# DISCUSSION BULLETIN

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The “Declaration of Economic Independence” appeared in the April issue of the New Unionist. In her letter enclosing a copy for publication here, the author indicated that the New Union Party intends to publish it as a leaflet. She also pointed out its potential usefulness to the local Grand Rapids anti-capitalism group, the Society for Economic Equality (SEE), whose introductory brochure calls for “a new Declaration of Independence, this time from an oppressive economic and political system: capitalism or the market system.” To contact New Unionists write to them at 621 W. Lake St., #210, Minneapolis, MN 55408. “The U.S.A.: A Transitional Period” comes to us from the only U.S. voice of council communism, and typically it concentrates on observation of the class struggle rather than any specific advice on organizing. Curtis Price, almost certainly the author of the article, has given readers

(To p. 9)
DECLARATION OF ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE
FOR THE AMERICAN WORKING CLASS

We, the American working class who must sell our working skills because we do not own the means of production and distribution, have come to the conclusion that we have no choice but to break away from the capitalist system and its government. Having found it necessary to make such a fundamental change, we wish declare the causes which impel us to this act.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all humans are created equal, that they are endowed by Nature with certain unalienable Economic and Social rights, that among these rights are fulfilling work, full compensation for labor, democracy on the job and in society, peace and security in a clean environment, and life and prosperity for all in a living world of diverse plant and animal species.

Thomas Jefferson believed that Democracy could prosper only if founded on widespread ownership of the economic means of life. Today, a tiny minority of capitalists own and control most of the economy. Property interests dictate over the needs of society and the environment!

As long as a social system can be reformed to make life better for its citizens, fundamental change can be avoided. Now, recognizing that our future and our children’s future is at serious risk, survival dictates that we set up a new system and new guards for our future security.

To prove this, let the Facts be submitted. Capitalism has proved over the years, that it cannot provide jobs for everyone except during war or by massive government military spending in order to protect markets and promote business interests. It horrifies us that millions, throughout the world, have died in wars brought on by international business rivalry.

Political democracy is meaningless as long as we live under economic tyranny. The owners of America, dictate all important political and economic policy. Because of the "Bottom Line", they rove the world, exploiting natural resources and leaving behind pollution and devastation. Numerous plants, animals and indigenous peoples, have become extinct, while increasing numbers are endangered. Today, the air, water and soil are contaminated over vast areas of the Earth and all life has been put at risk.

Under capitalism, working people have no sense of peace and security. Crime and violence pervades society. We understand that most street crime is related to poverty, but there is no excuse for government and corporate crime and it has a more ruinous and lasting effect on us.

Under capitalism, we workers are wage slaves creating far more value through our mental or physical labor then our wages and salaries. Many jobs do not pay enough to live on. We are constantly driven to perform faster and harder, with the ever present threat of job loss. For a large number, work is degrading and does not fulfill us as human beings. We try to escape from the monotony through alcohol, and legal or illegal drugs.
Because of wage exploitation, we workers can afford only a fraction of the goods we produce. Unsold products means unemployment! We, the victims, unemployed or on welfare, are made to feel that we have failed. With no prospect for the future, many of us have given up hope and have become self-destructive.

Today, looking back to the Great Depression of the 1930's we can see that the reforms which began in that period were implemented to save capitalism, and keep us from getting rid of the system. The Social Security reform program should be called Social Insecurity! The misery payments barely keep us from starvation and homelessness.

One of our greatest indictments against capitalism is its waste! Products are deliberately made to last only a short time, so we must buy more. Milk, vegetables and food animals are destroyed to keep prices up while people go hungry. The waste from military production, alone, could keep the whole world fed, clothed and housed for years.

Capitalists and their hirelings dominate politics, the media and education. It is their lies and propaganda that divides us racially, ethnically and sexually, by education, employment and age, and keeps us from uniting and confronting them.

For years, we have attempted to fight against the injustices of the system. We have struck for better wages and working conditions, only to see employers give our jobs to others, use the police to break our strikes, or simply transfer the work to other plants. We have built unions only to see them turned into business enterprises, merchandising labor as if we were cattle.

We have elected “friends of labor” politicians only to see the rich and powerful buy them off.

We have protested wars and arms buildup. After years of demonstrating, voting, and petitioning, the problems of capitalism have only grown and worsened. We have reached the conclusion that capitalism itself, is destructive of Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

Abraham Lincoln said, during his First Inaugural Address: “This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it.”

The foundation of real Democracy rests on ownership and control of the economy by society as a whole - not by corporations, the political state or anyone above us. There is nothing impractical or utopian about the idea of workers managing the future economy. We run industry from top to bottom today for the owners. We can do it tomorrow for ourselves!

As we collectively struggle with the problems of capitalism, it will become clear that we need a new approach to changing the system, simply voting for it is not enough. The capitalists will deny the vote. We will need both a workers' political party to raise the demand for social ownership of industry at the polls, and a powerful new union movement to back up the majority vote, by taking, holding, and democratically operating all the workplaces of the nation. After our success, we will help workers throughout the world to do the same.
Economic Democracy, collective ownership of industry, means democracy on the job and in society. We will vote at work on all measures that concern us, taking a positive role in decision-making through a system of local and national worker and community councils. Production will be planned for needs, not sale. Everyone will have a useful role to play, befitting him/her as a creative human being.

For the support of this Declaration, with a firm belief in the inherent Rights of all Humanity, we mutually pledge ourselves.

Constance Fundukh

THE U.S.A.: A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD - BUT TO WHERE?

Perhaps at no time in the past several decades has American society been so palpably polarized and ripe for social explosions. True, social conflict has yet to erupt on any significant scale but the preconditions are increasing and showing no signs of diminishing any time soon.

So far, much of this simmering tension and frustration has been tentatively diffused, recuperated and otherwise fragmented into either safely controlled scapegoating channels (for the time being at least) or else directed out of sheer necessity into privatized individual survival strategies.

As an example of the first tendency, the ruling class has largely (but not completely) succeeded in making welfare recipients and immigrants in particular 'responsible' for the decline of living standards by portraying welfare recipients as freeloaders and work-shy. Current welfare reform will effectively translate into a post-prosperity capitalist militarization of labor policy designed to impose the norms of work discipline and force the poorest sectors into the labor market at any cost, where they will be in direct competition with unionized workers particularly public sector workers.

For example, already in several major states welfare recipients have been driven into so-called workfare programs which are used by municipal governments as a way to cut costs by supplanting decently paid workers with a cheap replaceable source of labor. Along with this use of welfare-waged labor, state and city governments have also increasingly turned to temporary and contractual workers to break strikes and work actions. This past summer, for example, the governor of New Jersey broke a strike by turnpike toll collectors on a busy holiday weekend by bringing in with brutal swiftness contractual replacements to man the tollbooths thus effectively forcing the union to its knees.

Far from being exceptions, this sort of treatment is being increasingly doled out as a first resort by bosses in the private sector as well. The gentleman's accord of ritualized strike action followed by negotiations, cemented by several decades of labor peace, is being swept away, with employers in even previously safe sectors going for the jugular.

Even the Wall Street Journal noted earlier this year that provoking strikes has increasingly become the employer's weapons in the present period to impose changes in work rules, getting rid of "inflexible" workers, etc.

THE OLD WORKERS MOVEMENT

The old workers movement, represented by the AFL-CIO is in serious decline, a decline and disarray that probably will not be reversed by the election of Sweeney to the head of the AFL. Even what is being hailed as a new commitment to militance is limited to token and often symbolic law-breaking i.e. blocking traffic and courting arrests as a form of carefully orchestrated pressure politics. But significantly, such tactics do not extend to mobilizing for wider, more generalized disruptions of production, which in any case the existing union bureaucracy would be absolutely incapable of organizing.

But perhaps of even more significance is the erosion and accelerating break-up of what passed for worker's culture and community in the United States. With some important exceptions, most serious strikes in the past decade and a half have broken out in outlying areas relatively far removed from major urban concentrations. We refer here to Phelps-Dodge, Austin, the Pittston miners strike, Bath shipyards in Maine, etc. and today, the ongoing Decatur struggles. These hard fought and bitter strikes, most of which went down to defeat were often waged in what amounted to single industry towns.
The era of tightly constructed working class communities organized around industry, in which people lived and worked in communities often linked in close proximity to the workplace, is a set of circumstances which permitted a distinct worker’s identity specific to this long boom phase of capitalist development to emerge. All but disappeared, probably forever. Particularly in the large cities.

Traditional working class institution, such as the corner store and other small shops, are steadily eroding. Casualties of the increased privatization of leisure, which in itself was a measure of technological development (i.e. VCR's being both widely accessible and relatively cheap, at least if you were working) and changing standards of entertainment. You no longer go down to the corner bar and discuss problems over a beer - instead you stay at home and pop a video in the isolated privacy of your living room. And hope you don’t get shot looking out your living room window.

This has created a nostalgic longing for a return to an idyllic "community" that would replace Capital's relentless march into colonizing more and more of every day life. This nostalgia is being cynically exploited by the State, who, as we noted in previous issues of CAN, would love to transfer as many social welfare functions as possible to the beloved "community."

Perhaps no where has this been taken to such absurd extremes as in the Fairfield section of Baltimore, which is now a designated federal "empowerment" - once again, that magical word! - zone. Here, less than a couple miles from the glittering array of yuppyfied shops (or, excuse us, "shoppes"), as they are now properly called) and tourist attractions of the Inner Harbor lies what is arguably the most developed post-industrial ghost town in the United States. Fairfield makes similar demodified urban war-zones such as East St. Louis, Detroit, and Camden, New Jersey look positively gentrified in comparison.

The juxtaposition is startling. Once a prosperous, bustling industrial area with a smattering of residences in between the chemical factories and storage tanks, the area is now practically empty of both industry and people. Miles of abandoned infrastructure (including a whole public housing project now overgrown with weeds) stretch in eerie silence. One expects a sagebrush to come tumbling down the deserted streets.

Even at the height of prosperity, Fairfield - a Black majority town - was woefully underdeveloped. The sidewalks were unpaved and many of the houses lacked basic sewage facilities. Today, the area has been gutted and scattered. Even the ruins remain a few surviving mostly elderly homeowners. But as a result of it's empowerment zone status, small outside armies of social workers and urban planners have now descended on an area empty of people to "recreate community", starting with the setting up of a "village center" to prepare Fairfield for it's new economic role: recycling toxic industrial waste. What a future!

But to return to our original point, it is more than just working class leisure and "community" that is being affected. Indeed, it is a contradictory curiosity that at the same time the work ethic is being eroded by capitalism itself (i.e. what we mean is pride in one's work being rewarded by a decent pay scale, with periodic increases and a long term, if not life-long commitment on the employer's part to hire you), its ideological virtues are being trumpeted so loudly, much of the same pathological way that a fever often rises right before it is ready to break. And this will be the source of future contradictions.

Since people's consciousness often lags behind changed reality, it may take a little while for this sets in fully. But the traditional bond is gone with once former stable life-long employers such as IBM and ATT throwing workers away like so many discarded tissues these days. And the delinking of the work ethic is a two way street with important ramifications lost in the usually one-sided coverage of corporate downsizing.

It is impossible to accurately judge how widespread some of the social indicators for this new worker refusal are. Absenteeism, theft, sabotage broadly defined, drug use on the job; actions which are usually narrowly dismissed as being individualistic and not signs of class consciousness are usually ignored by both traditional leftists and right-wing industrial sociologists alike.

Typically, what few articles have appeared on the subject in the management and "human resources" press have generally focused on upper echelon white collar employees and not on blue collar or the more exploited sectors of the white collar and service proletariat. But the
indicators are that such behavior is on the upswing.

One of the rare exceptions to this general neglect that openly tackled the question of employee dissatisfaction was a survey conducted by Kenner-Tregoe, a management consulting firm who interviewed more than 1500 workers and managers. The results so startled the firm that they brought in yet another set of pollsters to double-check the findings. According to the president of Kenner-Tregoe, "The vitriolic response was amazing..." Workers don't like their companies and there is a very fundamental social change going on in this country regarding workplace relations... The workers hear the verbiage about how 'our people are the most important assets we have' and they want to throw up." In almost every single category, ranging from overall job satisfaction to opinions on the new team assignments, an overwhelming majority of the workers interviewed clearly rejected management views on the new 'empowerment' i.e. polite words disguising ruthless downsizing and increased exploitation through over-work.

If at present such views are becoming widespread, they are at the level of individual discontent and have yet to find collective expression. But as we have noted before, the line between privatized despair and collective mass action is a very fine one indeed. And the U.S. working class in particular has a history of sudden upsurges after periods of seeming calm. Certainly, the growing alienation at the workplace is a necessary precondition for future contestation.

**THE ROLE OF IMMIGRANT LABOR**

Concentrated in most larger US cities are growing numbers of foreign-born workers mostly of Latino and Asian descent who occupy the lowest rungs of the labor force and have brought their own traditional ways of struggle with them. In some ways, they have been much more militant than native-born workers. For example, we heard anecdotally of a 1971 strike in Los Angeles at American Racing Equipment where all the striking workers were former teachers from a particular impoverished area of Mexico who had immigrated to the States. Their strike, which was won in 5 days, evidently drew on militant labor traditions they had learned in Mexico.

At the same time it is important not to overestimate such developments - or set-up some particular sector of workers as a "vanguard." As one L.A. reader noted: "... with the Janitor For Justice militants (and there are hundreds), their leaders are using their mass actions - which can be very effective disrupting production to negotiate deals with corporate bosses which give the workers peanuts! E.g., their latest contract said many janitors would see their pay rise from something like $5.25 to $6.80 an hour over the next few years. But the older janitors making $5.80 an hour plus already would see their pay virtually frozen! The Durazo 'progressive' leadership of SEIU Local 399 and their 'left' apologists hailed this as showing how 'workers would make sacrifices for their fellow workers.' What about the bloated capitalists making 'sacrifices'? Also expanded health care was negotiated though there may be work hour extensions to 'qualify' for it."

**THE MILLION MAN MARCH**

To understand some of the contradictions of the March, you have to first understand the oceans of pain that convulse the Black community... For nearly twenty years as a result of deindustrialization, there is an atmosphere of nihilistic and fratricidal warfare in the ghetto; an implosion of anger and frustration compounded by the visible success of a growing minority of the black middle class who are used as an example that America has indeed overcome racism and if you haven't gotten ahead it is your fault and not the system's. It is impossible to convey the frightening and senseless violence that occurs as a result of this hopelessness turned inwards. The only comparison is that of a war zone, although the enemy is not external but the person next to you. For example, the numbers of people killed in Baltimore alone since 1970 surpass the numbers in Northern Ireland dead in the same period due to the civil war there. So the vague call for "atonement" struck a real chord with ordinary Black people.

But is equally true that most American cities with large Black and Latino populations are potential tinderboxes, any one of which could spontaneously explode into a Los Angeles - as witnessed by the mini-riots that have broken out this year alone in Paterson, New Jersey, Indianapolis, Miami and Lexington, Kentucky, among other, smaller localized outbursts.

Having said that, it was quite interesting to observe how the media essentially built the Million Man March. Even six weeks before the March; it appeared that there was very little grassroots infrastructure anywhere in place. Unlike any other national demonstrations on any issue, which are always ignored and downplayed both before and after they occur, the Million Man March was given surprisingly positive media coverage. This could be due to two factors. One, the demands of the March were considered non-threatening and thus safe to promote. Two, the media loves to exaggerate and sensationalize the growing and real racial divide (which of course, was compounded by the Simpson circus) so the March may have been viewed as a symptom of this gulf between Black and white America and thus focused on from this angle. Whatever their purpose for doing so, the sensationalistic media promotion had the effect - probably unintended - of turning the event into a spontaneous referendum on Black pride, which increased the turn-out all out of proportion to any actual organizing efforts.

It is undeniable true that the participants appeared to be
disproportionately better-off. Just the cost of traveling to D.C. would have excluded the poorest sector of the Black population. We personally witnessed a homeless man in Baltimore calling the local march organizers and inquiring if any free buses were being provided. He was told if he had really wanted to go, he would have saved up the money in advance since publicity for the march had been circulating for a couple months! Needless to say, he didn’t participate. Nor, probably for the same reason did many others.

The role of Louis Farrakhan must be placed in perspective. He is widely viewed as a doctor who can make an excellent diagnosis but no one is going to line up to take the cure. In other words, thousands of people will turn out to hear him denounce racism, which alone among Black national figures he clearly denounces in a no-holds barred, fiery manner. However, very few people join the Nation of Islam or even become among its periphery afterwards. The Nation is still a tiny group, with only an estimated 10-15,000 actual members. So for now, its publicity is all out of proportion to its actual membership.

In the past few years, Farrakhan has subtly shifted from attempting to recruit from among the Black lumpen proletariat, which had previously constituted the base for much of the NOI’s support (ex-convicts, etc.) and focused instead on the Black middle class (students and the college educated professionals. His prominent role in the March is an example of one more attempt to shift himself into this strata and position himself to be a player for the interests of the Black petty bourgeoisie.

Having said all of that, there is no denying that Farrakhan is potentially a very sinister and reactionary figure whose long term role could be that of an American version of Buthelezi in South Africa.

Surprisingly few observers, either pro- or con-, point to Farrakhan’s dependence on government money. The NOI gets millions of dollars in contracts to provide security services in the inner-city housing projects. Contrast this generous so-called “neutral” support with that accorded to the Panthers, Malcolm X and even Martin Luther King! So whatever they may say publicly, the rules clearly see this demagogue as someone worth supporting with an economic base. And needless to say, this umbilical cord of dollars will be very useful in ensuring Farrakhan also plays a role useful to them in return at some future point as well as feeding into Farrakhan’s attempted metamorphosis into a power broker for the masses of Black people. It is not unfeasible to see Farrakhan providing the shock troops to put down future riots in the inner city for example.

As for the long term effects of the Million Man March, it is too soon to tell, what if any these may be. Because it had a soft message which anyone could claim a vindication for their own political perspective, this will remain a clouded issue. The fact that the speakers on the podium included Black elected officials who have been the most responsible for administering budget cuts, layoffs and service cut backs in some of the largest cities - all of which have disproportionately fallen on the Black working class and poor - suggests that the conflict in class interests can perhaps be papered over for a one day March but not for a long range coalition.

And whatever the self-blaming content of the self-help official message of the Million Man March, it is clear that the March, despite itself, was perhaps the first and largest implicit protest so far against the Contract on America; a fact that the Republicans have been forced to acknowledge even as they uncomfortably scramble to find some comforting common ground with the overall theme of “self-reliance”.

CONCLUSIONS

What all these admittedly partial observations suggest is that the old post-WW2 institutional framework which governed class conflict in the United States is steadily being frayed and whittled away - a process which has led to a shake-up in old allegiances and a process which only stands to continue accelerating in the foreseeable future. No new reforms, in the time old American tradition of buying off mass discontent through sectional concessions, are anywhere on the horizon. Instead the immediate choice looming is merely between how severe the cuts in living standards are going to be. As the L.A. Rebellion amply demonstrated, where in stark contrast to the urban rebellions of the 60’s, no new cooling-off money in the form of poverty programs and other such measures trickled down to the streets.

Ironically, what were once considered “ultra-left” tactics during the long boom of prosperity and thus confined to the largely ignored hopes of tiny and insignificant groups, tactics such as factory occupations, objectively are now suddenly very practical and realistic measures. Much in the same way that during the Depression era, sit-downs in the factories sprung-up as a common-sense response to the growing numbers of unemployed outside the plant gates whose desperation would have been used as a battering ram to smash traditional strikes.

Today, and for the first time in decades, it is all the old reformist solutions (reliance on leaders, the Democrats, partial demands, etc.) which appear hopelessly utopian. Of course, these reformist solutions were not the result of “false consciousness” but the result of periods of relative prosperity where it was possible to force the capitalists to cough up the goods, at least in the short run. And in the short run, they indeed worked. But for all intent and purposes, now these tactics are dead as a doornail. There are no new crumbs to dispense anyone’s way as the previously existing objective conditions for most partial reforms have been wiped out. When struggles break out, they will eventually be forced to confront this fact, especially if people are to avoid going down to defeat, as the recent debacle of the Bridgestone/ Firestone rubber workers strike and now Caterpillar painfully
demonstrate the exhaustion of all factions of the traditional labor movement. And in this transition period to what hopefully could signify the small beginnings of a new worker's movement, over time, lessons will have to be learned and conclusions drawn in the course of the struggle itself. □ Dec. 5, 1995

Some Recent Publications Containing Useful Material On Different Aspects of the US

□ RACE TRAITOR # 5 (Winter 96): An editorial on the militias with which we agree wholeheartedly. Available for $5 from: POB 803, Cambridge, MA., 02140-0005

□ PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION #50 (Fall 1995): Good articles on Colin Powell and the Million Man March. Still, too wedded to the procrustean bed of orthodox Trotskyism. Available for $1 from LRP, POB 3573, New York, NY 10008-3573


□ TRADE UNION POLITICS: AMERICAN UNIONS AND ECONOMIC CHANGE 1960s-1990s. Edited by Kent Worcester and Glen Perusek. Humanities Press. $17.50

Excellent collection of essays on the U.S. labor movement in the past several decades. Highly recommended.

(From p. 2)

what strikes me as an insightful overview of the condition of the U.S. working class today along with some ideas about the prospects for the future.

DB76 carried George Kane's December, 1995 New Unionist review of David Stratman's book as well as my own, a New Democracy leaflet, and the two pages from the text summarizing his main points. In this issue he replies to his critics, and I answer his replies. Before this DB reaches most subscribers, readers of the New Unionist will find in its May issue the reply to George Kane's review as well as--I would guess--George Kane's response. The following article, "Marxism versus Leninism" appeared over a year ago in DB68. I have reprinted it because Adam Buick, it seems to me, does a first rate job of separating Marxism from the distortion it underwent as the official economic philosophy of the Soviet brand of state capitalism. Alan Kerr also raises some critical questions about Stratman's book and especially about the source of economic relationships and class struggle.

Next the De Leobist Society of Canada answers Irving Silvey's criticism of their and the Industrial Union Party's addition to the socialist industrial unionism which has informed the program of DeLeobists of all stripes for almost a century. "Distortions of Private Property" is a discussion from the "letters to the editor" section of the Socialist Standard. It struck me as an excellent example of ongoing polemics between revolutionary socialists and Greens. Monroe Prussack's letter raises a further argument for socialism.

I managed to mislay Adam Buick's letter answering mine in DB75. When I requested a replacement copy, he replied saying that actually we had probably carried our exchanges to the point where they were becoming a bit self-indulgent. I found his original a few days ago and reprint it here, but to have the last word, I would suggest that it is much easier for workers to judge the work of representatives from their own industry than for us to judge the politicking of political representatives in Congress (or parliament).

We are indebted to Milan Djuric for an interesting chapter in anarchist history. Somehow I never associated anarchism with Serbia. Spain and Italy -- yes, because they were more advanced economically. I received a similar surprise when I read John Crump's book about anarchism in Japan during the first decades of this century. I gather from Djuric's article that anarchism in Serbia--and this may be the case in other places where it took hold--was a reaction of some workers to the reformism already ascendent in many official socialist parties that claimed to exercise the political heritage of Marx and Engels. It would be interesting to examine anarchism literature for evidence that early anarchism was often a revolutionary socialist response to social democratic politicking rather than any

(To p. 19)
(New Unionist)

To the Editor:


Kane writes, "A Marxist understands that, while human nature is not infinitely malleable, people develop behavior patterns that their social and economic systems reward. Under genuine communism, people will be cooperative and act to promote the common good because such behavior will be rewarding for the individual, while the competitive, selfish behaviors of capitalism will no longer be rewarded."

In the Marxist view which Kane presents here, working people have no values within themselves as individuals which contradict capitalist values of selfishness and competitiveness. They simply respond (like pigeons in a psych experiment) to the reward system on which society is structured. Under capitalism, they are selfish; under communism, they will be cooperative.

This is a totally demeaning view of working people which has nothing to do with real people. You would never guess from Kane's portrait that working people are complicated human beings, millions of whom engage everyday in acts of sacrifice and solidarity with their families and friends and coworkers and who daily take part in individual or collective resistance to the encroachments of capitalism on their lives.

You also would never guess from Kane's description that millions of workers have fought the class war often at great cost to themselves and their families. It doesn't matter that their explicit demands have usually been "reformist." The point is that workers' motivation in these struggles clearly goes counter to capitalist motivations of selfishness and competition. What capitalist "reward system" were the Hormel meatpackers responding to in their year-long strike? Where are the selfishness and competition in the three-year lesson in courage and commitment provided to us by the Staley workers? Were these wonderful people simply foolish, deluded into thinking they were going to get some personal reward for persisting in their struggle long after it was clear that they could not win on the explicit issues? Or were they perhaps motivated by working class values that go beyond personal gain?

I believe that we cannot make sense of open and collective class struggles or of the everyday lives of working people unless we first realize that workers have goals and values which contradict the values of capitalism and that ordinary people seek to realize these values in their everyday lives and in collective struggle.

Since Kane and Marx believe that workers simply respond to whatever reward system is imposed on them, they must deny that the everyday lives of ordinary people have any meaning which contradicts capitalism. Kane says that, "The everyday conduct of ordinary people may, as Straitman claims, be seditious of bourgeois hegemony, but by itself it has no revolutionary potential. At best it is reformist, and at worst it is conservative."

Following Marx, Kane argues that, "The workers as a class become revolutionary only when their survival requires conditions that are incompatible with capitalist rule."

I think that this view is not only contemptuous of workers. It also is extremely demoralizing, and puts the left in the position of hoping that things get worse and worse for working people so that they will finally "become revolutionary."

The question that all of us who want to make a revolution must confront is, Is there a force for change in society. I believe that there is, but that we cannot see this force through the eyes of Marxism. To change the world, we must see it in a new way.

I argue in *We CAN Change The World* that the logic of the "dog-eat-dog" culture of capitalism is that this world should be a competely loveless and savage place. But we can see that this is not so. In fact most people in important parts of their lives—with their wife or husband or children, their friends or co-workers—struggle against the capitalist culture of competition and inequality to create relationships based on love and equality and solidarity. Most people try to shape the little piece of the world that they think they can control with values which contradict the values of capitalism. This means that most people, whether they
are aware of it or not, are already engaged in a struggle to create a different world.

This struggle may not get very far: capitalism has devastating effects. But to the extent that people have any positive relationships, they have created them by struggle against capitalist culture. People's everyday lives have revolutionary meaning.

This daily struggle to create and sustain relationships and infuse them with anti-capitalist values is the basis of more public and collective struggles. The recent strikes in France and the struggle of the Hormel meatpackers and the Staley workers did not fall from the sky. They were rooted in the everyday values and relations of the working class.

When people's idea of how much of the world they can shape with the values of equality and solidarity grows, they mount strikes and build movements. When their confidence in themselves and each other grows sufficiently, they make revolutions. The smallest personal acts of kindness and solidarity and the most earth-shaking revolutionary movements are on a continuum of struggle to humanize the world.

I believe that the class war is not just over a division of the wealth of society, however important that may be. It is rather a struggle over what goals and values should shape society and who should control it. On the one side stands the owning class, who value competition and inequality and control from above. On the other side is the working class, who value equality and solidarity and control from below.

The class war is finally a struggle over what it means to be a human being. This is a struggle which we and other working people are already fighting, but which we need to understand in a new way if we are to win.

The Marxist paradigm is profoundly anti-democratic; it cannot lead to the liberating revolution which Marx himself desired. "Genuine communism" in the Marxist paradigm will always require a party elite to rule in place of the working class and to remold workers from the "competitive, selfish behaviors of capitalism" so that they are "cooperative and act to promote the common good." Authoritarian rule in the Soviet Union and China has its roots in the Marxist paradigm and the Marxist view of people.

The Marxist paradigm also leads to feelings of powerlessness and despair in those who are explicitly seeking to create a new society, because it tells us that the vast majority of people are against us or at least do not share our goals.

The paradigm that I am proposing shows that the struggle to humanize the world and to shape it with values of solidarity and equality is the most pervasive of human activities. Revolutionaries are not alone. Working for revolution means taking a full and conscious role in a struggle in which the great majority of the world's people are already engaged. Fighting for revolution means fulfilling our lives through all the commitments to other people which already give the lives of ordinary people dignity and significance.

Marx once said that "the revolution will draw its poetry from the future." He was wrong about this. The revolution will draw its poetry from the past and the present: from the meaning of people's lives finally revealed.

Dave Stratman

We CAN Change The World: The Real Meaning of Everyday Life by David G. Stratman is available to New Unionist readers at a special price of $3.00 postpaid. Write to New Democracy Books, P.O. Box 427, Boston, MA 02130.
A Reply to Frank Girard:

In his generally positive review in DB #76 of my book, *We CAN Change the World: The Real Meaning of Everyday Life*, Frank makes two points which add up to quite a paradox.

First, he expresses "shock...that [Stratman] reaches the same conclusions we do about leftism, national liberation, Leninism, the Russian Revolution, capitalist unions, and the political system from a perspective that not only rejects Marxism but sees Marxist ideas as a major factor in the failure of the working class to abolish capitalism." Second, he concludes that "Stratman's book represents a fresh breath of air...it may be just the factor that will help build a new generation of revolutionary socialists."

How can a book which rejects the analytical cornerstone of revolutionary socialism "help build a new generation of revolutionary socialists?"

Without realizing it, Frank seems to be acknowledging the central thesis of my book: that for us to succeed in our project of destroying capitalism and creating a new and truly democratic society, we must place the revolutionary movement on a new basis. The purpose of my book is to propose a new way of thinking about people and society which makes possible the building of a truly popular revolutionary movement which succeeds.

The fact is that "socialism" has failed and most people know it. It is no help at all to say that "our version of socialism has never been tried." The various historical incarnations of socialism from Mao to Mitterand block the way of "libertarian" or "revolutionary socialism." The problem is not simply that some bastardized version of socialism has stolen socialism's good name. The problem is that the concept of socialism based on Marxism has been wrong from the start.

I argue in *We CAN Change the World* that there is a contradiction between the Marxist vision of socialism and the Marxist paradigm of history and human development on which it is based. Marxism cannot lead to the society it envisions.

The ultimate justification of capitalism is that capitalism is human nature and cannot be changed. While Marx contended that capitalism contradicts humanity's "species being," Marx's theory of social change did not challenge the capitalist view that self-interest is the primary human motivation. Marx declared that "the individual seeks only his particular interest." Marx believed with the capitalists that history is driven by economic development, which in turn is driven by greed. Unlike the capitalists, however, Marx maintained that greed leads not to permanence but to revolution. The actions of the capitalists would bring forth the desperate class that would be the capitalists' gravediggers.

Marx's model of history did not see working people as conscious agents of change who act on the basis of their own anti-capitalist values. Instead, observing the savage power of industrial capitalism, Marx defined working people primarily as dehumanized and passive victims of economic forces who, when they are moved to action, are moved by these same forces of economic necessity. The working class is "dehumanization conscious of its own dehumanization and therefore self-abolishing." While he believed the capitalist and the working class to have opposing interests, Marx saw them to be motivated by essentially the same goal—to get a greater share of the wealth.

Marx stated that "the emancipation of the working class is the work of the working class itself"; however, the Marxist paradigm of social change militates against this democratic end. There is a long history of Marxism in practice to show where it leads. The two major outcomes of Marxism—its historical divergence into reformist Social Democracy on the one hand and Communist dictatorship on the other—are not accidents of history but functions of Marxism's inner logic.

The mainstream Social Democratic parties of Germany and other economically advanced countries used Marxist economic theory and the idea of the economic self-interest of workers to keep struggle within the bounds of the capitalist economy. With the outbreak of World War I, they led the working classes of their respective countries to the slaughter.

Lenin was presented by Marxism and the reformist Marxist parties with two major problems. In a world driven by economic forces beyond human control, how do human beings con-
sciously intervene in history to make a revolution? And if real individuals, including workers, act only in their own self-interest, who will act on behalf of the working class to raise and achieve not just trade-union but revolutionary goals?

Lenin’s concept of the vanguard party acting on behalf of the dehumanized proletariat was his answer to these questions. With this answer Lenin discovered how to operationalize Marxism as a science of revolution. It is no accident that only Marxist-Leninist parties have succeeded in making revolutions based on Marxism. The disastrous results of these revolutions have their roots in the Marxist paradigm.

The heart of a political vision is not a view of economics but a view of people. The basis of a new revolutionary movement must be a revolutionary view of human beings which rejects the capitalist view and sees that working people are motivated not simply by material interests but by goals and values which contradict capitalism. These values are internal to working people as a class and as real, living individuals. Workers seek to accomplish their goals in the struggles of their everyday lives and in the more open and collective struggles of class war.

Marx was correct when he said that all history is the history of class struggle. The question is, What is that struggle about? I show in my book that, while specific issues like wages or working conditions are usually the occasions of working class struggles, their real meaning lies deeper, and leads workers in struggle to make sacrifices which make nonsense of any calculus of self-interest. Workers in struggle are motivated by a desire to shape the world with values and relations which contradict capitalism and which express their view of what it means to be a human being. This is a meaning to which Marxism is blind. These values, principally a belief in solidarity and equality, are implicitly revolutionary. The way for workers to succeed in their struggles is to make their implicit revolutionary meaning explicit.

Democratic revolution and the creation of society on a new and cooperative basis is the only possible fulfillment of the values and struggles and aspirations of working people.

Alone among Marxists, “libertarian” or “revolutionary socialists” have maintained their revolutionary democratic ideals. But they have clung to these ideals only by resisting the logic of Marxism. To succeed in their goal of creating a new society, revolutionary socialists must put their movement on a new footing which, rather than contradicting their goals, reveals that their goals for a new society are something which they share with the great majority of the world’s people.

Dave Stratman

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Dear Comrades,

This is an attempt to answer David Stratman’s letters above. First let’s consider the charge that “Marxism can’t lead to good results” in the reply to George Kane’s review. Stratman argues that Marxism’s view of the working class ignores their inherent family and community values: the sense of justice, solidarity, etc. and instead regards workers as robots who “... simply respond (like pigeons in a psych experiment) to the reward system on which society is structured. Under capitalism, they are selfish; under communism, they will be cooperative.”

Do Marxists have a flawed understanding of human nature? Is there a particular proletarian form of human nature not shared by the 10 percent of the population who, because they own capital, exhibit a different and capitalistic kind of human nature? I submit that there is only one kind of human nature and that in its basics it differs little from the nature of any other organism. It is governed by the need to
survive: i.e., to obtain the means of life, like food etc., and to reproduce.

Humans like all other organisms must survive within their environment. For millions of years our early ancestors lived by hunting and food gathering in extended family groups. Their ecological niche encouraged cooperation in the effort to improve their chances of survival. A highly developed central nervous system enabled them, through agriculture and the domestication of animals, to improve on the food resources that nature supplied. With the resulting production of surpluses the egalitarian tribal (extended family) society gave way—in a process best explained by Marx and Marxists—to a succession of class-divided social systems.

How a people express their human nature in such societies depends largely on where they happen to be located in the class structure. Certainly members of the capitalist class can and do show the same qualities in everyday life that workers do. Capitalists too can demonstrate nobility of character, self-sacrifice, class solidarity, kindness and love within their families, sometimes in the same struggles in which they are opposing and oppressing workers. By the same token workers, when they see their economic condition endangered, can exhibit the same levels of barbarism and betrayal as our rulers. The fact that David Stratman and we see the struggles of the Hormel and Staley workers as heroic and of the corporations as villainous reveals more about where we happen to be situated in the class structure than it does about any inherent set of virtues our class possesses. It's worth noting that these strikes were broken by people, whom we characterize as scabs, recruited from the working class.

Also worth noting is that the struggles Stratman describes are basically economic. The workers struck because the capitalist owners were making economic demands that would lower the quality of everyday life for the workers and their families. And the worker Stratman quotes in his book as saying that he is striking for his children and grandchildren means that he wants to preserve the economic basis of a higher quality of everyday life than the capitalist class is willing to grant.

As to the Marxist "paradigm." I'm not sure exactly what Stratman includes in the paradigm. The essence of Marxism, as I understand it, is 1) the "materialist conception of history" -- an explanation of the forces that move history and 2) the theory of surplus value, which explains the economic mechanism by which capitalism exploits workers through the wages system. Unfortunately Stratman seems to include as part of the paradigm a Marxist plan for the social system that will replace capitalism. But the fact is that Marx did not provide any extended plan or vision of the society that the working class would or should build to replace capitalism. We can infer from his writings a sort of outline of negatives—what it would not be like. It would not have private ownership of the means of production, nor would it have a political state, and consequently no government ownership either. Markets, the wages system, and money—since society would not be producing goods to sell—too would be absent from a socialist society. Clearly our class has not created such a society and thus—equally clear—nothing that can be described as a "Marxist social system" has ever existed.

The split between the Marxist—as opposed to the Bakuninist—branch of the revolutionary socialist movement occurred around the turn of the century between those who chose as the road to socialism gradual parliamentary reformism under he aegis of intellectuals and politicians acting as agents of the working class and those advocated the revolutionary Marxist road of class struggle. This internal struggle within national parties generally ended in splitting the parties; on the international level it was carried on at the congresses of the Second International, which was fractured but not split before WW I.
Now to the Leninist perversion of Marxism. Marx asserted that the revolution that will abolish capitalism must be the class conscious act of the working class itself. The insurrection and capture of power in Petrograd and other major Russian industrial centers by a tiny minority of Bolsheviks was not a working class revolution but rather an insurrection followed by the repression of working class groups that opposed Bolshevik (i.e. Leninist) directives.

The economic system that emerged in Russia used precisely the same capitalist mechanisms—the wages system, the market, commodity production, and money—to extract surplus value from workers that private capitalism did in the West. This seems to be the fate reserved for any society that attempts to establish socialism before the means of production have reached the point where goods can be produced in excess of needs. The first task in Russia was to industrialize production. This became a pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps operation because capital from the industrialized West, the traditional source of capital for underdeveloped countries like Russia, was not forthcoming. As a result the capital needed to pay for industrialization was surplus value had to be squeezed out of Russian workers and peasants. The abysmally low standard of living of the Russian working class and the rapid rise of Russia as an industrial nation testifies to the effectiveness of state capitalism in extracting wealth from workers.

The Marxist-Leninist pattern of state capitalism became the accepted mode of advancing the economic development of many third world nations after WW II when capitalists of the industrialized West either couldn't invest in such countries—during the immediate post WW II period, for instance, when capital was needed in the West to repair the ravages of the war—or when political considerations influenced capitalist decisions. Usually the new military-bureaucratic masters of former colonies, many of them university educated, and other third world countries found the combination of pseudo-socialist rhetoric, state ownership of the means of production, nationalism, and one-party control of the state along with the absence of democratic rights a great recipe for wringing surplus value from workers. To label such a system Marxist is simply wrong. Marx called for the abolition of capitalism, not its intensification in a new guise.

As to the paradox David Stratman sees in my welcoming his book and its ideas while disagreeing with his rejection of Marxism, “the analytical cornerstone of socialism,” as he calls it. I believe there are all sorts of roads by which working people will come to the conclusion that they must abolish capitalism if they are to survive. Stratman's view that people will become conscious of the contradiction between the humane values of the working class and the inhumane values of our masters is just one more path to add to those of Marxists, Greens with their environmental concerns, anarchists with their mistaken-to my mind-fixation on the state, and others. I earnestly hope that Stratman's book, with its class analysis and no-nonsense-about-it anti-capitalism will add a new increment of workers to the struggle against capitalism: those who will come to see the system as the force destroying their families and communities and the values they hold dear.

In fact, I think we non-market socialists should welcome workers whose opposition to capitalism is motivated by ideas some of us would not share and might even find personally abhorrent—like a movement by Southern Baptist workers and other religious fundamentalists who come to see capitalism as the enemy of the home and the Christian morality they value. The time to replace capitalism is a century overdue. Age has weakened the edifice; its flaws are becoming increasingly obvious as are its direct effects on the lives of people. As the great mass of people from any number of intellectual and ideological persuasions enter the struggle, we are going to have to learn to cooperate with them.
Somehow working class people who now regard themselves as Marxists, anarchists, New Democrats (Stratmanists), Christians, Greens, social democrats, liberals, populists, militia members, and even conservatives will have to cooperate to pull down the old system and design and build a new one. To quote a frequently used ending on articles in the SLP's newspaper the Weekly People a few decades ago, "SPEED THE DAY!"

--Frank Girard

**Marxism versus Leninism**

Marx's theory of socialist revolution is grounded on the fundamental principle that "the emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself." Marx held to this view throughout his entire forty years of socialist political activity, and it distinguished his theory of social change from that of both those who appealed to the princes, governments and industrialists to change the world for the benefit of the working class (such as Robert Owen and Saint Simon) and of those who relied on the determined action of some enlightened minority of professional revolutionaries to liberate the working class (such as Buonarotti, Blanc and Weitling).

**Conscious Self-emancipation**

Marx saw that the very social position of the working class within capitalist society as a non-owning, exploited, wealth-producing class forced it to struggle against its capitalist conditions of existence. This "movement" of the working class could be said to be implicitly socialist since the struggle was ultimately over who should control the means of production: the minority capitalist class or the working class (=society as a whole)? At first the movement of the working class would be, Marx believed, unconscious and unorganised but in time, as the workers gained more experience of the class struggle and the workings of capitalism, it would become more consciously socialist and democratically organised by the workers themselves.

The emergence of socialist understanding out of the experience of the workers could thus be said to be "spontaneous" in the sense that it would require no intervention by people outside the working class to bring it about (not that such people could not take part in this process, but their participation was not essential or crucial). Socialist propaganda and agitation would indeed be necessary but would come to be carried out by workers themselves whose socialist ideas would have been derived from an interpretation of their class experience of capitalism. The end result would be an independent movement of the socialist-minded and democratically organised working class aimed at winning control of political power in order to abolish capitalism. As Marx and Engels put it in The Communist Manifesto, "the proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority".

This in fact was Marx’s conception of "the workers’ party". He did not see the party of the working class as a self-appointed elite of professional revolutionaries, as did the Blanquists, but as the mass democratic movement of the working class with a view to establishing socialism, the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production.

**Lenin’s Opposing View**

This was Marx’s view, but it wasn’t Lenin’s. Lenin in his pamphlet What Is To Be Done?, written in 1901–2, declared:

The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own efforts, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories that were elaborated by the edu-
cated representatives of the propertyless classes, the intellectuals. (Foreign Languages Publishing House edition, Moscow, pp. 50–51)

Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside of the economic struggle, from outside of the sphere of relations between workers and employers. (Lenin's emphasis, p.133)

The spontaneous working class movement by itself is able to create (and inevitably creates) only trade unionism, and working class trade unionist politics are precisely working class bourgeois politics. (pp. 159–60)

Lenin went on to argue that the people who would have to bring "socialist consciousness" to the working class "from without" would be "professional revolutionaries", drawn at first mainly from the ranks of the bourgeoisie intelligentsia. In fact he argued that the Russian Social Democratic Party should be such an "organisation of professional revolutionaries", acting as the vanguard of the working class. The task of this vanguard party to be composed of professional revolutionaries under strict central control was to "lead" the working class, offering them slogans to follow and struggle for. It is the very antithesis of Marx's theory of working class self-emanicipation.

The Bolshevik Coup

The implication of Marx's theory of working class self-emanicipation is that the immense majority of the working class must be consciously involved in the socialist revolution against capitalism. "The proletariat movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority in the interest of the immense majority".

The Bolshevik coup in November, 1917 carried out under the guise of protecting the rights of the Congress of Soviets, did not enjoy conscious majority support, at least not for socialism, though their slogan "Peace, Bread and Land" was widely popular. For instance, elections to the Constituent Assembly, held after the Bolshevik coup and so under the Bolshevik government, gave them only about 25 per cent of the votes.

John Reed, a sympathetic American journalist, whose famous account of the Bolshevik coup, Ten Days That Shook The World, was commended in a foreword by Lenin, quotes Lenin as replying to this kind of criticism in a speech he made to the Congress of Peasants' Soviets on 27 November, 1917:

"Socialism can only be realized when the intellectual development of all the people permits it, then we shall not see Socialism for at least five hundred years. . . . The Socialist political party—this is the vanguard of the working class; it must not allow itself to be halted by the lack of education of the mass average, but it must lead the masses, using the Soviets as organs of revolutionary initiative. . . . (Reed's emphasis and omissions, Modern Library edition, 1960, p.15).

Compare this with a passage from the utopian communist, Wellsing: "to want to wait...until all are suitably enlightened would be to abandon the thing altogether!" Not, of course, that it is a question of "all" the workers needing to be socialists before there can be socialism. Marx, in rejecting the view that socialism could be established by some enlightened minority, was merely saying that a sufficient majority of workers would have to be socialists.

Lenin's Legacy

Having seized power before the working class (and, even less, the 80 per cent peasant majority of the population) had prepared themselves for socialism, all the Bolshevik government could do, as Lenin himself openly admitted, was to establish state capitalism in Russia. Which is what they did, while at the same time imposing their own political dictatorship over the working class.

Contempt for the intellectual abilities of the working class led to the claim that the vanguard party should rule on their behalf, even against their will. Lenin's theory of the vanguard party became enshrined as a principle of government ("the leading role of the Party") which has served to justify what has proved to be the world's longest-lasting political dictatorship.

The self-emanicipation of the working class, as advocated by Marx, remains on the agenda.

Socialist Standard March 1990 ALB
Dear reader,

David Stratman’s book is featured in the Discussion Bulletin for Mar/Apr 96. The title of his book contains the words: “We Can Change The World...” So, he needs to tell us how we can change our ideas.

David Stratman claims:

"People collectively know enough now to crush capitalism and to create a new world. The problem is that the working class does not know what it knows. The knowledge... among people is broken into many pieces; everyone has at least a bit of the whole truth, but the bits and pieces of collective knowledge have not been brought together..."

Page 272.

According to this it only needs for the “bits and pieces” to be shared.

On his next page, David Stratman adds that: “Knowledge is always based on experience...”

Now, with that addition, from page 273, the first claim, on the preceding page, becomes much better. Assorted (“already known”) bits and pieces are brought out, like all knowledge, through experience.


What are the ideas, about the “world”, among our class who David Stratman calls “ordinary working people”? Those existing ideas include the following: That private ownership of the land, and other means of work, is good. That private property is earned by the good hard work and personal worth of the private owner himself. That the more the private owner works, so, the more wealth he earns. Private property, so they say, is the self earned reward for hard work and talent. That idea we find among “ordinary working people”. And, it ought to be admitted, that idea is a true expression of real economic relationships. We also find, among our class, the idea that we “ordinary working people” need what David Stratman calls an “elite” in society. That we need those people of leisure, leaders who, specialise in morals, culture, politics, law, etc. That, according to our class, we mere “ordinary working people” ourselves have not the wealth, and leisure time, necessary, in order to attain the degree of proficiency, and ability, that the “elite” are able to do. These ideas we find among “ordinary working people”. Again, it ought to be admitted, the ideas we have been looking at (and more we could mention), are a true expression of real economic relationships. But economic relationships which have their feet in the development of small production.

Where small production has reached its most advanced state, the worker is the private owner of his land or means of work. Ultimately the steps are taken from small production to big production. The conditions for big production being furnished by small production.

Now the worker under big production works in co-operation with a large number of others under the wages system. The economic relationships are different. More than that, they are the exact opposite of those which exist under small production. Yes, the ownership is private as before, but, unlike before, the work is now co-operative. It is no longer, as before, the worker who is able to be the private owner of the means of work. And he who now is the private owner is the employing capitalist who, with the growth of his property, is freed of the need to work.

At the same time big production grows and develops, until it potentially removes the necessity for class rule. Potentially removes the evil necessity for the "ordinary working people" to have to spend their time lop-sidedly, in a narrow occupation. At last prepares the possibility, and the necessity, for them to create an association of the future, owning the means of work in a joint fashion, where the wage system is abolished, each sensibly changes from one kind of work to another, to develop all their talents to the full.
To realise this need, for our own good as workers, to extend ownership to workers, in step with what David Stratman calls "economic or technological development", is modern socialism, communism or Marxism.

David Stratman says that "history is driven not by economic or technological development but by class struggle." (Page 259) First look at the second part of that sentence. That history is driven by class struggle. Now by saying history is driven by class struggle, of course, there, David Stratman is not telling the "economic or technological" minded writers anything new, and he does not pretend to tell those writers anything new by that. A good number of economic or technological minded writers, Marx himself, already speak about class struggle "driving" history.

To see that classes rise out of and fall because of changes in the social division of labour, or that classes fight over economic matters affecting them. That does not deny the place of honour, of class struggle, in "driving" history.

But at the same time, David Stratman ought not to deny the necessity of circumstance in what he calls "economic or technological development".

David Stratman also speaks of: "...destroying the capitalist and Communist states" (Note: for "Communist states" David Stratman understands that of China etc., where the wages system is extended under a "Communist" label) "and all their apparatus — the military, the police, the courts, the legislative and executive bodies. It will include the active suppression of counterrevolution by armed working people..." (Page 266) So says David Stratman. With the first word I quote there, he aims at "destroying" the states with all their apparatus. Sorry to say, that is nonsense.

Realistically, as workers learn what is good for them, class struggle must go on from increasingly influencing to controlling the states' apparatus now controlled against the working class thanks to misplaced working class support and votes.

Alan Kerr 13 Huntings Farm Green Lane Ilford England IGI 1YE

(From p. 9)

wholesale acceptance of anarchism a la Bakunin and Johan Most. I think one might find such evidence in U.S. anarchist publications.

The New Democracy flyer may seem like an example of conspiracy theory politics until the readers reaches the David Stockman quotation, which is as genuine as it can be: The business editor of the Grand Rapids Press tells me that it came out in an interview Stockman gave to William Greider, at that time an editor of the Washington Post. As usual we end with some notes, announcements and short reviews.

BULLETIN MATTERS

Finances

Financially things are picking up for the DB. Receipts are up nearly $100 over the previous two-month period thanks to the generosity of readers. I realize that these financial reports may seem unnecessary; after all, DB subscribers are not members of a group that is responsible for the cost of producing the DB. I'm persuaded to publish this stuff partly through a feeling picked up early in my socialist experience—and I am sure shared by others who grew up in revolutionary groups—that I am accountable to the group for the way I use funds. Even though DB subscribers and contributors are not members of a formal group, they deserve an accounting. The second reason is that I have no other way of drawing readers' attention to the DB's financial needs except via this report. Unfortunately it also exposes my

(To p. 31)
Dear Frank:

In his Shema, Israel letter which you reprinted in DB76, Irving Silvey takes issue with both the "New System Party" (The Industrial Union Party, the IUP) and The De Leonist Society of Canada for what he alleges is their "lack of a rational [rationale?] for where to draw the line" in their use of the term "community." We are puzzled (and no doubt the IUP is also puzzled as to how Silvey could have failed to recognize the obvious—that "community" here did not and does not embrace "many forms and flavors, ad infinitum" but draws the line at a distinct category, namely the people, society-as-a-whole, the body politic.

But speaking now for ourselves alone, we wish to point up a number of Silvey's additional misconstructions as well as his seeming reluctance to confront the Canadian De Leonist Society's political position head-on. Consider:

1. "As I understand it," writes Silvey, "the 'community' consists of all those excluded for whatever reason from membership in the SIU [the Socialist Industrial Union]."

Comment: Here is a prime misunderstanding! First is the fact that our own text did not use the term "community." Second is the fact that we used the terms the people, society-as-a-whole, and the body politic. Third, it seems obvious to us that our context being what it was, the reader should have had no difficulty in equating "community" with the people, etc. In short, contrary to Silvey, "community" does not consist "of all those excluded for whatever reason from membership in the SIU" but of all members of society of voting age!

2. Silvey states that "both" the IUP and The De Leonist Society of Canada "propose the establishment of a political alliance between the SIU and the 'community.'"

Comment: Again Silvey has short-changed our position. What we propose is not an alliance between the SIU and a community that consists of all those excluded from membership in the SIU" but an alliance between the SIU and a political Parliament or Congress that speaks for all the people, i.e. for the people both inside and outside the SIU, i.e. for the body politic.

3. Silvey finds our "argument" amusing, "especially as regards the caricature[] of housewives and retirees."

Comment: A ludicrous distortion on our part? All Silvey needs do is prove that we are mistaken in our claim that as it stands the SLP program will disfranchise the above segments of society. Not until he proves we are wrong will we grinn with him.

4. Silvey accuses us of "all too hasty retreats from De Leon's precepts."

Comment: We have obviously not retreated from De Leon's precept that "the SIU be first the 'battering ram' for knocking over capitalism," nor have we retreated from his precept that the SIU serve as the FORM for democratic management of the industries and services by the workers themselves. What we no longer propose, however, is that the SIU serve as THE government of socialist society. Silvey prefers to call this change a
"retreat." That is his opinion, not ours. We don't consider our new position a "retreat" but an updating of De Leonism. What is more, considering that the updating took 90 years, it can hardly be thought "hasty"!

5. In his discourse on the Basic Shop Mix as "the primal SIU 'community,'" Silvey injects as a premise "the fact[] of it [the Basic Shop Mix] being a widely representative agency (inclusive even of 'housewives' and 'retirees')." (Our emphasis.)

**Comment:** This is news! "Widely representative" it may be; "inclusive of 'housewives' and 'retirees'" is **not**! **not**, that is, within the existing SLP program! Will Silvey please explain how he plans to induct these segments of society into the SIU?

6. Caucus, says Silvey, "may be likened to a community 'generator'.....it is not an extra-(so to speak)-terrestrial concordance politically enforced from on high such as is proposed by the New System Party [the IUP] and The De Leonist Society of Canada."

**Comment:** In our lexicon, the socialist **industrial** caucus comprises the Work Force, a caucus within the perimeters of the SIU whereas the socialist political caucus will embody society-as-a-whole, a caucus within the boundary of the nation. What then does Silvey mean by "on high"? Are decisions made by society's political representatives under Socialism (representatives who are democratically elected and subject to recall) indeed "extra-terrestrial" agreements enforced from "on high"?

Silvey should have given himself time to study our thesis (DB70) before commenting on it. If he had done so he would have realized that the source of our concern with the SLP program is that it contains a governing caucus that is not elected by society. We pointed to the fact as follows:

"The distinction between the people actively engaged in production at any given time [the work force], and the people as a whole, will not go away; on the contrary, as time goes by, advancing technology appears to be widening the gap."

At the same time we emphasized that while the **industrial form** is admirably suited for democratic management of industry by the Work Force, it is not merely wholly unsuited logistically for determination of social policy and resolution of social issues but, if permitted to function thus, would deny Socialism's proclaimed goal of **self-government**! And we brought the matter to a head thus:

"The crucial question that confronts us, therefore, is not whether there are social issues demanding resolution but the question of **WHO** in a Socialist Republic should make the final decisions in the resolution of such issues—**WHO** should determine social policy?

Now if Silvey will reread our thesis he cannot fail to discover that we not only stand for sovereignty of the body politic as against sovereignty of the Work Force, but by exploding the myth that political democracy is synonymous with the political State, we have brought the geographic constituency back out of SLP limbo to serve as the FORM requisite for government of the people, by the people, for the people.
Distortions of Private Property

The following letter was sent to one of our members by Dick Frost, who was the Green Party's candidate for Cumbria and North Lancashire in the recent Euro-elections. We publish it, with his permission, together with our comments. We have also received a letter from the Green Party Local Support Coordinator, to which we reply, too.

Dear Mr. Cummings,

Thank you for your letter and the material with it. I have had a quick read (knowing something about the subject already) and it is clear that we have much in common. I fear you overestimate the degree of anarchism in the Green Party; I am one and I can assure you I belong to a very small minority.

I read the review of the Pepper book (Socialist Standard, September 1993) and the interview with Jonathan Porritt and both raised some valuable points. One area of dispute between us might well be on the appropriate level of political and administrative organisation for a good world; the reason I am now an extreme de-centrist (in fact, I advocate the autonomy of any group in any and every area in which it claims competence) is that every social organization must be consciously and directly controlled by every person who belongs (by choice) to it and who is subject to its decisions. To my mind, that places a low maximum size on social organisation. I do not accept that politicians, bureaucrats or representatives have a place in democracy; once they exist, democracy is dead. Administration has to be equally democratic.

Of course, I envisage the cooperation and federation of small autonomous communities; I also envisage a statute of universal human rights to which all communities would have to subscribe and consequently, an enforcement agency. However, everything I suggest has to be placed in the context of economic adequacy (not mere subsistence) which I believe is the normal condition in which our species would live had the distortions of private property etc. not intruded (Rousseau, Marx etc.) and that adequacy is available to everyone; it requires us to bring it into reality. The ordering of economic life has to be in the hands of people in small communities, directly, to ensure that they know immediately the effects their actions have on their environment and on themselves. Though I do not mean lots of tennis ball-type organisations, neither a complex of Russian dolls, nor better, an eco-system. I am not concerned with the existence or not of money, but cannot see why the communities I envisage would require it. I reject Marx's class analysis, not because I can't see class differences in our society, but because I don't think people exist, existentially or subjectively, in classes and the proletariat is not, therefore, going to act as a class "for itself." I do not agree with Marx's
of autonomous local communities is not only impractical, it is not even desirable.

For a decent quality of life we depend upon machinery, equipment, energy, goods and services which are produced throughout the world. This includes materials such as metals and oil which are found in particular locations and a wide range of foods which require different climates for their cultivation. The technical division of labour which makes up modern production extends throughout a world-wide network of links and can give us the benefits of consumer goods and the pleasures of leisure equipment. To give some examples, it would be impossible for every local community to produce its own refrigerators, televisions, radios or music equipment.

And how would they deal with facilities and services concerning regional populations such as airports, transport systems, universities, specialised health services, energy supply, use and development of land? On a bigger scale, surely it is vital that we establish a world energy authority and other world agencies to co-ordinate action on the threats to the planet from pollution, and to continue such things as the investigation of space, the running of world communications for telephone links, and the celebration of such festivals as the Olympic Games.

We should certainly want to see the State with its tentacles of power that keep us all in its centralised grip. But the answer is not to replace it with an idea of local autonomy which has no practical connection with the conditions of modern life.

What is needed is to replace the State with an integrated system of democratic organisation which would be adaptable for use at local, regional and world levels. Local communities, however we might define them, could be the basic unit of organisation but these should also be associated as regional populations which in turn would be associated as the world community. Such a system of world democracy could be established, by a majority of socialists, from the existing structure of local and national government and such bodies as the United Nations Organisation.

You want to define the size of your autonomous local community by the maximum number who could consciously and directly control it, and say "that places a low maximum size on social organisation". Indeed it does and wouldn't they all be busy! Even for a small community they would be so involved in day-to-day affairs they will hardly have time for their personal lives.

Fortunately, democracy does not require that every person should be directly involved in all decisions. The important thing is that every individual, institution, production unit or council should be accountable. The practice of delegated function would allow people to get on with their jobs. We do not anticipate that in a socialist society they would act against the policies laid down by the majority. Nevertheless, the community would retain procedures whereby the decisions and actions of people could be challenged and reversed if circumstances required it.

It is surprising that you say you are not concerned with the existence or not of money, even though you add that you cannot see why the communities you envisage would require it. In fact, the use of money or not is of fundamental importance. The use of money means the production of goods for exchange and this means the operation of the market.
of their own narrow financial interest, ignoring wider social or ecological considerations . . . the result is an economic system governed by uncontrollable market forces which compel decision makers to plunder, pollute and waste. It could come from any Green Party publication. As our political analysis deepens and matures (although the Green movement has deep roots, the Green Party’s history is rather briefer than your own 90 years) the thinking of Greens like Derek Wall (whom you quote approvingly) has become widely accepted. We know ourselves now to be anti-capitalist, and have long been anti-statist, seeking a shift to self-managing, self-reliant communities. Our vision of a green economy is one in which money is local and impossible to accumulate (witness our support for Local Exchange Trading Systems), in which all stakeholders and not just shareholders participate in the running of an enterprise, in which long-distance trade is regulated for fairness, sustainability and need and in which banking is democratic and community-based (note our participation in Credit Unions).

LETS and Credit Unions are only two ways in which we are putting this into practice directly. Our recently-adopted strategy was clear that elections are only one democratic opening available to us - Greens are active in community initiatives, non-violent direct action and green economics. Our attitude to elections is clearly based on building local support first - earning the support of the community for Green action in local government, and seeking to build direct democracy through “town meetings” and referenda.

Of course, the Green Party has plenty of points of disagreement with the Socialist Party - we’d be discussing merger if we didn’t. We do believe in a libertarian, rather than a planned economy - we believe that given control over their lives, people do act responsibly and morally. We believe that much of the “means of production” are not simply misused and monopolised, but destructive in their very design - we call for a retooling of society. We are not so certain that the working class will be the last to achieve emancipation - what about women, subsistence farmers, the unemployed, or even other species? It is not our class background that determines your revolutionary potential, but your actual lifestyle or aspirations. And we do believe that important as community and workplace action is, change across the whole of society must be facilitated by Greens in every level of government.

I hope these real points of difference will be dissected in your pages in the future - as the old saying goes, the only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about.

ALEX BEGG, Green Party Local Support Co-ordinator, Leeds

Reply: We’re sorry, but the Green Party does accept the market and it does accept profit-making. Not, it is true, in their present form but as modified by the legislation to be enacted by a Green government.

The “Green economy” that the Green Party wants seems to be a small-scale, localised economy but still one in which the market and profit-seeking firms have a place. You yourself mention that this will still involve money, banking and shareholders. But shareholders draw an unearned income from the firms they invest in, so these firms will have to make profits in order to be able to pay this out. Interest-free banking under capitalism is conceivable as a remote possibility, but not profit-free firms - even small ones.

If we had to put a name to it, we would say that this “Green economy” would be a small-scale, modified capitalist economy. The main objection to it is that it is never going to happen. Capitalism has a built-in tendency to the concentration and centralisation of industry and, with this, of government and the population as well. Capitalism runs on profits. Under the competitive pressures of the market, most of these have to be re-invested in new and cheaper methods of production which are generally “capital intensive” and so large-scale. This “accumulation of capital” (as Marx put it) is an economic law of the system which cannot be reversed by the action of any government. Still less by the sort of self-help action at local level (LETS, credit unions, housing associations, etc) that you say the Green Party is now into as well as trying to get a Green government elected.

We are not saying that a more decentralised decision-making and administrative structure with more local democracy is not desirable. What we are saying is that it is impossible to achieve within the context of capitalism. In fact the only framework within which it could be achieved is that provided by Socialism, a world in which the natural and industrial resources of the planet have ceased to be the private property of individuals, firms and states, and in which market forces have ceased to operate because production is carried on directly to meet needs.

The same goes for the problems faced by the groups you mention - women, subsistence farmers and the unemployed (most of whom, by the way, are members of the working class, properly understood as the vast majority in society who are excluded from the ownership and control of productive resources). Their problems, too, can only be solved within this framework.

Where this points is towards our policy of trying to get people to concentrate on working to establish this framework rather than diverting their energies into trying to get a few minor - - precarious improvements within the present system. This is the real difference between the Socialist Party and the Green Party - and all other parties.

EDITORS

-- from Socialist Standard, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN, England
Dear Readers,

Recently the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that government can seize cars, houses and other property used in criminal activity. By a 5 to 4 vote the court ruled, for the state of Michigan, that a car belonging to a man and his wife can be seized because the man was sexually involved with a prostitute in the car. His wife demanded half the car back but lost the case. If society should consider private ownership of the means of production to be wrong like it does prostitution and the use and sale of illegal drugs, the thinking of people would have caught up to the times. Eric Hass, the late editor of The People quoted "we are in a prison where the doors are unlocked." When we want freedom from wage slavery we can open the doors and walk into a new social system based on industrial democracy and social ownership of the means of production.

A Supreme Court decision shortly before the Civil War, the Dred Scott Decision, made people aware that slavery could spread all over the United States. The arrogant pro-slavery majority in the Supreme Court ruled that a person's right to a slave is protected in any state of the union. The face of Chief Justice Tannery that appears in a history book reveals a serious, intelligent man who upholds laws handed down by ancient Greeks and Romans who used slave labor. People could no longer stand in the middle; they were forced to take sides for or against slavery. People from the Whig Party formed the Republican Party which got Abraham Lincoln elected President.

The recent message the Supreme Court gave me is that private property is not inviolable or sacred if society opposes the use such property is put to. It is time for Socialists to spread Marx's teachings that capitalism is responsible for much harm in people's lives especially strife between people and nations. The program of DeLeon is the key to societies advance to Socialism once industry is socially owned because revealed that production can continue when industry is not privately owned. Workers will elect their managers and supervisors. For us to have Socialism people all over the country and even all over the world will have to be in accord that we want the social ownership of the means of production. We will all share fairly and equally the fruits of social labor once Socialism is established. Personal wealth and privilege will be replaced by social harmony as our personal goals for Socialism to work.

Monroe Prussack
Dear Frank,

I don't seem to be doing too well in getting across to you the point I'm trying to make. But I'll have one last go!

When I wrote about the "socialist movement" I wasn't talking about today at all. Today, unfortunately, there is no "socialist movement" in the sense of a mass movement for Socialism. All there is are a few thousand individuals around what are essentially only education or propaganda groups.

The "socialist movement" I was talking about is the mass movement for Socialism that will exist when millions and millions will have become Socialists. Will this movement grow out of the SPGB and its Companion Parties, as you (admitting to being over-suspicious and a bit paranoid) say, I must think? I don't know and, to tell the truth, I don't care as long as it does emerge sometime from somewhere. However, I do think that, in whatever way and from where it emerges, the as yet non-existent mass movement for Socialism will be based on the same sort of broad principles as the SPGB now puts forward.

It will be clear-sighted as to what its goal is, i.e. the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production. It will pursue this goal, and this goal alone, and will not be diverted into advocating reforms of capitalism. It will clearly understand that this goal can only be achieved when a majority are in favour of it and organise themselves democratically to get it. And that this self-organisation will not only have to be economic (at work) and social (in the community) but also political (to win political control, via the ballot box where possible).

This last point is of course what distinguishes the SPGB's scenario for the coming of socialism from that of most of the other small education and propaganda groups that exist today. Personally I am convinced that the future mass movement for Socialism will organise, among other things, to contest elections and win political control and, in any event, I would argue that it should. But, no doubt, the arguments as to the precise tactics and methods to adopt will go on inside the future mass movement for Socialism when it emerges and what it is finally decided to do will be decided democratically and in the light of the particular circumstances faced at the time.

On your second point. You are right. When I wrote of "delegates" from the future mass movement for Socialism I did envisage this as including people chosen to stand for election to parliaments and local councils (as well as including people chosen for other positions within the political side of the movement and for positions in the workers' industrial organisation).

You say such people would inevitably become leaders and could not be subject to the right of recall since this is not permitted by the constitutions of most capitalist states and is ineffective in those which do permit it. In terms of constitutional law you are right, but general political conditions also enter into the equation. If some socialist delegate to a parliament refused to be recalled (to resign when asked), then the movement could declare that they no longer represented the Socialist movement, and that individual, even though remaining a member of parliament from a constitutional point of view, would then represent nobody and would have no political influence. Even capitalist politicians have been reluctant to continue under similar conditions despite their constitutional right to do so.

But why would the socialist movement be able to control their delegates in the socialist industrial unions (as you accept and), indeed, base your
whole scenario for the socialist revolution or? While being unable to control any delegates they elect to political office? The same workers, with the same degree of determination and democratic consciousness, will be involved in both cases. If they won’t condemn undemocratic behaviour from their delegates in one case they wouldn’t in the other either.


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TORPEDO — NEWS FLASH
special issue

number 8... 25.10.1995.

Anarchism in Serbia at the Beginning of the 20th Century

The ideologue of anarchism in Serbia before the First World War was Krsta Civić, who was born in the village of Nikojevci in the Osije region. In 1902 Civić was an unusual student of Belgrade, but before those higher secondary school classes he finished up in Belgrade.

Presumably he came into contact with anarchist ideas in the period 1898-1901 when the anarchists, persecuted throughout Europe because of frequent attentats, passed by and through Serbia. In 1902 Civić was already formed as an anarchist and then had separated from the Marxists, previously his comrades. Dimitrije Tucovic affirms that Krsta Civić tried many times to join the Serbian Social Democratic Party, but they tried everything to keep him out because of his anarchist orientation (...) Besides Krsta Civić's visible role in the development of anarchist ideas in Serbia there was Petar Muraić, but his role was secondary. The greatest number of anarchist articles, books and pamphlets were the work of Civić, but he was of course a very prolific writer.

Since he was not able to enter the workers' organisations, nor to have access to the pages of the Socialist publications, Civić found an outlet in starting up anarchist papers, in putting out numerous pamphlets, and he even made use of the pages of the bourgeois press, which gave the Social Democrats a reason for accusing him of being a hireling of the bourgeoisie. Civić began to popularise anarchism in print in 1905 by bringing out the paper Izid i sloboda ("Bread and Freedom"), continuing in 1907 with Radnička borba ("Workers' struggle") until 1909 and 1910 which was the richest period of his publishing activity. All his writings have a characteristically polemic character and concern themselves first of all with a critique of social democracy, and then with an expansion of the anarchist attitude to workers' organisations and methods of struggle (...)

In criticising social democracy Civić started out from the position that the Social Democratic Party (like all the other SDSs) was an ordinary bourgeois democratic party which
was only socialist in name and "which fights for power in the
town hall and the state like any other bourgeois party". To be
able to accomplish its anti-revolutionary aims social
democracy had "created a single horrible centralised
organisation" with the aim of "bringing into the soul of the
proletariat greater legalism and respect for bourgeois laws".
As he went through the critique of the tactics of the Social
Democratic Party, Cicvarič was particularly concerned with its
parliamentary activity which, according to him, "comprised the
whole activity of social democracy (...)" Writing about social
democracy's attempt to conquer state power, under which
Cicvarič understood was the state apparatus, an apparatus
which was to be used simply as a means to bring about "social
transformation", Cicvarič reached the conclusion that this was
impossible because "whenever the proletariat fights against
the bourgeoisie it always comes into conflict with the state,
which is nothing other than a bourgeois organisation" (...)

Since the Social Democratic Party, as bourgeois
reformists, was not in a position to be an organizer and
leader of the working class in the struggle for proletarian
freedom, that task, according to Cicvarič, would be taken or
by the anarchists themselves who "knowing in advance the
futility of all peaceful efforts (...)" calling for persistent
revolutionary struggle, which will one day lead to victory
(...) the organisational form of workers' association was the
unions, but not the unions which already existed in Serbia,
whose centralised organisation and ideological unity with the
Social Democratic Party presents only an obstacle to
successful class struggle (...) The first task of a union
organisation is to free itself from the influence of the
Social Democratic Party "which is legal and bourgeois
throughout" and thus realise its own independence and
autonomy. Only then when it is obliged to associate as a
single league on a "simple federal basis" and in this way to
create a single strong revolutionary federation, which will be
free from any influence of the political parties. Such
organised workers can lead the struggle against the
bourgeoisie, and that struggle consists of direct action,
direct confrontation with the bourgeoisie.

The most important form of direct action is the general
strike, which is not simply a refusal to work, but already a
forceful interruption of production. Since in the event of
general strike there will be an obligatory police
intervention, the workers will "have to answer police terror
with workers' terror" and then the general strike ceases to be
legal and "takes on a revolutionary character, it becomes a
revolution - a social revolution". Developing this thesis
further Cicvarič rejected other forms of directly settling
accounts with the bourgeoisie such as fighting on the
barricades, i.e. armed struggle. Because in the event of a
general strike the state will definitely make use of the army
the general strike will take on so much of the character of a
people's rebellion that it poses the question of by what means
the proletariat can defeat the army, and "that is the question which is of the greatest importance for the proletariat after the general strike". Ciovarić found a solution to this question. Since "the main contingent of soldiers" is not composed of bourgeois but is proletarian, it is indispensable to apply forms of organisation in the army similar to the general strike - the withdrawal of military obedience. Anti-militarism means workers having to go into the army to organise revolutionary action there. "If we want to successfully carry out revolution in the streets we must prepare revolution in the barracks" concludes Ciovarić.

In the same way the trade union movement must lead the anti-parliamentary struggle. Since parliament is a bourgeois institution, workers cannot expect anything from it and so anarchists fight "against any participation in elections". When the proletariat participates in elections this "only disabuses it for the revolution which alone can bring it freedom" (...). Until 1905, except for information on the starting of the anarchist émigré Narodne vreme ("New Times") - here we don't even know whether it generally came out - for now there is no intelligence regarding various anarchist organisations and whether it is likely that anarchists were at work (...). In August 1905 the anarchists crowned their own strengthened activity with the starting up of the paper Hleb i sloboda (...) 1906 was the year of the apparent offence of anarchist action. There's no information whatsoever on the existence of anarchist clubs nor on the time that a particular anarchist paper was published (...). At the beginning of 1907 the anarchists made a new attempt at establishing and bringing out a new paper Radnička borba (...) Until the revival of anarchist publishing activity beginning in 1909, when Kresta Ciovarić developed a great deal of activity, comprising numerous articles in the press, resulting in the formation of a larger mass of autonomous workers in the area of the theory and practice of anarchism.

* * *

From the book Tokovi revolucije II ("Currents of revolution"), translated by Alan, published by R.G. Torpedo. More information (please enclose one or two IRCs) on following address:

Milan Džurić
M. Velikog 12/10
11000 Smederevca
F.R. Yugoslavia
THE DEFICIT IS NO ACCIDENT
A NEW DEMOCRACY FLYER

Debate in the media and Congress about how to balance the budget has ignored the most fundamental questions: why and how did the federal deficit and four trillion dollar national debt come about?

THE "STRATEGIC DEFICIT"

The national debt is mainly a product of the Reagan-Bush years. Ronald Reagan ran on a pledge to balance the budget. Why did he create a huge deficit instead?

David Stockman, Reagan's first Budget Director, admitted in a famous interview that the administration purposely created a "strategic deficit" to achieve Reagan's real goals. He wanted to put in place a mechanism for gutting programs created in response to popular movements during the previous 45 years—programs like public housing, youth employment, child nutrition, welfare, school lunches, food stamps, and other programs which give ordinary people some floor to stand on in hard times.

First the Reagan Administration cut taxes on corporations and the rich, while it increased military spending, thus creating a huge deficit. Then it claimed that there was no money left to fund social programs—a claim which the Democratic Congress of the time largely echoed.

Reagan cut the social safety net to create a large pool of desperate people, willing to accept any work at any pay, and to send a message to those who still had a job: "Stay in line or you'll be living on the street with them." Bush continued to build up the deficit, and used it to justify more cuts and pain for working people.

The current Congressional budget blueprint continues the strategy. It gives a $245 billion tax break to the rich and increases Pentagon spending by $34 billion, while it hacks $450 billion from Medicare and Medicaid.

The deficit and national debt were created intentionally by politicians of both parties, to destroy social programs which give working people some protection against unrestrained corporate power. Together with high unemployment, shipping jobs overseas, the use of temp labor, and other devices of corporate power, the deficit was created to strike fear in the hearts of working people and weaken their ability to organize.

CLINTON'S USE OF THE DEFICIT

President Clinton uses the deficit in the same way as Reagan and Bush and the Congress: to make people more vulnerable to the brutality of the market. As soon as he took office, Clinton declared that "the deficit is larger than we thought," and abandoned his campaign promises of large-scale job creation. Instead he proposed to "re-invent government" and to cut 250,000 federal jobs, freeze the wages of federal employees, and cut Medicare and Medicaid. He no longer pretends to disagree with the Republicans on balancing the budget, but only on timing.

WHERE DOES OUR MONEY GO?

Who benefits from the deficit? In addition to gaining greater political control by cutting social programs, the rich also benefit financially from the deficit. Interest payments on the debt have amounted to more than $220 billion each year since 1990. This money has gone to banks and wealthy investors who purchase Treasury notes.

Instead of taxing the rich, the government now borrows from them and pays them billions in interest. According to a recent study, "Interest payments [on the national debt] represent the largest transfer of wealth in this century."

THE SOLUTION

We face very serious problems in our society. Inequality. Unemployment. Crime. Destruction of the environment.

But it is important to see that, while these are serious problems for ordinary people, for the ruling elite they are not problems but solutions. Each of the problems we face is a source of profit or control for the elite: inequality to divide people; unemployment to make them afraid; crime to justify more police; an environment raped for profit. The rulers won't solve these problems. Their power depends on them.

The deficit is a false problem designed to cover-up the real problem of government by the rich and for the rich.

The problems in our society are not inevitable. They are caused by the lack of real democracy. They can only be solved by democratic revolution, to put society in the hands of ordinary working people.

Please copy this flyer and pass it on.

New Democracy works for democratic revolution. Call Doug Fuda (617)323-7213, or John Spritzler, 566-9637. For free literature: New Democracy, P.O. Box 427, Boston, MA 02130.
Glen Johnson of South Lyon, Michigan, died early this month at the age of 80. He was a charter subscriber to the DB and a generous contributor. Glen worked for years as a maintenance worker at a major hospital in Ann Arbor. I think he joined the Socialist Labor Party as a charter member of Section Washtenaw County when it was organized in 1950. He resigned from the SLP along with many other dissidents in the late sixties when the party squelched discussion of questions about policy and tactics raised by the ferment created by the Vietnam War, the New Left, and the youth movement. He was involved with others in an attempt to organize a new style DeLeonist organization on a national scale. When that failed, he and others in the Ann Arbor area organized the Industrial Republic Association of Michigan, which published leaflets and continues to agitate locally. Glen was active up to the end. He was a practicing Roman Catholic and a kind and gentle man.

“The Spirit Untamed” Michigan Anarchist Conference will—if all goes as planned—be held the weekend of May 10-12 in Lansing, Michigan. Active Transformation, the moving spirit of this conference, wants input regarding ideas for the conference. For further information write to them at P.O. Box 6746, East Lansing, MI 48826.

The Socialist Labor Party has published a set of five new four-page leaflets: “Getting Something for "innumeracy,” as Ben Perry used to call my inadequate bookkeeping.

Contributions: Tad Pice $2; Eugene Rodriguez $10; Curtis Price $5; Herb Edwards $6; Tom Dooley $15; John Cassella $10; Tom Tully $7; John Craven $7; Frank Andreasen $10; Sam Smucker $7; Monroe Prussack $7; David Stratman $22; Louis Prisco $3; Robin Cox $5; Rado Mijanovich $40.

Thank you, comrades.

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Fraternally submitted,

Frank Girard
for the DB
Nothing!: Who Gives and Who Receives in the Age of Productivity?, "The Role of the Union": What’s Right and What’s Wrong with Labor Union Reform Movements," "Sneak Attack on Labor Standards: Congress Targets Overtime Pay, Eight-Hour Day," "Who Are the Polluters?: How Capitalism Is Destroying the Earth!" and "Here Today and Gone Tomorrow: The Plight of America’s Temporary Workers." Some of these may be published in the DB as the opportunity occurs, but interested readers can probably get sample copies from the SLP, P.O. Box 70517, Sunnyvale, CA 94086.

Anarchist Age Monthly Review is a 36-page Australian publication now in its sixth year. Its cover defines anarchism: "An anarchist society is a voluntary, non-hierarchical society based on the creation of social and political structures which allow all people equal decision making power and equal access to society’s wealth." Number 63, March 1996, reprints four issues of the four-page Anarchist Age Weekly Review as well as an especially interesting anarchist election tactic being used in Australia. Under the heading “PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY: TWO MINUTES OF ILLUSORY POWER” they have begun a campaign urging people to “vote informal” as a way to meet the Australian law forcing citizens to register and vote. I’m unsure just what is meant by voting “informal,” but it must involve actually casting a vote since the anarchists will run candidates for “informal” voters. It reminds me of the rather mixed feelings among some SLP members in the days when we were running candidates. Some of our candidates used to speak of running against office rather than for it (e.g., “I’m running against Congress in the Fifth District”) to highlight our opposition to the whole political system. Subscriptions to AAMR are £36 a year, $20 for low income. It is published by Libertarian Workers for a Self-Managed Society/Anarchist Media Institute, P.O. Box 20, Parkville 3052, Melbourne, Australia.

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