarian struggle in the context of historic conditions. This error was illustrated repeatedly in the NUP text.

For example, Marx and Engels supported alliances with certain progressive factions of the bourgeoisie at certain moments under certain conditions in the last century. This position stemmed from an understanding that conditions were not yet ripe for proletarian revolution, that capitalist development had not run its course, that capitalist relations of production had not yet developed to the point that further development of the productive forces. Alliances with the progressive bourgeoisie were necessary to push aside feudal remnants that blocked the development of capitalism, which was itself a necessary precursor for the development of the modern proletariat which would in turn carry out the historic task of destroying class society.

Bourgeois democracy was the political form which best facilitated the developed of capitalism, so in the last century when proletarian revolution was not yet on the agenda, the proletarian movement would often support the democratic bourgeoisie in its struggle against the vestiges of feudalism.

Marx and Engels were always conscious of the need to reexamine their positions and to test theory against the experience of the class struggle. Thus for example, the experience of the Paris Commune in 1871 led Marx to consider many of the conceptions in the Communist Manifesto, written in 1847, to be outdated, including specifically the concept that the working class could "capture" the bourgeois state and use it for its own purposes. The Commune, Marx concluded, had shown instead that the proletariat must destroy the bourgeois state, that workers must "smash" the bourgeois state.

When the NUP text asserts that "DeLeonism offers a strategy for capturing and overthrowing the state that recognizes the actual institutional functioning of the bourgeois democratic state..." it uses an anachronistic formulation that revolutionary Marxism rejected as incorrect in 1871.

When the NUP says that Marx's motivation was "to create a democratic state and that it was within the context of bourgeois democracy that the class struggle between the working class and the bourgeois would be fought out to a finish," he takes Marx out of historic context and makes the alliance with the democratic bourgeoisie appear not as a tactical measure valid under certain historical conditions, but as a timeless principle.

The conditions that led Marx to support alliances with the progressive bourgeoisie no longer exist. Capitalism is no longer an historically expanding, progressive system. It is a system which reached its limits in the early part of this century, with the completion of the world market and dominant penetration of capitalist economic relations throughout the globe. From that time on, the continued existence of the capitalist system has been a fetter on the further development of the productive forces, which meant, following Marx's view, that the system was ripe for revolutionary overthrow. World War I signaled the onset of capitalist decadence and put proletarian revolution on the agenda. Revolutionaries at the time recognized that the choice was now "War or Revolution."

With the beginning of capitalist decadence, the nature of political and social institutions underwent a transformation, necessitated by the changed historical conditions. This was particularly true of bourgeois democracy, which during the ascendant phase had been the arena in which political differences within the ruling class were played out. In the previous period, rival factions had vied for control of the state apparatus, for the opportunity to put their particular policies into operation, which inevitably favored the development of one branch of industry over the other. Within this context, when real decision-making was taking place in parliament, that the revolutionary movement could run candidates for parliament, could push for durable reforms that could benefit the working class, such as the 8 hour day, the end to child labor, universal education etc. To improve the proletariat's chances to wrest gains from
the bourgeoisie, revolutionaries fought for the extension of the franchise in government elections.

However, when capitalism entered its decadent phase, there was an historic shift in the way bourgeoisie democracy functioned. Since the requirements of the national capital, as a whole, in its confrontation with rival national capitalisms became paramount in the conditions of a saturated world market, real power in the state shifted from the legislature to the executive, including especially the permanent bureaucracy. Real decision-making increasingly was made in a private and in secret, not in the open forum of parliament. Since it was no longer possible to wrest durable reforms from the capitalist system and the locus of real decision-making had shifted within the state apparatus, parliament was no longer an arena where workers could defend their interests. More and more parliament and elections became a democratic mystification, giving workers the illusion that were participating in the decisions that affected them.

Miller buys into this bourgeois democratic ideology when he writes snidely that in "the actual institutional functioning of the bourgeoisie democratic state...the one with the most votes wins. See, that's why Mandela is president of South Africa and Clinton is president of the U.S. - get it? That's why the capitalists spend their money to finance election campaigns, to help the candidates they like get the most votes so they can take political office." This type of "analysis" could be straight out of a junior high school civics textbook distributed by the bourgeoisie to indoctrinate impressionable teenagers; it is not Marxism. It accepts at face value the bourgeoisie's own description of electoralism. It fails to take into account the manipulative process by capitalism determines who the nominees will be, how the media is used to achieve electoral victory. In reality, the most important factions of the bourgeoisie decide on who will constitute the best ruling team and then manipulate the electoral process so that the one they have decided should win, actually receives the most votes.

Real decisions today are not made in parliament, much less in popular elections. Whoever is elected, the policies pursued by the government are essentially the same, and they are never what was promised in the campaign. No matter who is elected today, left, right, or center, austerity and attacks on the workers standard of living will be government policy. Johnson ran as a "peace" candidate in 1964 and pledged "No Wider War," only to escalate the war in Vietnam immediately after the election; Nixon promised a secret plan to end the war in 1968, only to escalate bombing and continue the war for another six years; Bush promised "No New Taxes," Clinton promised to welcome Haitian refugees, and then imposed a naval blockade to turn the refugees back.

In the ascendant phase of capitalism, when elections meant something, the bourgeoisie bitterly resisted attempts to extend suffrage. Now that voting is absolutely meaningless, except as a bourgeois mystification, the ruling class uses every tool at its disposal to drag people off to the polls. We are barraged by television commercials and billboards urging us to vote in America. In some European countries, it is against the law not to vote; if you don't vote you are fined. Why, if the ballot represented the potential for workers to destroy capitalism, would the bourgeois campaign so hard for us to vote?

The NUP writes that Marx said the working class must win the battle of democracy, as if Marx meant get elected to office. Let us examine what Marx actually said. In the Communist Manifesto, Marx made it clear that by winning the battle of democracy he meant the proletariat had to seize power by violent revolution. He wrote, "We have seen above, that the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy." Seven pages earlier we find what Marx was referring to when he said "we have seen above." In this passage he explains how the working class would raise itself to the position of ruling class with these words:

"In depicting the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we traced the more or less veiled class war, raging within existing society, up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat." How DeLeonism manages to convert these remarks into a view of a peaceful transition to socialism through victory at the ballot box in bourgeois democracy is a mystery.

The NUP writes that Engels emphasized the use of "legal means of mass political organizing instead of violent conspiracies" and that 'barricade revolutions' were a thing of the past. Here the NUP is referring to Engels' 1895 introduction to a new edition of Marx's The Class Struggles in France and once again the NUP takes Engels position out of context and draws conclusions from it which are totally unwarranted. Engels comments were an attack on attack on anarchists
and terrorists who rejected mass political work and parliamentarism and instead advocated terrorism and violent conspiracies. As we have said, under the conditions prevailing at the time it was possible for the proletariat to use parliament to defend its interests, and marxism has always rejected minority conspiracies to make the revolution and understood to the contrary that the revolution could only succeed if it were the result of the mass action of a class conscious proletariat. However, the nature of parliament has changed because of the changes in the historic development of capitalism, as we have pointed out, and the strategy of building proletarian strength in parliament is now outdated.

Engels warns against frittering away the strength of the proletarian movement in premature violent confrontations with the bourgeoisie is also well taken, not only under the conditions prevailing in 1895, but for later periods as well. One only needs to recall that the Bolsheviks took the position that conditions were not yet for revolutionary insurrection in the July Days in 1917.

When the DeLeonists cite this passage to support their contention that a peaceful transition to socialism is possible through the electoral process, however, they emulate the opportunists in the Second International, like Bernstein, not the left. Nor do they even correctly read Engels' own words. In this text Engels doesn't predict a peaceful passage to the revolution. On the contrary, Engels predicts that if the proletariat gets too strong, the bourgeoisie will not hesitate to "overthrow" their own democracy, commit a "breach of the constitution," and impose "absolutism" and "dictatorship." Engels writes, "If, therefore, you break the constitution...the Social Democracy is free, and can do as it pleases with regard to you. But it will hardly blurt out to you today what it is going to do then." Certainly, Engels is talking about using organized force to crush the bourgeoisie, a class civil war, not passing a resolution in parliament.

DELEONISM, PARLIAMENTARISM, AND REFORMISM

The NUP text refutes our charges of DeLeonism's parliamentarism by writing, "DeLeon attacked parliamentarism by name, which is the idea that incremental reforms achieved within bourgeois parliaments can eventually add up to socialism." (emphasis in the original) Here the problem is DeLeonism's historic political confusions in regard to marxist terminology. The belief that "incremental reforms achieved within bourgeois parliaments can eventually add up to socialism" is not parliamentarism, but reformism. DeLeonism's terminological confusion notwithstanding, for the rest of the revolutionary movement parliamentarism has always meant participating in parliament and parliamentary elections. There was a fierce debate, for example, in the early days of the Third International over the tactic of revolutionary parliamentarism, according to which revolutionaries should take advantage of the opportunity to run in parliamentary elections for propagandistic purposes. There was no illusion here about a peaceful, parliamentary path to revolution. In that debate, the Communist Left argued that the changed historic conditions ushered in by WW I meant that any participation in parliament would only contribute to the mystifying power of bourgeois democracy.

Unlike the advocates of revolutionary parliamentarism, who saw participation in parliamentary elections as a vehicle for educational propagandizing, DeLeonism actually sees participation in elections as the mechanism by which the proletariat takes power, which has a lot more in common with the perspective of reformism than revolutionary marxism.

In 1895, in What Means This Strike, DeLeon advocated that the proletariat take over the bourgeoisie state for its own purposes, and that it could do this through the ballot box. DeLeon wrote, "the aim of all intelligent class conscious working men must be to bring the government under the control of their own class by joining and electing the American wing of the International Socialist Party -- the Socialist Labor Party of America..." and "a labor organization must be perfectly clear upon the fact that it cannot reach safety until it has wrecked the government from the clutches of the capitalist class; and that it cannot do that unless it votes, not for MEN but for PRINCIPLES, and unless it votes into power its own class platform and program..." (Emphasis in original). These ideas were a departure from Marxism even in 1895, for the question of the need for workers to destroy the capitalism state was decided in the Paris Commune in 1871. Miller still spouts the same confusions when she a "majority vote for the revolutionary party" in capitalist elections as the linchpin of the revolution. Instead of denouncing bourgeois elections as a circus and a sham and a swindle, DeLeonism maintains that bourgeois elections are the point of liberation for the working class. That we insist is a departure from marxism.
In any event, DeLeon's much vaunted opposition to reformism was in reality quite confused. Whereas other revolutionaries in the late 19th and early 20th century correctly supported the struggle for reforms, DeLeon did not support that struggle. Instead he denounced the struggle for reforms as synonymous with the counter-revolutionary practice of reformism. In The Warning of the Gracchi (1902), DeLeon dismissed the day-to-day struggle of the working class with these words: "The characteristic weakness of the proletariat renders it prone to lures...short of the abolition of wage slavery, all 'improvements' either accrue to capitalism or are the merest moonshine." This view, which fails to see the link between the day-to-day defensive struggle of the proletariat and the revolutionary struggle, is still another example of DeLeon's departure from Marxism.

In Wages, Price and Profit, after pointing to the objective tendencies, which if unopposed, would continually lower the working class standard of living, Marx wrote:

"Such being the tendency of things in this system, is this saying that the working class ought to renounce their resistance against the encroachments of capital, and abandon their attempts at making the best of occasional chances for their temporary improvement? If they did, they would be degraded to one level mass of broke wretches beyond salvation...

"By cowardly giving way in their everyday conflict with capital, they would certainly disqualify themselves the initiating of any larger movement."

VIOLENCE AND REVOLUTION

The NUP writes that our equation of DeLeonism and pacifism is "a stroke of sheer desperation." The text insists that "the theoretical principle of non-violent revolution in DeLeonism does not derive from a philosophical moral absolute but from a sociological analysis of force and power in a modern technological, bourgeois-democratic society." Here again, part of the problem is the use of terminology. For Miller, pacifism is synonymous only with a Gandhi-like, turn-the-other-cheek, absolutist non-violence. Whereas, we use the term in the dictionary sense of opposition to violence and war.

The real issue here is the whether a non-violent revolution against capitalism today is possible. Miller is right that Engels wrote that force is the midwife of a new society. But the question, as Frank Girard points out in his Introduction to publication of the ICC/NUP debate in the Discussion Bulletin, is what is the difference between force and violence. Any honest reading of that passage in anti-Dühring will lead to the inescapable conclusion that Engels was not talking about vague, some non-violent coercion that Miller conjures up.

The NUP text claims that DeLeon's principles of non-violent revolution were based on an assessment of social forces in bourgeois democracy. What was this the nature of this assessment. In Socialist Reconstruction, De Leon wrote that a peaceful revolution was possible in the U.S., but that "in Europe a peaceful solution of the social question is out of all question." The reason, according to DeLeon, was that the U.S. bourgeoisie were cowardly swindlers who lacked a "feudal tradition which stressed valor," whereas the European ruling class was still heavily influenced by feudal traditions which stressed "deeds of valor." As the ICC wrote in Internationalism 24, "DeLeon's fascination with feudal valor probably reveals more about him than it does about the actual conditions of the class struggle. To tell the working class in the US that its bourgeoisie would shrink from a violent struggle -- despite the examples of the civil war, the genocide against the native American Indian population, of the proletariat's own experience at Haymarket, Homestead and Ludlow--was to set the working class up to be butchered. DeLeon's view probably reflected a belief that 'democracy' was less repressive, less brutal than more open dictatorships, but history has demonstrated that whatever form the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie takes it will not hesitate to vent its terror on the working class."

DeLeon spoke of the "ideal so dearly pursued by the Socialist--the peaceful solution of the social question (Socialist Reconstruction, emphasis in the original.) Elsewhere in the same text he wrote, "...the political movement bows to the methods of civilized discussion: it gives a chance to the peaceful solution of the great question at issue." (emphasis in original) Not much analysis here, but definitely a real commitment to non-violence. We believe that we do not distort DeLeon's view when we accuse him of a pacifist vision of proletarian revolution.

DeLeon's refusal to recognize that violence was inherent to the class struggle between the workers and the bourgeoisie translated into a disastrous intervention in the class struggle. In What Means this Strike, DeLeon wrote, "Look at the recent miners' strike; the men were shot down and the strike was lost; this happened in the very midst of a political campaign and these miners, who could at any election capture the government, or at least, by polling a big vote
against capitalism announce their advance towards freedom, are seen to turn right around and vote back into power the very class that just trampled on them."

Instead of concluding that a bourgeoisie that wouldn’t hesitate to shoot strikers down in cold blood would never surrender power peacefully, instead of seeing the necessity for workers to defend themselves against the state and the pinkertons, DeLeon called upon the workers to take to the ballot box. This view was in sharp contrast to that of Eugene Debs who, after the Ludlow massacre, called upon the miners union to distribute ten thousand rifles to the workers so that they could defend themselves.

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

The bourgeois democratic confusions in DeLeonism are so strong they inevitably lead to still another serious departure from marxism. DeLeonists, either down or deny the marxist position on the dictatorship of the proletariat. We can only guess that the word “dictatorship” is upsetting to the DeLeonist current, or that they have fallen for the bourgeois propaganda which has tried to portray the stalinist regime in Russia as the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Despite the fact that Engels and Marx used the term repeatedly to refer to their conception of the proletarian rule in the period of transition between capitalism and communism (Introduction to Civil War in France, Critique of the Gotha Programme), DeLeonists never use the term. The importance that Marx placed on the conception of the of the dictatorship of the proletariat can be seen in this excerpt from correspondence with Weydemeyer, dated March 5, 1852:

“And now as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society, nor yet the struggle between them. Long before me, bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle, and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did that was new was to prove: 1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production; 2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; 3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society.” Letter to Weydemeyer March 5, 1852.

We put the question to the NUP do you support the necessity for a dictatorship of the proletariat, or not. If you do not, on what basis do you depart from this basic tenet of marxism?

WORKERS COUNCILS AND REVOLUTION

The NUP writes that “since internationalism rejects both electoral politics and unions, it is impossible to fathom where the force you insist on is going to come from, unless you suppose a lot of tough talk and ridiculous anachronistic-purging are going to scare the capitalists to death.” This comment is either distinguishing or based on ignorance of the ICC positions on workers councils. Since 1905, whenever the working class has launched a struggle that seriously challenges capitalist rule it has organized itself in workers councils to coordinate its struggle. These councils, called soviets in Russia, have been based at the point of production, with revocable delegates being elected and sent on to regional and national levels. DeLeon’s model of Socialist Industrial Unionism recognized the same principle of organization at the workplace, but differed in keeping workers segregated by industry, with each industry sending representatives to a national coordinating body. This conception has been superceded by the working class in its real struggle, in which delegates from all workplaces, regardless of industry, are sent to a city-wide coordinating council, to a regional and national level, etc. In the 1980s in France and Italy we saw once again the rise of similar forms, what could be called the embryonic forms of workers councils, among workers in the hospitals and railroads in France, and the education sector in Italy. Similarly, during the outbreak of the mass strike in Poland in August 1980, the workers used the same type of organizational form when delegates were sent from factories around the country to the assembly at the Gdansk shipyard. DeLeon’s conception also called for these unions to be organized within capitalist society on a permanent basis. However, again, history has shown that these organs arise in the course of struggle and disband when the struggle dies down. Whenever these forms of organizations become permanent, they become incorporated into the state apparatus as a new union method for controlling the workers, as the experience of Solidarnosc demonstrates in Poland.

CONCLUSION

Having cut themselves off from the mainstream of the left communist movement for nearly
three quarters of the century, DeLeonists find themselves mired in the confusions and controversies of the Second International at the turn of the century. The ideas that the socialist revolution requires the violent overthrow of the capitalist class, that bourgeois democracy is a form of class dictatorship, that workers cannot advance their interests in parliament, that the workers’ revolutionary struggle must destroy the capitalist state and replace it with the dictatorship of the proletariat, that the workers councils are the historically discovered form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, are not controversial in the revolutionary marxist movement. And haven’t been for decades. The DeLeonist current, despite its many confused positions, remains proletarian because it has never crossed the class line to the side of bourgeoisie. At crucial, watershed moments in history which test the class nature of political organizations, particularly imperialist world war, DeLeonism has always refused to come to the side of imperialism, has always stuck to the defense of proletarian Internationalism. However, this is not enough to make a positive contribution to the class struggle, which we believe these comrades really want to do. They must be able to critically reexamine the history of DeLeonism and its serious distortions of the marxist tradition. JG

(from p. 2)
these—perhaps rather too complete for some readers’ taste—is published in this issue. Julian Prior’s letter comments on the language of “mechanical metaphor” (personifying inanimate things, as I understand it) and calls on DB writers to look to William Morris and, like him, to use the language of human experience. Next Ed Wizek, in an effort to bring about understanding between the World Socialist Movement (WSM) and DeLeonists, points out the advantages of the socialist industrial unionism as a model for a post-revolutionary society and ends by raising a couple of questions for WSMists.

Laurens Otter comments on the Communist Bulletin Group, a splinter from the International Communist Current, which has disbanded because its major premise—that war between the private capitalist West and the state capitalist East was inevitable—has proven false. Laurens goes on to say that both the SLP and the SPGB had denied the likelihood of such a war. Having handed out thousands of SLP leaflets that asserted the inevitability of such a war if our class didn’t organize to end capitalism in all its forms, I know he is wrong about the SLP.

Adam Buck’s letter accuses me of misrepresenting the SPGB’s “conception of revolution,” and I plead sort of guilty. In one respect it reminds me of the debate between advocates and opponents of abortion. Does life begin at the moment of conception or at birth? For the WSM does the revolution begin when socialist gain control of parliament or after parliament has made all the social and economic changes? Next I reply to Adam using an SPGB pamphlet, part of which is reprinted here.

Monroe Prussack reveals a constitutional plan for socialism that should appeal to the Michigan Militia. Although the next item, the document on left-wing politics from Subversion, focuses on the British political scene, it strikes me as a useful tool in the struggle against capitalism’s left wing. My major objection is to the article’s condemnation of “bourgeois democracy,” if that is meant to include such basics as freedom of speech, the press, etc. As usual we end with some short reviews, announcements, etc.

BULLETIN MATTERS

Finances

The DB is enjoying a surplus at this point mainly because we haven’t yet received the final repair bill on the copier. I looked into the possibility of returning to offset printing and found that the rock-bottom cost would be $150 per issue, and this was before the recent jump in paper prices. As you can see, we

(to p. 19)
"DEMOCRACY--POLITICAL AND INDUSTRIAL"

In the first issue of *The De Leonist Review* we advised readers that The De Leonist Society of Canada had adopted a changed position and program, one that incorporates both political and industrial democracy in socialist government. That issue also reproduced our position paper of the above title and noted that, as space permits, we would subsequently reproduce the debates that followed. Accordingly, what follows is an exchange between our society and Harry Banks of *The De Leonist Society of the U.S.*

* *

To The De Leonist Society of Canada
Comrade Shand and Sanderson:

This is responding to your thesis on Political Democracy in a classless Society. Stop dreaming!

De Leon is very clear and precise on that question, quoting from "Socialist Reconstruction of Society" page 45,

"The Political movement of labor, that, in the event of triumph, would prolong its existence a second after triumph would be a usurpation. It would be either a usurpation or the signal for a social catastrophe. On the other hand if the political triumph does find the working class industrially organized, then for the political movement to prolong its existence would be to attempt to usurp the powers which its very triumph announces have devolved upon the central administration of the industrial organization."

Your criticism of the use of the word "people" by De Leon and making an issue of it is ludicrous!

The main criticism of your "Thesis" is the fact that you made an unforgiving error for getting, and using the definition of the word "Political" in Websters Dictionary.

Would you also use a definition of "Surplus Value" in Websters Dictionary?

Would you not be better informed if you read about the meaning of the word Political, in "Ancient Society" by Lewis H. Morgan LL.D.??

The final error in your "Thesis" is the shattering thought, of Political Democracy in a Classless Society, and the origin of these misconceptions is the unscientific definition of the word Political.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Harry Banks
Dear Comrade Banks:

Thank you for yours of December 15.

Your reaction to our thesis is just what our own reaction would have been a few years ago. However, it is now abundantly clear to us that while Socialist Industrial Unionism answers the question of how to dispose of the capital class and institute a socialist industrial administration of things, it does not address the question of how society as a whole will be enabled to not only determine industrial policy but also resolve the many social issues that have come to the fore since De Leon's day. Apropos, the Advisory Committee itself presumably recognized the existence of a problem here when it endorsed our draft for the (now dated) WAR—WHY leaflet, the relevant passage occurring on the back page of this leaflet and reading: "With representation from industrial constituencies, supplemented by whatever representation is necessary from the nation-at-large to facilitate functions of government not directly concerned with production..." (Our emphasis.)

Now as to your allegation: "Your [Our] criticism of the use of the word 'people' by De Leon and making an issue of it is ludicrous!" You have obviously misunderstood the point we were trying to make. We took as our standard of socialist democracy De Leon's incomparable definition of Socialism, a definition containing the key phrase "by the people"—a phrase that unquestionably implies, and a phrase that democracy insists, must mean by the people-as-a-whole! No, our problem did not stem from De Leon's use of the word "people" but from the fact of a radical change in the "demography" of the people over a near century!—that is, that while in De Leon's day the work force (the people actively engaged in production) may have for all intents and purposes been broadly perceived as synonymous with the people (the people-as-a-whole), "the second industrial revolution" has destroyed the credibility of such perception. Just look at the composition of today's population—its fast-growing segment of retirees! Just contemplate the perfectly credible socialist scenario wherein the work force could become an actual minority of the adult population! In a word, we are convinced that the widening gap between the active producers and the rest of the population vis-a-vis the question of socialist democracy, far from being a "ludicrous" issue, has become a crucial issue that demands utmost consideration by all who recognize that in this respect De Leonism is not abreast of the times.

As to your "main criticism": "The main criticism of your [our] 'Thesis' is the fact that you [we] made an unforgiving [unforgivable?] error for getting, and using the definition of the word 'Political' in Webster's Dictionary." This, coupled with your assertion: "The final error in your 'Thesis' is the shattering thought of Political Democracy in a Classless Society, and the origin of these misconceptions is the unscientific definition of the word Political"—and further coupled with your admonition: "Would you [we] not be better informed if you read about the meaning of the word Political, in 'Ancient Society' by Lewis H. Morgan LL.D.?"

To begin our response to the above we would ask what makes you so sure that the Webster's definition of political which we employed is "unscientific"—that is, erroneous or ill-founded? We used this in the con-
text of an industrially-developed society to help convey our conviction that if it is to be truly democratic the legislative body of a socialist government, as distinct from its executive, must be directly responsible to a national electorate. Our many discussions under this head led us to at last realize that not sovereignty of the work force of the day but sovereignty of the whole people must become paramount. Not only does this conclusion harmonize with De Leon's concise definition of Socialism but it is also a reflection of a profound passage that is found towards the end of Eugene Sue's The Mysteries of the People--this grand and noble epic tale so admired by De Leon. Quoting the relevant passage:

"Our program contained in substance this: 'France is free, she wants a Constitution. She will accord to the provisional government no right but that to consult the nation. The people should not, and can not [must not?], alienate its sovereignty. [Our emphasis.] No more royalty. Let the executive power be delegated to an elected President, responsible and subject to recall. The legislative power should be reposed in an Assembly elected by universal suffrage. For these principles we have just exposed our lives and shed our blood, and we will uphold them at need by a new insurrection.'" (The Sword of Honor, vol. II, p.322.)

The connection between this splendid passage and our use of Webster's should now be crystal clear. Quoting from our thesis: "According to Webster, 'political' is among other things: 'of, relating to, or concerned with the making as distinguished from the administration of government policy.'" (Our emphasis.) With Sue's spokesman we firmly uphold the democratic principle of sovereignty of the people--a sovereignty that will have flesh and blood only on condition that the people-as-a-whole exercise the legislative power (i.e., determine government policy). We therefore ask on what basis do you find Webster's above-quoted definition of political "unscientific" and our use of it "unforgiving"? As you merely state but do not explain your position, we can only conclude that what you really object to is not Webster's definition per se but our insistence that sovereignty of the people requires political (as well as industrial) democracy--ergo, in your opinion, requires retention of the political State! But that is not our position! Not only do we hold that the State is a creature of class-divided society that must be abolished but that its abolition is a condition for the full flowering of political democracy!

In view of the foregoing, would you still claim our use of Webster's in this instance is wrong?

Incidentally, as regards your query--"Would you [we] also use a definition of 'Surplus Value' in Websters Dictionary?"--we decided to look up its definition and we quote as follows: "surplus value n: the difference in Marxist theory between the value of work done or of commodities produced by labor and the usu. [usual] subsistence wages paid by the employer" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, Copyright c 1979 by G. & C. Merriam Co.).

Granting that this definition does not touch upon relative surplus
value (an aspect that would seem to require more than a word or two to define), we nevertheless think it comes pretty close to the mark in defining what Marx defined as Absolute Surplus-Value, namely: "The prolongation of the working day beyond the point at which the labourer would have produced just an equivalent for the value of his labour-power, and the appropriation of that surplus-labour by capital, this is production of absolute surplus-value." (Capital, Vol. I, Chapt. XVI, Kerr edition.)

Speaking generally, we have no reservation in agreeing that much caution must indeed be taken in the use of dictionary definitions of sociological terms. At the same time we do not think a taboo should be placed on all such. In practice, therefore, we have rejected some as either ambiguous or unscientific while employing others that appeared faithful to our context.

Examples of the former are:

(1) "Among Webster's definitions of democracy are (1) 'A government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usu. involving periodically held free elections'; (2) 'The absence of hereditary or arbitrary class distinctions or privileges.'

The definitions bear thinking about....

"So much for ailing political democracy! What of Websterian economic democracy...what, simply, of 'the absence of hereditary or arbitrary class distinctions'? Underneath its fine feathers what is this but bourgeois democracy....Tak...en together, Webster's two foregoing definitions can well identify 'western democracies.' At the same time it cannot escape notice that by failing to totally exclude [economic] class from its ken the latter is irreconcilably at odds with the former." (Excerpt from the article GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE published in The De Leonist Society Bulletin, November 1986.)

(2) "According to Webster: The entrepreneur is 'one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise'....

"The definition cannot stand [as is]. The context is obviously small capitalist business; but although small, the entrepreneur is nevertheless not a one-man show. Like the large corporation he is an employer of wage labor." (Excerpt from the article THE ENTREPRENEUR published in The De Leonist Society Bulletin, June 1988.)

Examples of the latter (for which, be it noted, we received no objection):

(1) "According to Webster's, KNOWLEDGE is not merely 'the sum of what is known; the body of truth, information and principles acquired by mankind' but also '(1): the fact or condition of being aware of something (2): the range of one's information or understanding.'" (Excerpt from the article MORE THAN KNOWLEDGE IS NEEDED published in The De Leonist Society Bulletin, July 1985.)

(2) "Now socialist revisionism, according to Webster, is 'a movement in revolutionary Marxian socialism favoring an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary spirit.'" (Excerpt from the article SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY "CENTENNIAL" published in The De Leonist Society Bulletin, November 1990.)
"Dictatorship of the Proletariat is defined as 'absolute control of economic and political power in a country by a government of the working class (proletariat): regarded in Communist theory as a means of effecting the transition from capitalism to socialism.'" (Excerpt from SLP of Canada compilation entitled Recent SLP of America Changes, 1975-1977, copy of which was sent to the U.S. De Leonist Society.)

But we must now respond to your "main criticism" with a broader survey of that ubiquitous word political.

Let us first say that your prescription that we look into Morgan's Ancient Society was well taken by us. For the record, however, we should state here that while we are very far indeed from being fully conversant with this vast work (or with Engels' Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State) we had nevertheless explored relevant chapters in Morgan (especially "The Institution of Grecian Political Society") prior to drafting our thesis. We of course cannot know in advance what your conception of Political is when you ask us to look into Morgan for its meaning. Our own conception is a composite from a number of sources including Morgan.

In his The Rise of the West--A History of the Human Community (Copyright 1963, University of Chicago Press), W. H. McNeill quotes Aristotle to the effect that "Man is a political animal." What did Aristotle mean by "political"? Let's expand the excerpt thus:

"'Man is a political animal,' said Aristotle; and his definition was particularly apt for Greek antiquity, when the polis, or city-state, embraced almost all human concerns within its institutional frame." (P.209)

"The polis constituted the fundamental cell of both Greek and Roman civilized life. Physically, it consisted of a town or city with an area of farm and pasture land round about. Politically, it was a community governed by magistrates and laws....In its mature form, the Greek polis commanded an almost total dedication on the part of its citizens. Economics and politics, together with religion, art, literature, and philosophy, came to be pursued largely within its framework." (P.214)

In short, since the word political derives from the Greek polis, it would appear that political (polis-ical?) society begins with the appearance of the polis or city community.

Morgan's meaning is suggested by numerous passages, as for instance:

"Thus the Athenians founded the second great plan of government upon territory and upon property. They substituted a series of territorial aggregates in place of an ascending series of aggregates of persons....His [the citizen's] relations
to a gens or phratry ceased to govern his duties as a citizen. The contrast between the two systems is as marked as their difference was fundamental. A coalescence of the people into bodies politic in territorial areas now became complete."

(Ancient Society, Henry Holt & Co., 1907, p.272)

"As a consequence of the legislation of Cleisthenes, the gentes phratries and tribes were divested of their influence, because their powers were taken from them and vested in the deme, the local tribe and the state, which became from henceforth the sources of all political power." (P.273. Our emphasis.)

Thus in Morgan it would seem that "bodies politic" (political bodies) are citizen bodies of the poleis (cities), or of the demes or local tribes as the case may be; and further, that "political power" manifests itself first as local self-government of the polis--or of the deme, as the case may be, and subsequently as government embracing larger territorial areas.

At the same time, the second of the above quotes taken from Morgan infers that the gentes, phratries and tribes who first settled in poleis did at first exercise political power!

That such was indeed the case seems amply demonstrated elsewhere by Morgan wherein he attributes the downfall of gentile municipal government to its increasing demands to the conflict between the needs of fast-growing urban communities of both indigenous people and aliens. But that is not all. Corroborating Morgan, Engels, too, makes the point that political government was first undertaken by organs of gentile society--albeit that the growth in size and complexity of the political units eventually made gentile political government no longer viable. Quoting Engels: "The gentes, phratries, and tribes, whose members were now scattered over all Attica and thoroughly intermixed, had thus become useless as political bodies..." (Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, International Publishers, p.105.) Need we add that what had "become useless" must thereby have at one time been useful?

* 

But what about the word "state" in McNeill's term "city-state"? In the Grecian example, by the middle of the first millennium B.C. the tribes of Attica had already coalesced and completed the transition from gentile to political government; in short, had evolved the Athenian city-state. The point that must now be addressed is Morgan's use of the word "state."

To us, "state" denotes not only a politically-organized people occupying a definite territory but also a society characterized by economic class division and class rule. The seeming problem here is that while Morgan does not hide the fact that the Athenian citizenry was supported by a slave class, he nevertheless employs the term "free state" to describe Athenian democratic institutions. However, the apparent contradiction seems largely resolved when we discover that Morgan's purview here is not all the inhabitants of Athens but only its citizens, and that within this frame he provides evidence that, with few short-lived exceptions, the citizen body enjoyed an epoch of political democracy. For instance:
"Cleisthenes...placed the Athenian political system upon the foundation on which it remained to the close of the independent existence of the commonwealth." (Ancient Society, p.270.)

"Omitting minor particulars, we find the instructive and remarkable fact that the township, as first instituted, possessed all the powers of local self-government....Freedom in religion is also noticeable, which was placed where it rightfully belongs, under the control of the people. All registered citizens were free, and equal in their rights and privileges, with the exception of equal eligibility to the higher offices. Such was the new unit of organization in Athenian political society, at once a model for a free state, and a marvel of wisdom and knowledge. The Athenians commenced with a democratic organization at the point where every people must commence who desire to create a free state, and place the control of the government in the hands of its citizens." (pp. 270-1)

"The classes...both those instituted by Theseus and those afterwards created by Solon, disappeared after the time of Cleisthenes." (p.273)

"Usurpations not unlikely occurred, followed by controversies...but they [the Athenians] never lost their liberties, or those ideas of freedom and of the right of self-government which had been their inheritance in all ages." (p.274)

In sum, while Morgan shows that the citizens of Athens acquired a high degree of political democracy, the fact remains that this was predicated upon state subjugation of an enslaved class of producers. But is political democracy to be thereby regarded as incompatible with a classless industrial society? Marxists—De Leonists have long held such position, a position exemplified in the following excerpt from the Weekly People's Question Period column of December 7, 1974, in answer to the question "Why is political government outmoded?"

"To put it plainly and simply, political government must go because it cannot administer society's productive machinery in the interest of society. Indeed, the very fact of the political state's existence is evidence that the productive machinery is not being operated for society's benefit, but rather that classes or bureaucratic masters are the beneficiaries."

And here is the crux of the problem! In this one paragraph "political usage" is equated with "political state"! We believe such synonymous usage has been the source of untold confusion on the question of socialist democracy. Obviously political government is today unfit to administer industrial production and distribution in the interest of society (or for that matter, today, in a ruling class interest). However, it should become equally obvious that an industrial administration is unfit to handle, much less resolve, today's manifold problems of a socio-political nature. At the same time, by what reasoning? is the conclusion reached that whereas political democracy was in the past and is now, wedded to the State, so it ever shall be, world without end! In our view, there is nothing inherently oppressive or undemocratic in political representation from geographic constituencies. The problem lies in the
present manipulation and control of the political field and political
government by ruling class interests. When these interests are dethroned
through the political mandate of society, backed up by the seizure and
administration of industry by the industrially-organized workers, the po-
itical field and political government (reformed to suit classless so-
ciety's needs) can provide the necessary forum and machinery to enable
society-as-a-whole to discuss and determine social policy. Where such
policy pertains to industry, it will be carried out by the workers through
their Industrial Union organization.

As to the presently oppressive organs of the State (e.g., armies,
police, courts, prisons), the question is, are all these inherently oppres-
sive or is it their ruling class control and application that makes them
so? If they are indeed inherently oppressive then it would seem they
should be quickly eliminated. However, in view of the terrible legacy
that will be left us by class rule, it may be that some of these organs
will be necessary at least for a time after a socialist revolution. For
the sake of argument, consider the problem of crime. It should be readily
admitted that the advent of Socialism will not immediately rid society of
the pervasive crime that Capitalism will undoubtedly hand it. How, then,
is Socialism to address the problem if not through police, criminal law,
courthouses and judiciary, jails and penitentiaries, etc.? The signifi-
cant point that we therefore again emphasize here is not a continued exis-
tence of coercive organs per se, but that with the outlawing of economic
class and class rule these organs would no longer oppress but would merely
keep order.

As we see it, therefore, your statement that "The final error in
your [our] 'Thesis' is the shattering thought, of Political Democracy in
a Classless Society" is not an error on our part. Lacking a convincing
argument to the contrary, what our thought shatters is a misconception-
the misconception that political democracy cannot be divorced from the po-
itical State! Here, as in so many other instances it is economic devel-
opment that is the determining factor. In ancient Athens, the citizen
body enjoyed political democracy on a material foundation of wealth lifted
from slave labor--under a political State umbrella designed to keep the
slave in slavery. But apropos is the following quote from De Leon's essay,
"The Materialist Conception of History," as it appears in the pamphlet
Abolition of Poverty:

"The set typified by Aristotle and Xenophon looked upon involuntary poverty
as an evil, but a necessary, an unavoidable evil. The Aristotelian passage,
cited by Marx,--"If every tool, when summoned, or even of its own accord, could
do the work that befits it, just as the creations of Daedalus moved of themselves,
or the tripods of Hephaestos went of their own accord to their sacred work, if
the weaver's shuttles were to weave of themselves, then there would be no need
either of apprentices for the master workers, or of slaves for the lords'--this
passage strikes the key-note of the reasoning of this set."

Today, however, is it not evident that industrial development has reached the point where
"the weaver's shuttles" do indeed "weave of themselves"? where an abundance for all is
produceable with a minimum of toll by any? where the servitude of Labor is no longer the
price of political democracy? and where, therefore, Labor's emancipatory act should be-
stow not only industrial democracy--but also political democracy stripped of its class
content? In a word, we think that instead of depriving the people of the political
democracy they now have, the De Leonist program should be a portal to realms of
self-government whose limits can not yet be imagined! Our keynote throughout has therefore been sovereignty of the people—a principle or cause upheld, as we have shown, by De Leon in his definition of Socialism, by Sue’s spokesman, and as is clearly evident in Ancient Society, by Morgan himself—as for instance:

"As the unit, so the compound. It is here that the people, as before remarked, must begin if they would learn the art of self-government, and maintain equal laws, and equal rights and privileges. They must retain in their hands all the powers of society not necessary to the state [Obviously, here, not the Marxist state but a democratically-controlled executive body of the nation, federation, or commonwealth.] to ensure an efficient general administration, as well as the control of the administration itself." (P.275. Our emphasis.)

In conclusion we wish to comment on your opening salvo—that De Leon "is very clear and precise" as regards "your [our] thesis on Political Democracy in a Classless Society." Here you quote relevant passages from De Leon’s Socialist Reconstruction of Society address—passages that would indeed constitute a knockout blow to our position were it not for one highly significant circumstance that easily renders the blow harmless. Consider the following, which you quoted:

"On the other hand, if the political triumph does find the working class industrially organized, then for the political movement to prolong its existence would be to attempt to usurp the powers which its very triumph announces have devolved upon the central administration of the industrial organization."

This is unquestionably a potent argument, nevertheless the circumstance that would render it impotent is an amended question!—a question that would make it clear that what the nation would be asked to agree to would NOT! be devolution of its powers upon an industrial organization but delegation of industrial executive authority to an industrial organization responsible to the people through a political legislative assembly!

* *

Our hope is that our thesis will not be finally received by our U.S. comrades as an impudent or thoughtless attack on De Leonism but as an earnest and reasoned effort to adjust it to conditions now prevailing. Our new position has been several years in the making. We now ask that it be accepted or rejected on its merits. Perhaps we will yet receive an argument that will defeat ours. If so, we must surrender our position. Otherwise we will conceive it our duty to propagate an amended De Leonist program—a program of Political and Industrial Democracy.

Fraternally,

THE DE LEONIST SOCIETY
OF CANADA
Dear Comrades,

Reading the debate between Steve Zaalai and Robin Cox (D.B's 71 & 72) I am reminded of E.P. Thompson's brilliant polemic against the European Althusserian Marxists in the 1970's, for whom capitalism was always to be understood in terms of different "levels" or "structures" (economic, political, ideological etc.) always reducible "ultimately" or in the "final analysis" to the economic base or mode of production. Hence we have Robin - "capitalism is itself an essentially economic construction", and Steve - "Capitalism includes all of the changing political appliances attached to it. It is the political power which maintains capitalism, not its economic power." Again, Robin - "by capitalism we mean a specific mode of production which entails a specific set of class relations to the mode of production..." and Steve - "Socialism, on the other hand, is a basic change in economic structure..."

What this kind of language does is purge history of living, breathing human beings by bestowing inanimate objects -- structures -- with human qualities; it is language which "fetishes" ("it is the political power which maintains capitalism...""). In Thompson's words, these are "mechanical metaphors" derived "from constructional engineering (similar to the boxes and building terms beloved by some sociologists) (which are) inadequate to describe the flux of conflict, the dialectic of a changing social process... All the metaphors which are commonly offered have a tendency to lead the mind into schematic modes and away from the interaction of being-consciousness." The unfortunate consequence of this is often that "revolutionary economic man is offered as the antithesis to exploited economic man" (E.P. Thompson - The Poverty of Theory and other essays, 1978, 79-83).

If capitalism is "essentially" anything, then, it is "essentially" struggle - or more accurately class struggle, the multifarious ways that capital seeks to dominate and exploit "living labour" (those of us -- waged and unwaged -- who have to work for a living), and in return, the resistance to this exploitation which can take many forms. For sure the forms assumed by class struggle can be "economic" or "political" (the demand for higher wages, better working conditions, the defense of social programs, the struggle to form unions, the replacement of an obnoxious state capitalist regime). However, the class we can come to assigning an ultimately determining role to "economics" (whatever that is) under capitalism is perhaps by demonstrating that, in Thompson's words, capitalism has an "innate tendency to reduce all human relationships to economic definitions" (84). The important point here is that this must be demonstrated empirically, not assumed. A metaphor is sometimes useful but it cannot substitute for an explanation. Explaining how and why capitalism reduces us to wage labourers, to commodities, to spectators over our own lives etc., involves much, much more than the assertion of glib, historical terms such as "economic base," "mode of production," or "political superstructure." It involves above all the need to focus on social and cultural practices, on relationships, on processes, on the everyday lives of women and men. "Economics" doesn't act; "politics" doesn't act; even "classes" (as "things") don't act. Real people struggling to change their circumstances and being changed by them act, and it is these people who are going to bring about a post-capitalist society, not bases and superstructures.

The roots of such fetishised language are, I suspect, to be found in Marx and Engels (who, as Thompson notes, were unable completely to throw off the static and mechanical language of the political economists they critiqued), and the Second International. Steve and Robin are in good company then; indeed, since the origins of both the SPGB/WSM and SLP lie in this period it is hardly surprising that the pages of the Socialist Standard and the Discussion Bulletin are often conspicuously marked by concepts derived from classical political economy. I want to suggest an alternative, perhaps even a complimentary alternative, for libertarian socialists. Let's take seriously Marx and Engels' project of establishing a Critique of political economy but...
let's see this not just as a critique of the inadequacies of Ricardo's theory of value, but as a critique of the very categories of political economy themselves, the categories of "absolute surplus value," of "competition between capitalists," of "economic laws," of the "logic of capital accumulation." Let's see the 3 volumes of Capital, not as the culmination of Marx and Engels' work or as the foundation for a preferred "scientific socialism," but as one part of a much larger projected project which was to include books on wage labour, the state, the world market etc. In short, let's acknowledge that the language of libertarian socialism should start from -- or at least include -- the categories of human experience and the many-sidedness of human needs rather than the abstract and one-sided language of capital. If we are indeed to go beyond capitalism, is it not more appropriate to derive our concepts from the historical attempts of workers to resist and transcend exploitation, to oppose being slotted into "economic categories"?

After all, we do have a predecessor for this, a libertarian socialist and contemporary of Marx and Engels for whom the "innate moral baseness" of the capitalist system... was founded upon forms of exploitation which are simultaneously economic, moral and cultural (Thompson, 84). Not for this man "immutable laws," "bases," and "structures," but the constant struggle of women and men against an inhumane and exploitative system and the need to go beyond it:

"I pondered how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name" (William Morris - A Dream of John Ball).

Julian Prior
Vancouver, B.C., Canada

1 note - this argument is developed further in Michael Lebowitz's excellent Beyond Capital (St. Martin's Press, 1992).

(from p. 8)
can pay out quite a bit for copier maintenance and still come out ahead, if I do the work on the copier.

Sometimes I wish I had never included a balance sheet in the DB. Actually it dates back to the very first issue when I began the DB with funds contributed mostly by exSLPers who I felt would want an accounting. It was printed on a separate sheet and enclosed only with the copies of those who contributed. Changes in the format of the DB have resulted in it's being included here, where it demonstrates my lack of talent and interest in bookkeeping. Ben Perry, who was a math major in college, used to refer to my innumeracy as evidenced by the DB accounting. Part of my problem is the remittances from outside the U.S., which I can't enter until the bank finishes figuring their worth in U.S. currency, by which time I have forgotten them and fail to include them in the receipts. At any rate our income is up a bit, and balance will probably cover the repair bill when it comes.

Contributions: Ed Wizek $25; Julian Prior $5; Joseph Tupper $25; Jerry Maher $7; Frank Girard $22; Tom Holzinger $15; Milton Herder $19. Total $118. Thank you, comrades.

BALANCE

June 25, 1995

$41.17

(to p. 31)
TOWARD WSM-IU UNDERSTANDING

I have read Steve Szalai's response to Frank Girard and believe there is a misunderstanding of the DeLeonist program.

Steve writes: "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."

POLITICAL POWER NOT ENOUGH

The WSM assumes that the world's ruling classes will respect the "legitimacy" of the vote for Socialism. Steve writes, "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 Socialist Salvador Allende had a majority vote in Chile and his political program was resisted or blocked by the economic power of reactionaries (also, CIA) who fomented unrest and led to his death. Capturing the State, per se, solves no problems for workers.

THE DUAL POWERS OF LABOR

DeLeon made very clear the role of the political party of labor (power of numbers) is to contest with the Capitalist Class for control of the state; and once workers attain state power, to abolish the State outright and BACK IT UP with the economic might (power of possession) of Industrial Unions.

ATTEMPT PEACEFUL REVOLUTION

In the United States where the DeLeonist Program applies (HIGHER INDUSTRIALIZED), we have an amendable Constitution which affords the right to abolish private property in the means of production just as in the last century it was amended to abolish private property in Slaves. We also have the right to alter or abolish the Constitution and set up "new systems of government".

The outright abolition of the State means that it be dismantled and transfer any useful functions to workers organized in industries and services. So long as needed, coercive State functions will be integrated with Industrial Unions along with lifeguards, traffic control, fire, paramedics and others which provide for public safety.

INDUSTRIAL UNIONS UNIQUE

Industrial Unions are different from other unions. Workers cannot be fired or laid off because workers form Industrial Unions to take, hold and operate the socialized means of production to assure production for use. Today workers occupy the means of production to do their jobs; the new society can be organized as simply as workers going to work, if they have a plan how to organize—to take and hold their jobs.
FROM HERE TO THERE

For example, the Air Controllers, freed from State domination, will function within the transport industrial union where finally, their concerns for air safety will be heeded. The functions of the Federal Aviation Administration which is supposed to oversee airline safety (grossly negligent under Capitalism)—these workers will also become part of the transport industry where they can do their jobs without the constraints of State and Capitalist profits. The workers in the Coast Guard will become part of the maritime Industrial Union and carry out their needed functions of rescue and safety. Likewise other useful and necessary State functions will be integrated into Industrial Unions like water works, power plants, highway and parks, etc. There are over 12 million on State payrolls and many will have to be retrained for useful jobs in Industrial Unions.

The only way to assure a smooth transfer from State and private control to worker’s control is by means of Industrial Unions which are not arbitrary but well defined by the way workers are organized to carry out their jobs.

PLAN AHEAD OR PERISH

Now, Steve insists that workers don’t need a plan. They will work it out once the State is abolished. Experience in the Russian Revolution shows that this may be partly true but the Worker’s Opposition was crushed before it had a chance to form a concerted plan. Better to have one in advance.

My point is the revolutionary moment is not static. Just as in Russia, reactionaries (even in radical clothing) will be at work to do their job—THEY HAVE A PLAN. One of the slimy modern tactics is “mind-befuddle”, you know what I mean. To issue a false divisive statement and attribute it to opposing groups. It was part of the “dirty tricks” in the Nixon Campaign and ruling classes have perfected this tactic to a science. The CIA used it to create suspicion and unrest to ultimately unseat Salvador Allende in Chile.

Workers need a clear plan of their own in advance or they will probably end up with someone else’s plan. The Industrial Union is not and cannot be established or controlled by DeLeonists—only workers have that capability and we call it worker’s power because worker occupation of industry gives might to back up the ballot—an economic force, Industrial Unions.

BLUEPRINT NO PROBLEM

I see no problem in calling the plan a blueprint. Maybe in the old days blueprints were cast in concrete. Today they are computer drawn and changed continually from beginning of project to completion. Workers are part of the changing process. Most important, workers are used to working blueprints and following or changing them to
do their jobs. Their jobs under Capitalism fully prepare them for their jobs under the new society—to run industry and produce for use.

I recall a cartoon on a machine shop bulletin board. The old timer goes to the boss/engineer and asks, "DO YOU WANT ME TO FOLLOW YOUR BLUEPRINT. OR DO YOU WANT ME TO MAKE THIS THING SO IT WILL WORK?" The Industrial Union plan is flexibly aimed to keep things working, goods and services flowing to satisfy our needs.

Steve claims that projecting a plan based on possibilities for a new society is somehow binding, dictatorial and that it implies "nobody is really capable, without supervision, of making decisions? Except for the WSM....."—which, of course, seems to have no plan.

Fact is that workers run industry today and the parameters for self-supervision are already established by socialized production under Capitalism. If you have MacDonald's as we do in the U.S., watch each person work his station without supervision, or minimal, at best.

The newly hired counter worker may call out orders to the manager who is working the grill. Many times, it is difficult to even determine the manager—they work as a team. Who tells them what to do? Their activities are based upon customer demand. When customer demand slackens, they do cleanup and housekeeping as part of their pre-determined tasks to keep that unit producing.

In modern production workers are accustomed to do their jobs with a minimum of supervision. In a way, the functions of their jobs directs their activities. That is why the bosses want the power to speed up the assembly line—let the work itself be the driving force of supervision and greater profit.

Industrial Unions nullify the boss's power—when workers take and hold the means of production, they assume control of their work and continue production at their own determined speed. How do they decide without some kind of meeting or vote? If Steve were on that assembly line, I don't think he would find such a vote "a pain in the butt".

**WORKER & COMMUNITY DECISIONS**

In a class-less society, all of us will be worker/consumers. There will be workers in training, active workers and retired workers. Regardless of worker status, all of us will be consumers. How is PRODUCTION FOR USE to be determined? By the needs of all of us—THE WORKER/CONSUMERS. There is no dichotomy here.
Workers take turns at the wheels of production to satisfy our needs as consumers.

Consumer needs can be individual or community. The individual indicates what is needed by what is taken "individually" from the public stores. Suppose individuals want new products, or the community wants a new music center, a playground or a compost garden center?

How may we place new demands on the economy. Worker/consumers will express their needs through their community consumer organizations interfacing with appropriate local industrial unions which will put them on the "production for use" agenda. There is no conflict between consumer and producer. Determining needs and satisfying them are integral parts of Industrial Union Society.

NO BOUNDARIES FOR INDUSTRIAL UNIONS

When the State is abolished, we no longer have national or geographic boundaries. Boundaries are essential components of a State— but meaningless to Industrial Unions. That means the Industrial Unions of workers will not respect borders and will be extended as fast and far as workers throughout the world can organize.

Industrial Unions will be integrated with workers organized at the point of production throughout the world. This means PRODUCTION FOR USE, as it is organized, will immediately address the un-met needs of the world's population. It means the unemployed, the dis-employed (military, unproductive workers, etc.) will immediately be incorporated in Industrial Unions where they are assured the full social value of their efforts and less inclined to the possible lures of reaction.

To me it is important that the WSM and Industrial Unionists resolve their pent up misunderstanding now. Assuming the success of WSM in achieving a world majority vote, there would still remain the problem of organizing world wide production to satisfy human need. If workers, at that time, decide upon Industrial Union organization as a means to do this, would the WSM be opposed?

Assuming the successful abolitions of the State and establishment of Industrial Unions in the United States, would the WSM be opposed to their expansion throughout the world?

These are practical class conscious questions which our interchanges in the Bulletin should address if we are to avoid the Capitalist Class playing one group against the other in a crisis. Concern for our class; knowing its strengths and weaknesses; its need for education and unity—should motivate our drive for mutual understanding and accommodation.

TOWARD SOLIDARITY, Ed Wizek
Communist Bulletin's Testament.

The other day, as Communist Bulletin announced its demise, it remarked that the unifying basis for all the "Communist Left" had been the common belief that war between the two great power capitalist blocks (Western & Stalinist) had been inevitable; and that now with the collapse of the Stalinist regime in the USSR this had proved false & C.B. praised itself for being the only sector of the "ultra left" to recognize that the facts had disproved its theory & consequently had dissolved itself.

Did the "ultra left" so universally hold that war was inevitable? If, by "ultra left" one confines one's self to the Italian Left, perhaps; (partly because in their reading of Marx's analysis that Booms inevitably lead to slumps which could only be cured by war, they saw the "curative" role of war as being the destruction of capital which would then have to be rebuilt; rather than as the occasion of vast advances in technology;) perhaps also any Luxemburgist-KAPDist faction may so have done; though by no means all "Councillist" factions have been so dogmatic.

The analysis of groups descended from the Italian Left moreover never seemed to consider just how destructive war in a nuclear age would be; very often they would talk as if such a war would provide the opportunity for a socialist revolution. Given that any future world war could destroy mankind completely, & if it failed to do that, it would almost take mankind back to the stone age, the idea of a social revolution resulting from it was apt to strike readers as remarkably foolish.

The SPGB & the De Leonists on the contrary have been almost equally dogmatic in denying the likelihood of such a war.

Most anarchists saw the Cold War as being useful for both power blocks in supplying a propaganda excuse: "Look at those beastly people over there, attempting to impose Capitalism/Communism on the world; they want to restore our Tzar/impose one party dictatorship on us; we must resist them to the death, everyone must make sacrifices; though there appear to be notable exceptions; we cannot afford good wages/social services, equality for Racial Minorities/Women, until the monster is overthrown.

Some anarchists (like the Spugubs) deduced from this that the Cold War was a total charade, that both sides knew they needed each other so much that war was not merely unlikely but impossible. Others of us, while agreeing that the people at the top on both sides in the Cold War, must have been aware that they had in more in common with their fellow super-rulers than they had with their victims; nevertheless argued that the bluff could only work if the people who had not quite reached the top of the tree, (those say at Brigadier level,) actually believed their side's propaganda. That this being so the world was kept in tension on a knife edge, the tension could break a war could be occasioned by an accidental misjudgement.

So contrary to the Communist Bulletin swansong, by no means all the "Ultra Left" had to believe in an inevitable military conflict between the two power blocks. It is indeed worth considering why a significant minority of the "ultra left" erected this dogma into a central pillar of its theory. The Italian Left, though it never accepted Lenin's theory of Imperialism, nevertheless conformed to a broadly Leninist view of the 1917 Revolution, & despite its Luxemburgism adopted more or less bolshevist party-organizational forms. So even though for over 60
years. The Italian Left groups have regarded the Soviet Union as being capitalist, their "ultra Leftism" has nevertheless been "ultra-Leninism" rather than the rejection of Leninism common to anarchists, councilists, spugubs & De Leonists. However much of Lenin had been discarded as involving a compromise with capitalism the central concept of war being the only bringer of revolutionary opportunity was retained.

Laurens Otter

Dear Frank

You've done it again! Repeated your misconception that the SPGB and the World Socialist Movement have a purely parliamentary conception of revolution, that is, and this despite having been corrected many times on this point.

Indeed, the particular words you used (DB72, page 20) suggest that we actually identify the social revolution with the winning of a parliamentary majority! You wrote: "Like social democrats from Norway to Israel they believe that social revolution is synonymous with winning control of parliament".

In fact we hold that winning control of parliament is one means (the best under most circumstances) that should be employed by the socialist-minded working-class majority in the course of the socialist revolution to take control of the state machine out of the hands of the capitalist class. It is not the social revolution itself, which is obviously the transformation of the basis of society from class to common ownership, the actual transfer of ownership and control of productive resources from the capitalist minority who at present monopolise them to the community as a whole.

But what a statement you made! Who besides Frank Girard believes that the Social Democrats in Norway and Israel --who happen at the moment to be in power, with parliamentary majorities-- have anything to do with socialism or social revolution? Certainly they don't themselves, but there are possibilities here for a new game of devising nonsense statements.

What about "like fascists from Berlin to Buenos Aires syndicalists believe that social revolution is synonymous with direct action" or "like Bolsheviks from North Korea to Cuba anarchists believe that social revolution is synonymous with smashing the state".

Perhaps your readers can think up other such nonsense statements.

Entries please, marked "nonsense statement", to Frank Girard, PO Box 1564, Grand Rapids, MI 49504, USA.

Yours for Socialism,


Dear Comrades,

Write in haste, repent at leisure. Clearly I need an editor as well as a bookkeeper. But let's put back into context the sentence in DB72 that so upset Adam. The context was a letter in which I was commenting on the common political roots of both the World Socialist Movement (WSM) and the DeLeonists/Socialist Labor Party (DL/SLP) in the pre-1900 Second International. Both groups opposed the reformism that swept the social democratic parties of the Second International and both separated themselves from the larger reformist parties, as did revolutionary elements in many other parties of the Second International. At the same time both
retained what strikes me as an inordinate confidence in the electoral aspect of the political democracy the capitalist class in advanced industrial nations of western Europe and North America had felt safe in bestowing on their working class.

The divergence between the two groups began with the SLP's attempts to create a revolutionary union movement. By 1905 it had cross-fertilized with European syndicalism and involved the SLP in the organization of the IWW. There the party espoused a dual political and economic approach to the revolutionary act. It called on workers to elect revolutionary socialists to office and also to organize industrially to take over the means of production and run them for the benefit of society. It is this synthesis of political and economic action that DeLeonists regard as a major contribution to revolutionary socialist theory. For one thing it removes the revolutionary act from the aegis of a party and places it in the hands of our class, who occupy and run the industries. It also relegates electoral politics to a minor role. Although DeLeonists have always insisted on the importance of participation in elections, electing revolutionary socialists to Congress will simply confirm an accomplished fact. They won't have to dismantle the state, they can just abolish it. Officially—for legal reasons, we members always assumed—the SLP's argument ran that the Socialist Industrial Unions would enforce a victory at the polls by simply taking over the means of production; in practice we believed that the actions would be reversed. Workers would not wait for an election.

Not having gone through the union experience of the SLP, WSM theorists never freed themselves from the purely electoral view of revolution that informed the thinking of the parties in the Second International. The revolution must wait for the election. The revolutionary changes will be effected through the use of the machinery of the state, now manned by socialists.

In my DB72 letter I then went on to put too fine—and too inflammatory—a point on it: "Like social democrats from Norway to Israel, they (the WSM) believe that the social revolution is synonymous with winning control of parliament." An editor would probably have had me replace is synonymous with begins; he might also have had the same doubts Adam expressed about the revolutionary goal of social democrats from Norway to Israel. I believe, though, that appearances aside, the ultimate goal officially of social democratic parties is still the classless society we call socialism.

As to Adam's denial that "the SPGB and the World Socialist Movement have a purely parliamentary conception of revolution" I leave the matter to readers' judgement. They will find all of Chapter 2, "The Political Objective," (pages 8-10, minus graphics) of Socialism as a Practical Alternative on an adjoining page. There is certainly a role for workers: voting for delegates who will exercise the power of the state, strip capitalists of their wealth, convert productive wealth into common property, etc— even defend the revolutionary government with the military if necessary. (See paragraphs 1, 6, 7, and 8.) The role of workers once they have voted for socialism appears to be little more than waiting for the political state and the new socialist administration to institute socialism.

Incidentally, I can also see some problems with the DeLeonist scenario for the post-revolutionary society. They hinge on De Leon's use of the term "central directing authority," to describe the industrial government at the top level. All three words suggest a top-down authoritarian structure.

The good thing is that it is highly unlikely that our class will pay much attention to the "programmes of action," SIU charts, or other pronouncements by existing socialist parties once conditions and our agitation have brought them to the point of revolution.

Frank Girard
CHAPTER 2: THE POLITICAL OBJECTIVE

The question of what would be the basic features of democratic organisation in socialism cannot be separated from the objective which the socialist movement is now organised to achieve. Initially, the outcome of the present political work would be the gaining of control of all the powers and machinery of governments. The achievement of this objective will mean that socialist delegates will be in place, locally, nationally and, in the case of bodies such as the European Parliament, internationally.

More than this, the socialist movement is a world movement. The interest of workers is a common world interest and therefore rises above existing national or international political structures. In representing this interest the socialist movement must take control as a coordinated world movement.

In view of the objection that socialist ideas might develop unevenly across the world, the fact should be noted that before an overwhelming numerical majority is achieved, socialist ideas will be in the forefront of political debate throughout the world. Even in Britain, a relatively small party of say 20,000 socialists would be in a position to present socialist ideas internationally. World co-operation already exists between the companion parties for world socialism. Linking up through developed organisation, a small fraction of the world’s population would still constitute a movement of many millions. These millions of socialists would be able to keep socialist ideas before the overwhelming mass of the world’s population. In any case, given the nature of communications in the modern world, it is inconceivable that the growth of socialist ideas and organisation could be confined to limited locations.

As well as the development of world organisation, socialists organised in their local areas would probably prepare programmes of action for immediate implementation once the movement has gained control of the powers and machinery of governments.

So, two key elements are involved in these developments: firstly, an ability to maintain socialist ideas in the forefront of political argument as the most urgent and practical means of solving social problems; secondly, the preparation of programmes of action in advance of the capture of political power. Such programmes will no doubt include the ways in which the present machinery of governments could be converted for the purpose of useful administration in socialism.

The exercise of power by the state is one of the ways through which the present class domination of labour by capital is maintained. Therefore the socialist movement must take this power out of the hands of the capitalist class. In the first instance the capture of political control will render the capitalist class powerless. Furthermore, on this basis, with a majority of socialists having taken over democratic control, the common ownership of the means of production will be instituted. This will involve stripping the capitalist class of their monopoly of the means of living and the conversion of all land, industry, mining, manufacture, transport, energy supply, communications and resources, into the common possession of the whole community. At the same time the state will be abolished and this means that the socialist movement will lose its political character. What will commence from this point will be the democratic administration of classless society and production solely for needs. As we have suggested, the practical ways in which this will begin, as part of various community actions to deal with problems, will have been prepared in advance of the capture of political control.

When we speak of the abolition of the state, we mean the abolition of the power of the capitalist class to maintain their monopoly of the means of production, and control of society. Any useful feature of the previous state machine would be converted as part of the new democratic administration.

In the event of a minority trying to violently disrupt the plans of the majority, socialist society would have to defend itself. Socialists are not pacifists but simply do not advocate violence unless it is absolutely necessary to defend the democratic will of a socialist majority. Should there be any attempt on the part of an undemocratic minority to use violence to resist the abolition of capitalism, then the socialist majority will have to be prepared, as a last resort, to deal with them by using armed force (suitably reorganised on a democratic basis). Much of the work carried on as part of the existing machinery of government would have to be maintained, modified or expanded. This includes the work of housing, education, health, transport, and welfare departments; strategic planning offices; fire services; or any other body which the community might consider useful.

Administration in socialism would therefore dispense with the redundant features of the previous machinery of governments which had maintained and enforced class rule, and adapt and expand all those useful functions necessary for administration to meet human needs. Administration will be democratic at local, regional and wider levels and will take place through democratically elected delegates.
Dear Readers,

Unfortunately the libertarian socialists who write to Discussion Bulletin do not have a unifying goal. Many believe that De Leon or the current Socialist Labor Party does not have the final word on what will motivate us to strive for the inevitable revolution that is to replace collapsing capitalism. My absorbing interest in life has long been to study socialists, reactionaries and the non commited to see how we can best harness our energy for our common best interests in a stable social order. What follows is what I believe to be the fruit of my long study.

When Abraham Lincoln said that a government of the people, for the people and by the people shall not perish from the earth, he meant for that to hold for all time and I concur with him. The American constitution established that government and like Lincoln I believe we should keep the constitution for all time. Chattel slavery was the national problem when Lincoln said the above words and it no longer is, but wage slavery is our national as well as world problem. Since the Civil War this country had rapid industrial growth and held together because our constitution allows for change in a peaceful way. Most people in this country trust the constitution and Socialists should not think of establishing an industrial government with a completely new constitution or no constitution at all. When people become convinced that capitalism no longer works to expand industry and to keep order we have the power to change to socialism under the amendment clause of the constitution.

De Leon's conception of an industrial government is the idea for future society and we should implement it into our present government that is based on our constitution. Two changes in our constitution will end capitalism and recognize socialism as the new social system with a mandate from the people. Simultaneously our people must vote to abolish private property in the means of social production and provide that democratically elected industrial unions should manage and run industry as De Leon explained it. This plan goes beyond De Leon's plan for our future in that the benefits of political government will remain with industrial democracy added on. Surely most of us will agree that it is good for workers to democratically run industry so long as the majority rule as provided for by our constitution. Actually the capitalist class rules today because of their enormous wealth that is legally stolen from their wage workers as is explained by Marx. For the socialist future relatively equal wealth for all will guard against corruption in government as we know it.

In DB72 the World Socialist Movement argued that socialism must be established in all major countries of the world simultaneously. If there are serious differences among nations and within nations as there are today, we would require military force and that would be inimical to socialism they say. Our constitution allows for military force and if the majority believe a war is necessary, I believe it will be a just war. To conclude I believe that people are meant to live in a society of laws and the constitution provides for this. Socialists in particular should study what I say because discipline in society as well as in our lives is necessary for civilized living. De Leon said self imposed discipline is what we all need for a better future under socialism.

Fraternally yours,

Monroe Prussack

Monroe Prussack
THE REVOLUTIONARY ALTERNATIVE TO LEFT-WING POLITICS

The Left has not failed. And that is one of the greatest disasters ever to befall the working class.

Most people think that the Left is the movement of the working class for socialism (albeit riven by opportunism and muddle-headed interpretations of the part of many in its ranks).

Nothing could be further from the truth.

We in Subversion (and the wider movement of which we are a part) believe that left-wing politics are simply an updated version of the bourgeois democratic politics of the French revolution, supplemented by a state-capitalist economic programme.

Consider:

In the French revolution, the up and coming capitalist class were confronted not only by the old order, but also by a large and growing urban plebeian population (the working class in formation, artisans, petty traders and the like), who had their own genuine aspirations for freedom from oppression, however inchoherent.

Bourgeois democracy was the device that enabled the capitalist class to disguise their own aspirations for power as the liberation of everyone outside the feudal power structure.

The notion of the People (as though different classes, exploiters and exploited, could be reduced to a single entity) was thus born.

The notion of Equality and the notion of Rights possessed by all presented a fictitious view of society as a mass of individuals who all stood in the same relations to the law, completely ignoring the difference between the property owners and those whose labour they exploit.

And, above all, the notion of the Nation that oppressor class should identify with those of their oppressors who live in the same geographical area or speak the same language, and see as alien those of our class who are on the other side of "national borders".

By means of this imaginary view of society, capitalism was able to dominate the consciousness of the newly forming working class. Bourgeois democracy is the biggest con in history.

Consider also:

As capitalism developed more and more, the material position of the working class forced it to engage in struggle despite its bourgeois consciousness - thus enabling this consciousness to be undermined.

The existing capitalist regimes often came to be hated. Thus there was a need for a more radical version of bourgeois democracy with a more specifically working class image. Left-wing politics fulfilled this role in the 19th and 20th centuries, first in the form of Social Democracy or Labourism and then in the form of Bolshevism. Both of these variants managed to dress up support for capitalism in working class language, and became major players in the full development of capitalism (this was especially true in Russia, where State Capitalism, introduced by the Bolsheviks, a supposedly working class party, was the only way capitalism could be developed.

So what does Leftism consist of?

At first blush it seems to be about supporting the struggle of the workers, but when you look more closely everything is on the terrain of capitalist politics. The main features of Leftism are:

Support for radical capitalist parties

Such as the Labour Party in this country and the ANC in South Africa (precisely because its goal is to widen bourgeois democracy - the vote etc.) and support for Parliament. Some 'revolutionary' groups who don't support the Labour Party nevertheless still support participation in parliament - thereby helping in practice to uphold the ideology of bourgeois democracy.

Support for State Capitalism

Already referred to above, State Capitalism (a term with various meanings, but here we mean the form of society that developed in Russia and its imitators) collects all property into the hands of the state. And this is a capitalist state, not a "workers' state" because capitalist property relations still exist - wage labour, money, the market - and of course the workers do not control the state. The state, indeed, regards the workers as the "collective bourgeoisie", extracting surplus value from them for the ruling bureaucrats, who are themselves the "collective bourgeoisie".

Let us be clear about this: the only way capitalism can be dismantled is for the working class to immediately abolish money and the market, and distribute goods according to need (albeit with scarce goods being rationed for a time if necessary). Those who argue that this cannot be done immediately are in fact arguing for retaining the very core of capitalist social relations - if that is done the revolution is as good as dead.
The idea that state capitalism is not capitalism doesn’t merely justify support for anti-working class dictatorships like Russia, China, Cuba etc., but creates the very real danger of such a society being created in any future revolution.

Support for Nationalism in its "radical" form

Left wing groups routinely advocate support for weaker, e.g. "third world", nation states - meaning the governments of nation states, against stronger ones (Iraq in the Gulf War, etc.). This is described as anti-imperialism (!) as though the victory of the weaker country would do more than slightly alter the ranking of states within the world imperialist pecking order. Imperialism is a historical stage of capitalism and opposing it, as opposed to opposing capitalism itself via working class revolution, is meaningless.

The most common form of this "radical" nationalism consists of so-called "national liberation movements", such as the IRA, who don’t yet have state power. As soon as they do come to power they always crush the working class - that is, of course, the nature of bourgeois state power.

Often the line will be used that, even if one disapproves of nationalism, that nevertheless nations have a right to self-determination, and one must support their rights. A purer example of bourgeois democratic double-talk could not be imagined: Rights are not something that actually exists, but are a bourgeois mystification (see above). The working class should not talk about its rights but about its class interest. Talking about a right to national "self-determination" (as though a geographical grouping of agrarian classes can be a "self") is like saying that workers have a "right" to be slaves if they want to, or a "right" to beat themselves over the head with a hammer if they want to. Anyone who supports the "right" to something anti-working class is actually helping to advocate it, whatever their mealy-mouthed language.

Siding with the working class against all capitalist factions necessitates opposing all forms of nationalism whatsoever. Any wobbling on this will lead the working class to defeat yet again.

Support for Trade Unionism

Seemingly the most working class activity of all, Trade Unionism is above all a movement to reconcile the workers to capitalism. Its stated aim is to get workers the best deal within capitalism, but it’s not even that:

The mass of workers have bourgeois consciousness, but because capitalism forces them to struggle, they can resist despite that consciousness and thereby begin to change that consciousness.

Struggles of the working class are the seeds of revolutionary change. But because Trade Unions are made up of the mass of workers (with bourgeois consciousness) and exist all the time - i.e. when there’s no class struggle (and although the day-to-day life of workers can well be called a struggle, we are of course talking about collective struggle) the said Unions inevitably fail to challenge capitalism, and furthermore become dominated by a clique of bureaucrats who ride above the passive mass of workers. These bureaucrats get their livelihood from the day-to-day existence within capitalism that is Trade Unionism. They are thus materially tied to it. That is why when struggle breaks out, the Union machine sabotages it and hams workers in the back in the time-honoured tradition. This will always be the case - the workers can never seize the unions. The very nature of Trade Unionism produces anti-working class bureaucratic control.

We believe the workers must create new structures, controlled from the bottom up, to run every struggle that occurs, outside and against the Unions, if the struggle is to go forward. Left wing groups’ support for Trade Unions is just one more way in which they help shuffle the working class to capitalism.

And last but certainly not least, advocacy of the Leadership of "revolutionaries" over the working class

This division between a mass of followers and an elite of leaders mirrors the divide in mainstream capitalism (and indeed all forms of class society) between rulers and ruled, and serves well the project of constructing state capitalism, after the future revolution.

None of this means that all workers will come simultaneously to revolutionary ideas, because to begin with only a minority will be revolutionaries, but their task is to argue their case with the rest of their fellow workers as equals.

What the Left do however, is to perpetuate the sheep-like mentality workers learn under capitalism and harness it to their aim to be in charge after the revolution. We say that if anyone is in charge, if the working class does not lead itself, and consciously build a new society, then it will fare no better than in Russia and China and all the rest.

We believe that all left wing groups, whether Stalinist or Trotskyist (or Maoist or Anarchist or whatever they call themselves) are merely radical capitalist organisations who, if they ever came to power, would erect new state capitalist dictatorships in the name of the very working class they would proceed to crush.

This is not a matter of the subjective intentions of their members, whose sincerity we are not questioning here, but the objective result of their policies.

This is why the Left has not failed. Its aim was never more than to save capitalism by disguising it as something it was not - just as the original form of bourgeois democracy did in an earlier age.

In opposition to the Left there exists a political movement, consisting of both groups and individuals, some of whom might call themselves
Communists, while some might call themselves Anarchists (the Marxist-Anarchist split is an outdated historical division that bears no relationship to the real class line, which cuts across it), but who all stand united against the false radicalism of the Left, and for a genuinely communist alternative. We in SUBVERSION are a part of this movement.

What is the Alternative?

We believe that, despite the obstacles put in its way by both Right and Left, the working class has the power to destroy capitalism for real, and create a society without classes, without the state, national boundaries, oppression or inequality. A society not based on money or other forms of exchange, but on collective ownership of, and free access to, all society's goods on the part of the whole of humanity.

This society, which we call Communism or Socialism or Anarchism interchangeably, will be the first truly free society ever to exist.

The social movement that will create this society will grow from the existing struggles of the working class. As part of this process, our class must surmount the barriers put in its way by bourgeois ideology, including left wing ideology. Our task in SUBVERSION is not to be leaders (see above), but to be part of the process of creation of a revolutionary working class movement that will put an end to our world's long history of oppression and exploitation, and begin the long history of the free, world human community to come.

If you would like to contact us, or receive a copy of our magazine SUBVERSION, then write to: Dept. 10, 1 Newton St., Piccadilly, Manchester M1 1HW.

(from p. 19)

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**BALANCE**

September 1, 1995

$97.30

Fraternally submitted,

Frank Girard
for the DB

(from p. 32)

new, even the section headed “Cover-ups by Industry and Government.” Unfortunately the “Goals and Tactics” section seems to have been written by authors who believe that once people understand the seriousness of the dioxin problem they have the power to demand that the government take action. A careful check of the articles in this issue on the role of the major government agency charged with controlling pollution, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), might have disabused them. Several articles spell out the collusion between major polluters and the EPA. One might think that the writers of such articles as “A National Strategy for Dioxin Elimination” would realize that writing to one’s congressman or demonstrating will not force industry to act against its economic interests nor will it spur the EPA and Congress to act against the interests of the capitalist class that has bought their loyalty.

--fg
NOTES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHORT REVIEWS

The 6th Annual Midwest Scholars and Activists Conference, October 27-29, Loyola University, Chicago. Subject: The Rise of the Right -- What Does It Mean? What Can We Do About It? For information on registration and organizing a panel or presentation write to Networking for Democracy, 3411 W. Diversey, Suite 1, Chicago, IL 60647 or phone (312) 384-8827.

Manifesto of the World Socialist Party (India), (20 pages, 8 1/2 by 11), $1 ($2) from World Socialist Party (India), c/o B. Sarker, J-78 Baghajatin Pally, Calcutta 700 032, India or the SPGB, 52 Clapham High St., London SW7 4UN England. Much of this pamphlet details the history of the Calcutta group that became a part of the World Socialist Movement recently. They withdrew from the Communist Party of India in 1982 and began publishing a Bengali language monthly, Lal Pataki which became the name of their group. After a political pilgrimage that involved discussions with other left communist groups in India, among them Kamunist Kranti, a Faridabad group, some of whose articles have appeared in the DB. Although they felt close to these groups they were unable to reach a basis for unity with them. Around 1986 they began getting discussion materials including the Socialist Standard from the Socialist Party of Great Britain. This led to correspondence that convinced them that the SPGB’s position was correct on such things as parliamentarism, a transition period, the nature of Soviet society, trades unions, etc. The manifesto announces their adoption of the Object and Declaration of Principles of the World Socialist Movement. Also included are speeches at the founding conference by fraternal representatives from the SPGB.

Dioxin: The Orange Resource Book is the title of numbers seven and eight (Summer 1995) of Synthesis/Regeneration: A Magazine of Green Social Thought, (96 pages, 8 1/2 by 11), $7 from WD Press/Regeneration, P.O. Box 24115, St. Louis, MO 63130. The 54 articles by as many authors are organized under eight headings, among them “The Basics of Dioxin,” “Times Beach,” “War, Herbicides, Pesticides,” “Poisons from the Health Industry,” and the like. All these are informative and marshall enough appalling facts to render the reader apoplectic with anger or sufficiently frightened to retire from civilization. But actually much of this is not really