



The Praxis Network



Issue No.02 May 2008

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A Journal of Independent Marxist Theory & Practice

Towards Socialism

The Praxis Network and *Surplus Value* are initiatives of some thinkers and activists around Australia who recognise the value and relevance of Marxism as an analytical and organizational tool. Our initial plan is to build a network of groups and individuals to share ideas, educate ourselves, and to encourage and be involved in dialogue with others, particularly those in the organised labour movement, but also the broader community. We trust that others may be interested in joining in this initiative.

Our aims are threefold:

- To re-energise and strengthen the idea that class is still the most-fundamental basis for developing political understanding and strategy.
- To introduce a materialist approach to understanding our own history and into everyday political practice.
- To bring a dialectical approach to analysis of political events and activity.

To give effect to these aims, we recognise that:

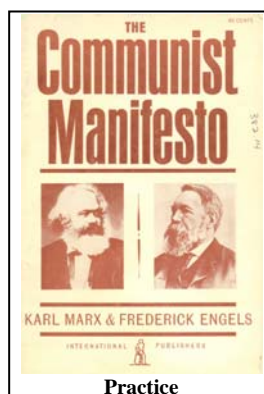
Our strategies must be based on the lives and experiences of everyday Australian people – both workers, and those currently dependent on social security – rather than on a dogmatic or idealist assertion of “political and conceptual truths”



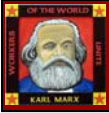
We must engage in constructive dialogue with a range of people with the intention of achieving clarity on questions and problems that confront our movement. **We need to be self-critical**, open to disagreement, and willing to accept a diversity of opinion, but within the general framework of our aims.

The labour movement and progressive sections of the broader community need to be able to understand and respond to the crises and impacts of capital in a globalised world. We believe Marxism offers a practical guide and tool for analysis and action in addressing this.

Our aim is not to form another group, faction or sect, but to bring people and organisations together in a loose network which we have called The Praxis Network. In adopting this name, we do not intend it to be a reflection of any particular strand of Marxist thought or earlier use by particular groups or journals. This name simply reflects our desire to meld theory and practice within the context of a critical understanding of Marxism.



If you wish to contribute to our initiative, please contact us or spread the word to your friends and organisations. As part of this initiative, we have established this newsletter, a website, and an email group for discussions and the dissemination of information. With your help, we hope that justice can be done to the aims we have set ourselves.



FROM THE EDITOR

This is the second of our newsletters. The initial edition was issued about this time last year, so it's been a while between editions. What we lack in numbers we hope is made up for in quality.

You will note that there has been a change of our organisation's name. The first newsletter was produced in the name of the Australian Independent Marxists (AIM). This was the creation of a few activists interested in furthering the ideas and practice of Marxism.

Because of growing interest, we have changed the name to *The Praxis Network* to reflect a desire to become a broader coalition of like-minded individuals and organisations coming together loosely under a Marxist banner.

We have also decided to call it a *journal* because of the nature of the articles included (often lengthy analytical rather than shorter news items). Whilst our aims establish us as Marxists, there is no requirement that articles be from a Marxist perspective. Our main aim is to publish contributed articles which foster discussion or reflect an opinion in the broader progressive movement, and which contribute to developing our understanding of the current situation or to developing strategies for political change.

Ultimately, as the editor, I take responsibility for what is included. However, my role is one of facilitator, not director. So choice of articles will reflect my honest attempt at putting together material that I think most readers would find of interest, which will further our aims, or which active contributors ask to be included.

Generally, all articles and contributions will be attributed to the person who wrote them.

However, some contributors may wish to remain anonymous. Even though this is not the 50's, capital still has the power and the will to destroy working people who pose a threat to their privileges.

Since our first edition, we have also set up a web site. This is still very new and so has a lot of development work to be done before it can do justice to our aims. But in the not-too-distant future, we hope it will become an active site for publishing information, engaging in dialogue, and notifying of events.

Please feel free to contact us via the web site or our email address. Also, please feel free to contribute articles or opinions or feedback about this journal.

Adrian Pollock, 1 May 2008

TEACHERS' VOICES DEMAND RECOGNITION

By **Peter Curtis**

Teachers around the country are in protracted disputes over wages and conditions with their ALP government bosses. Federal Education Minister Gillard has come out in opposition to teacher unions' proposition that we place bans on administering national literacy and numeracy testing in pursuit of our claims for real wage increases and the addressing of our working conditions.

Gillard is suggesting teachers are recalcitrant for refusing to administer the national testing program. Pretending to be some sort of an authority on education she has stated the testing regime is necessary for the "...best understanding (of) what's happening in our education system" ... (to) "make sure we're keeping the system working the way we want it to". (The Age, 17/4)

The Federal ALP government and their state counter parts' attitudes to public education, and their actions on teachers demonstrate just how they want their system to 'work'. The Victorian governments' contempt for teachers in the state system has been such that it has allowed the Liberal Party to present, albeit hypocritically,

a conciliatory position on wages. Decades of governments have neglected state education infrastructure, and the undermining of teachers working conditions and professional standing are nothing but the continuation of the destructive counter-reforms of the Liberal-Kennett years.

Two massive mass meetings and weeks of rolling stoppages across the state have clearly expressed teachers' frustrations with the intransigence of government administrators. Education Minister Pike refuses to meet with the AEU negotiators, and has not budged on its lousy 'offer' of 3.25%. The government refuses to hear our concerns over workloads that detract from delivering quality programs and teaching. Instead they expect us to give up holidays and work even longer hours in return for anything beyond their wage 'offer'.

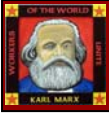
Governments, Corporate leaders and Administrators all reiterate that teacher quality is the key to good education and schools, but refuse to acknowledge the obstacles voiced by thousands of teachers around the country to developing effective, quality professional learning. It is ignorance to suggest that standardised testing is any measure of quality teaching. Quality teaching requires that teachers be treated as professionals foremost, that is, with respectful regard for the important work we do day in day out for our students and the society at large.

Our current brace of bosses have demonstrated to us time and again a complete lack of comprehension in this regard. Teachers and their organisations' reasonable demands and requests of governments and its administrators have been met with nothing but disregard. If our administrators were serious about improving state education they would listen and engage with teachers and their unions, for it is they who know what needs to be done to achieve genuine improvements. It is the teachers who are taking industrial action who are committed to improving the standing of our profession and public education. Sacrificing our own time and money, and doing what ever it takes to defend and improve public education is surely one indicator of a teacher's best qualities.

Peter Curtis is a member of the Australian Education Union (AEU).

I am convinced there is only one way to eliminate these grave evils, namely through the establishment of a socialist economy, accompanied by an educational system which would be oriented toward social goals....

Albert Einstein

**A TURNING POINT**

May 1st – Labour Day – means a lot to the organised working class in Brisbane. In a way not seen in any other capital city of Australia, thousands of grass roots members of trade unions march together to celebrate and assert our collective power.

This May 1st marks a real turning point for us all.

Over the past twelve months, the ACTU led an unprecedented campaign to oppose Australian laws regulating labour. Partly as a result of this campaign, and partly as a result of recent economic hardships faced by a growing section of the people, a large majority of Australians opposed the laws. Slightly more than 50% of Australians voted in a government committed to lessening some of the harsher aspects of the laws.

There was over this past year open and widespread questioning of the fundamental relationship between capital and labour. What is reasonable for bosses to ask of workers? How much should workers trust their employers? How much control should

government have over the way in which bosses hire and contract workers? Questions such as these have come up in a thousand different ways, as discussion centred on AWAs, unfair dismissal, disallowed matters, union rights of entry to workplaces, and so on.

This discussion and questioning has up till now been unorganised, anarchic and spontaneous. A hundred flowers have bloomed! Nevertheless this collective national discussion has focussed not on a particular industrial dispute, such as national discussions did during the SEQEB or waterfront disputes. Rather the discussion has been directly about class relations under present day capitalism. Not since the 1960s struggles against the penal powers of the arbitration system have we experienced such a social and political situation.

With the election of a new social democratic government, we are at a turning point in the development of our collective political consciousness.

On the one hand, there is a real possibility that this discussion about class relationships will be dampened out of existence during the next twelve months.

There are many voices arguing not to rock the boat, to give our new government a go, to “hasten slowly”, and etc.

There is some truth to these arguments in that it would indeed be a tragedy for many insecure working people if the real gains were to be reversed by election of a reinvigorated and hostile liberal government in two years time.

Yet on the other hand there is some possibility that the current heightened consciousness of class and class relations – a consciousness grown out of the real struggles of the past year in a thousand different workplaces and union offices – that this consciousness will continue to develop into an organised and focussed discussion.

For those of us with an aim of developing a greater collective awareness of class and its importance in political strategy, current times are an opportunity not to be missed.

We have nothing to lose but the shackles of our minds.

Ross Gwyther, May 2008

MAKE CAPITALISM HISTORY

The globalisation of commodity production has had profound human, social and environmental effect on the vast majority of people. Millions of people are now threatened with starvation due to the skyrocketing price of food and the destruction of traditional agricultural societies in the drive to plunder natural resources, establish capitalist agribusiness, and divert production from food to energy. Capitalism is a system in which the fundamental outcome for people depends on whether they are one of the few owners of capital (capitalists) or workers, or in other words, their class position in society dictates their ability to make the basic decisions such as should grain be grown for food or energy.

Modern capitalism is global in scale. The basic drive is to maximise profits for corporations. In this constant search to reduce the cost of production and maximise profits, the masters of finance capital, set up production in countries

that have the cheapest, most restricted and impoverished labour.

Although capitalism is a global system, the historical centres of capitalist accumulation remain much more wealthy in comparison to those areas that have, for the last several hundred years, been the colonies of the capitalist powers and subject to the plunder of their human, mineral and environmental resources.

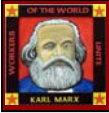
Despite the huge amounts of abundant wealth created by the working class in this capitalist system, millions of people in the world are dying from such basic problems as malnourishment, the lack clean drinking water, adequate shelter, and health care. The bankruptcy of the capitalist system is there for all to see. This alone serves as a damning confirmation that there hasn't been any fundamental shift in the ownership of wealth. This shift in wealth can be observed more clearly in developed countries with the whole-sale destruction of what was termed as the middle class, or the more secure strata of workers.

In Australia, unions were organized

to defend the working class from the constant attempt on the part of capital to drive down the conditions and income of the workers. Australia was one of the first nations to see political parties formed to further the struggle against capital. Employer groups and representatives of capitalism formed their political parties to keep the numerical superior working class out of parliamentary office. This was the basic national structure of the system within which political movements, social struggles, and ideological currents expressed themselves in the past.

With the globalization of the capitalist system the economic theory and the strategies of social struggles have to be considered in the global context of capitalism dominated by one mighty superpower, in which other nations are reduced to branch office status. In this age of Empire, every pretext is used to foster the break-up of even the nation as a political area of social organization.

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Deregulation, a term coined in Australia, means that capital can flow, unrestricted by national frontiers, to the most profitable areas. This is the logic that has seen manufacture moved to areas such as China and India where the price of labour power is the cheapest. One very beneficial outcome of this strategy to capitalism is to bring about the greatest possible fragmentation of the forces potentially hostile to the system.

De-industrialization has destroyed working communities in Australia and even in the centre of capital accumulation, the United States. The ability to off-shore production has given the capitalist class a

weapon to destroy the power and cohesiveness of the working people, drive down their conditions and wages, and create a huge pool of temporary workers fearful of losing their jobs.

The objectives of capital remain the same—the control of the expansion of markets, the looting of the earth's natural resources, the super-exploitation of labour, especially in the third world.

Capitalism remains a system that has as its fundamental purpose the prosperity for the few, and this is dependant on the deprivation of the many. It is a false assumption that

capitalism can be made to work in the interest of all - rich and poor alike. Failure to recognise this essential class antagonism between the few who control capital and the many who are exploited and impoverished by the process of capital accumulation leads to the myth that capitalism can be made "fairer", or that some global equitable system is possible under Capitalism. Capitalism can never be made more "fair" or "equitable" either by rock stars or gestures of debt relief. Effective change will only be accomplished by the complete overthrow of the capitalist system.

Don Wilson, May 2008

NOT THE 1930s

Historian **Humphrey McQueen** writes:

Ten years after the Asian financial tail-spin and twenty since the Wall Street panic cut 30% off stock prices, central bankers are running up warning flags about the fragility of their global system. The International Bank of Settlements might be reserved about the likelihood of a crisis but it raised the stakes last June by using the D-word – a Depression of 1930s dimension - not just a recession like that of the late 1970s.

Returning from two years in Tokyo in April 1990, I waited for the bursting of its real estate and stock market Bubbles to bring down the world economy. Instead, Japan's technocrats navigated through a protracted deflationary cycle by ignoring the advice of free market economists to deliver a short sharp shock of the kind that devastated post-Soviet Russia.

Having got Japan wrong, and not keen to join those commentators renowned for predicting eight of the last three recessions, I stopped asking "When will capitalism collapse?" Instead, I gave lectures titled "Can capitalism collapse?"

One theme in those talks has been that another depression will not be a replay of the 1930s. The first point to grasp is that the Wall Street Crash of October 1929 was a symptom of the depression, not its cause. The flood of funds into the stock market had followed the drying up of opportunities to gain average rates of return from investing in physical production. In brief, the effective demand for T-models had been met. Planned

obsolescence and hire purchase were still in their infancy and so could not then provide a counter.

The stock market imploded because the ratio of share price to earnings passed the point where there were enough "greater fools" to buy over-priced stocks. As Warren Buffett learned at the time, the stock market is a voting machine, not a weighing machine.

A second difference from the 1930s is how much bigger the world economy is today. The force needed to stop its expansion will have to be much greater than around 1930-32. That mass might also allow the system to keep from stalling while growing at a lower rate.

Connected to this increased size, the global order now has three principal centres, Europe, North America and East Asia, against only one and two halves 80 years ago. In the last 15 years, the global economy has sometimes got by on a single engine until at least one of the others restarted.

On top of these objective factors, there is a psycho-sociological reason why the start of another depression will not replicate October 1929. Too many people are watching that possibility. The danger spots become wherever no one with the power to act is looking.

Two points of similarity with the 1920s remain. First, any tripwire will again be in the financial sector, perhaps from protecting East Asian investments against the collapsing US dollar. Secondly, financial imbalances will be able to trigger a collapse because they

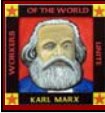
are the result of another bout of excess manufacturing capacity. One instance of this over-supply is that if all the car plants in North America were to close down, those in the rest of the world would be able to roll out more vehicles than there is money to buy them (ie, "effective demand").

So why is the productive system in this crisis? There are two interlocked reasons. First, each oligopoly plans to capture the largest possible slice of the market. In combination, therefore, all the corporations produce more units than there are buyers. The second explanation concerns why the demand is limited. This constraint arises because the bulk of consumers are wage-earners who are paid less than the value of the goods they produce. From the difference, corporations derive their profit. Debt has been a bridge over the gap between wages and the value of goods. Now, far fewer households can obtain or afford credit.

The system works when there are opportunities to invest that gain in profitable endeavours. We are now at one of the points where those outlets are far too few to absorb the money-capital. That the stock market keeps bouncing back is a mark of why the global system is in jeopardy. There is nowhere better to park the trillions of money-capital than in shares.

So what if it blows?

If it is dodgy to speculate about the timing of or the immediate trigger for
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another global depression, several of its consequences can be predicted with almost 100% accuracy.

A collapse of real existing capitalism is not going to move the world one toenail towards a kinder place to live. On the contrary, a depression will make every problem worse.

On the economic front, oligopolisation will spike. The benefit of a depression to capitalism as a whole is, as Joseph Schumpeter recognised, as a gale of creative destruction. That means the destruction of many huge firms of the size of GM and Ford.

The impact of even a serious recession on generations who have never known more than mild deprivation will be much harsher than poverty was on the 1930s victims

who had been weaned on frugal comforts, not expecting super-affluence. Far fewer will know how to feed themselves once they can no longer afford to dine out.

This material deprivation will provoke identify crises. Individuality has shrunk from being defined by what one creates, to what one makes, to what one owns and now to whatever gadget one has most recently bought. Self-esteem is reduced to the exchange of credit for a commodity which loses its prime use value by being purchased. What happens to the sense of self when the buying has to stop?

The political consequences will rip through civil society. Reflecting on the recession of the mid-1970s, the head of CRA, Sir Roderick Carnegie, warned that "A society raised on champagne tastes may not be a polite or a pleasant one if it is reduced to a beer income." That shadow over democracy is larger in the era of anti-terrorism.

The environmental consequences will be catastrophic. Although the burning of fossil fuels and the use of other non-renewables will be cut as a result of the slashing in effective demand, the corporations and the poorest alike will be driven to plunder the wealth of nature for survival. Emission targets and carbon offsets will be out of the window.

That skim through the consequences leaves us with a variant on the opening question: if capitalism can indeed collapse, can it also rise again? To approach an answer we must look again at the 1930s. The conventional belief is that Roosevelt's New Deal rescued the US. In truth, the downturn of 1938 was as steep as that at the start of the deflationary cycle. What dragged the world out of depression was global war. That gale of destruction lost some of its creative promise at Hiroshima.

FIRE SALE OF THE PEOPLES' ASSETS CONTINUES

by Paul Gould

The Queensland Government is laying the groundwork for the possible sell-off of Queensland Rail and the deregulation of our Water resources. This should send alarms bells to the working families of this state. The sell-offs are being orchestrated by a State Labour government, although this should be no surprise as the Australian Labour Party have been the prime architects of privatisation in this country.

The arguments for privatisation have always been based on a false economy and the primary motivation is greed and short sightedness by incumbent governments.

The Queensland Premier, Anna Bligh has shown her true colours with the sale of public assets when she told state parliament that by the end of the year the Government would sell the Cairns and Mackay airports, along with the Port of Brisbane Corporation's shareholding in the Brisbane Airport Corporation.(Ref2)

"With the funds of this major sale, we will expand and redevelop the Cairns Base Hospital, buy a site for a future Cairns hospital, build a new Mackay

Base Hospital on its current site and redevelop Mount Isa Hospital," (Ref, 2)

One has to ask, why does the Government need to sell assets in order to fund essential projects? Surely there would be other ways to fund such essential services as hospitals? If there is no other way to fund essential infrastructure development, what will the future hold for generations when there are no more public assets left to fund these services?

We are often told that the sale of public assets leads to better management due to competitiveness. However, electricity retailer, Origin, in April apologised for incorrectly charging 899 of its customers the state government's ambulance levy and not applying the seniors' rebate to their bills, leaving pensioners from \$50 to \$80 out of pocket (Ref 4). In today's economic climate, with rising living costs, this is a significant expense for most people, let alone pensioners. No wonder people are cynical about politicians when told that private and corporate concerns can manage public utilities better than Government and then we hear of such mismanagement.

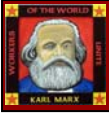
The close association of business and government has meant that, in reality, the elected government of the people is really in the pocket of big business. Governments seek advice on deregulation

and privatisation through the ranks of individuals within the financial services industry. These are merchant bankers, lawyers, accountants, stockbrokers and a collection of 'consultants' and lobbyists – all of who might expect to benefit from advisory work, in 'preparing' agencies for Corporate change and in drafting plans for privatisation. (Ref 1. p3)

The argument for privatisation is that it can repair government finances based on the alleged need to reduce government debt or the money gained can be spent on infrastructure or other services. This argument ignores the fact that selling government businesses in order to pay off debt may actually lead to deterioration in the financial circumstances of the government. Selling a public utility signifies the loss of dividend revenue from a government business and this loss may exceed the profits and savings from reduced costs made by selling the entity. (Ref. 1, p48)

Also alarming is the take over of water resources by the state government from the local councils. The Queensland Commission of Audit, a body set up by the Borbidge Government in 1997, had recommended an end to public ownership of water assets, and the government appointed Deutsche

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A SHELTER IN THE TEMPEST OF HISTORY

By Terry Eagleton

February 2002

[Ed: this article is a few years old but, like the Einstein article in the previous issue of Surplus Value, it is a well-written, rallying-cry for socialism.]

The soothsayer seeks to predict the future in order to control it. He peers into the entrails of a social system so as to decipher the omens, which will assure its rulers that their profits are safe and the system will endure. These days, he is generally an economist or a business executive. The prophet, by contrast, has no interest in foretelling the future, other than to warn that unless people change their ways there's unlikely to be one. His concern is to rebuke the injustice of the present, not dream of some future perfection; but since you can't identify injustice without some notion of justice, a kind of future is implicit in the denunciation.

A future that was not somehow in line with the present would be unintelligible, just as one that was only in line with it would be undesirable. A desirable future must be a feasible one, otherwise we shall come to desire uselessly and, like Freud's neurotic, fall ill of longing. But if we simply read off the future from the present, we cancel the futurity of the future, rather as the new historicism tends to erase the pastness from the past. The seriously bizarre utopian, the one with his head buried most obdurately in the sand, is the hard-nosed pragmatist who imagines the future will be pretty much like the present only more so. The pure fantasy of this delusion, that the IMF, Brad Pitt and chocolate chip cookies will still all be up and running in the year 5000, makes the hairy, wild-eyed apocalypticists look like spineless moderates. Whatever Francis Fukuyama may think, the problem is not that we are likely to have too little future, but too much. Our children are likely to live in interesting times.

It's highly probable that there will be a major crisis of capitalism in the coming decades, which is not to say that it is certain or that there will be socialism. That the future is bound to be

different from the present doesn't guarantee that it will be any better. But as the West draws its wagons into tighter and tighter circles and slams the hatches on an increasingly alienated, displaced, deprived population of the excluded (both at home and abroad), and as civic society is increasingly torn up by the roots, it doesn't require a Nostradamus to foresee a spot of turbulence on the horizon.

You can't let market forces rip without a lot of social featherbedding, otherwise you risk too much instability and resentment; but it's exactly that sort of featherbedding that market forces destroy. The system undermines its own hegemony, without much need of help from the left. What is to be feared is less that history will merely repeat itself, than the prospect that it will begin to unravel while the left is dishevelled, disorganised and incapable of steering ragged, spontaneous revolt into productive channels. The problem then is that a lot more people are likely to get hurt than might otherwise be the case.

This is all the more regrettable when you consider how remarkably modest a proposal the left is really advancing. All it wants are conditions in which everybody on the planet can get enough to eat and have a job, freedom, dignity and the like. Hardly a revolutionary affair. Yet it's a sign of just how dire things are that it *would* take a revolution to achieve this. That is because of the extremism of capitalism, not of socialism. That things are very bad, by the way, is the kind of simple-minded claim that distinguishes radicals from liberal reformers, but not certain conservatives. Liberals, pragmatists and modernisers cling to the Utopian delusion that there's nothing *fundamentally* wrong. Conservatives see that there is something fundamentally wrong; it's just that they tend to be mistaken about what it is. The most blatantly naff form of idealism is not socialism, but the belief that, given enough time, capitalism will feed the world. Just how long do you let such a view run before judging it discredited?

I've never been very convinced, for all that, that terms like optimism and pessimism make much political sense. What matters (what's indeed the necessary condition of any fruitful moral or political action) is realism, which sometimes leads you to be glum and

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Morgan Grenfell to advise it on the sale of this infrastructure. (Ref 1, p29).

If privatisation is not stopped and reversed, then the future will not be bright for the coming generations. This will mean that delivering of essential services, such as water and rail services, will no longer be accountable to the people but to a few select shareholders and greedy company directors. The trade unions, community groups and other progressive organizations need to express their public disapproval, so that the economic rationalist policies exhibited by both State and Federal Governments can be reversed.

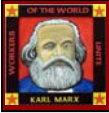
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sometimes to be jubilant. Realism is extraordinarily arduous. The point is to be gloomy for the right reasons, which is where the left sometimes gets it wrong. So let me briefly spell out some reasons for the left not to be discouraged.

First, I think it's a mistake to think that the current crisis of the left has anything much to do with the collapse of communism. Few socialists were disenchanted by the events of the late 1980s, since to be disillusioned it is necessary previously to be illusioned. The last time that large numbers in the West were illusioned about the Soviet Union was in the 1930s, which is rather a long time ago. Indeed, if you want the most effective critique of that system, you have to go not to Western liberalism but to major currents of Marxism, which were always a good deal more radical in their resistance to Stalinism than Isaiah Berlin. In any case, the global left was in deep crisis long before the first brick was dislodged from the Berlin wall.

If there's a reason for the left to feel dismayed by the end of communism, it's more because that collapse demonstrated the formidable (continued on Page 7...)



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power of capitalism (which, through a deliberately ruinous arms race, was largely responsible for bringing the Soviet bloc to its knees), than because some precious life form disappeared with the Ceausescu. Even so, what happened in the late 1980s was a revolution, for all its horrific consequences. And revolutions weren't supposed to happen in the 1980s.

Nor is the supposed apathy of the populace a good enough reason for feeling glum. That's largely because it's a myth. People who clamour against refugees and demand the right to defend their property with a neutron bomb may be unenlightened, but they aren't apathetic. There are lots of good citizens in the north of where I live, Ireland, who are all too unapathetic. Men and women are usually only apathetic about kinds of politics that are apathetic about them. People may not currently think much of the politicians or theories of surplus value, but if you try to drive a motorway through their backyard or close down their children's school, they will protest swiftly enough. And why not? It is rational to resist an unjust power if one may do so without too much risk and with a reasonable chance of success. Such protests may not be in the least effective, but that's not the point at issue. It is also rational, in my view, to refuse radical political change as long as a system is able to afford you some gratification, however meagre, and as long as the alternatives to it remain perilous and obscure. In any case, most people invest too much energy in simply surviving, in immediate material matters, to have much left over for politics. But whereas the demand to be reasonable nowadays means 'cool it', in the 1790s it meant throwing up the barricades. Moreover, once a political system ceases to be able to provide enough gratification to bind its citizens to it, and once reasonably low-risk, realistic alternatives emerge, then political revolt is as predictable as the word 'like' in the conversation of a Cornell freshman. The fall of apartheid is a signal instance of this taking place in our own time.

There's little evidence, then, that the citizenry is, in general, torpid or complacent. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that they're considerably alarmed about a number of key issues; even if most of them are about as likely to turn to

socialism as theosophy. Though faced as we are with the Brazilian landless movement, French working-class militancy, student anti-sweatshop agitation in the US, anarchistic raids on finance capitalism and the like - one shouldn't exaggerate the lack of leftist resistance either.

Nor can the 'disappearing working class' thesis survive close scrutiny. It's true that the proletariat has shrunk in size and significance; but the proletariat, in the sense of waged industrial manual workers, isn't quite the same thing as the working class. You don't cease to be working class because you're a waiter rather than a garment worker. Roughly speaking, 'proletariat' denotes a kind of labour, whereas 'working class' denotes a position within the social relations of production. (It's partly because in Marx's day the working class *was* pretty much identical with the industrial proletariat that this confusion has arisen.) In any case, even the proletariat, in a strict, technical sense of the term, has increased absolutely in global terms. It's arguable that in global terms it has declined relative to other classes, but there was never any requirement that the working class be the *majority* social class for it to qualify as a revolutionary agent. The working class is the 'universal' class not necessarily because it is the most numerous, but because for it to achieve justice would mean a global or universal transformation of the system.

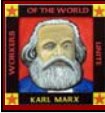


Nor is there any requirement that the working class be the most miserable and wretched of folk. There are plenty of people - vagrants, the elderly, and the unemployed (what we might today call the lumpen intelligentsia) - who are far worse off. The working class has been viewed by some socialists as the agents

of revolutionary change not because it suffers a lot (sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't), but because it's so placed within the capitalist system as to be feasibly capable of taking over. Like some other radical forces, it's simultaneously at the root and source of that system and incapable of being wholly included within it, part of its logic yet a subversion of it. If the working class, for Marxism, has a special role, it's not because it's especially miserable or numerous, but because it is, in the Freudian sense, 'symptomatic': that which represents contradiction, which, like the boundary of a field, is both in and out and manifests something of the dual or contradictory logic of the system as a whole. If it's in some sense a 'totaliser' of that system, it's because it represents the contradictions of the regime as a whole. Who else but the men and women who create the system, whose livelihood depends on it, who are capable of running it justly and collectively, and who would most benefit from such a change, *should* take it over?

In the ancient world the word 'proletariat' (*proletarius* in Latin) referred to those who served the state by producing children (who manufactured labour power) because they were too poor to serve it by property. The proletariat, in other words, is as much about sexual as material production; and since the burden of sexual reproduction falls more upon women than men, it's no hyperbole to say that in the world of antiquity, the working class was a woman. As, indeed, it is increasingly today. The geographer David Harvey speaks of the oppositional forces of the future as the 'feminised proletariat'. Those dreary old bickerings between socialists and feminists are being made increasingly redundant by advanced capitalism itself. It's capitalism that is throwing socialists and feminists into each other's arms. (I speak metaphorically.) Of course, these oppositional forces may fail. But that's a different matter to their not existing in the first place.

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Should the left be gloomy because Marxism has been finally discredited? No, because it hasn't. It's been resoundingly *defeated*, but that's a different matter. To call it 'discredited' is a bit like calling Mozambique discredited because it was once owned by the Portuguese.

If Marxism has been discredited by the fall of the Soviet bloc, then why wasn't it already discredited in the 1960s and 1970s, when we already knew well enough what a grotesque travesty of socialism the Soviet bloc was? Marxist theory hasn't been unmasked as intellectually bankrupt; partly because it didn't need to be. It's not so much out of answers as out of the question. A whole cultural and political shift has left it behind as a practical force, but hardly disproved it as a description of the world. Indeed, as a description of the world, what could be more to the point than a document of 1848 (*The Communist Manifesto*), which foresees a future of spreading globalisation, deepening inequalities, mounting immiseration and intensifying warfare? This is surely a lot less out of date than Maynard Keynes.

In any case, when people call Marxism discredited or irrelevant, they imply that they know just what Marxism is, which is more than I can boast. Devout anti-essentialists speak of the failure of Marxism as though we could isolate some essence of the creed that has now disintegrated. But figuring out what's peculiar to Marxism as a doctrine is no easy matter. The concern with class? Certainly not: Marx and Engels themselves insisted that this was by no means new to them. Political revolution, class struggle, the abolition of private property, human cooperation, social equality, an end to alienation and market forces? Not at all: many leftists have shared these views without being Marxists; William Blake, for example, shared almost all of them; so did Raymond Williams, who didn't call himself a Marxist. The economic determination of history? Well, perhaps that's getting a little warmer; but Sigmund Freud, himself no friend of Marxism, held that the basic motive of social life was an economic one, and that without this dull compulsion we'd just lie around all day. Different

material stages of history as determining different forms of social life? Well, this was pretty much a commonplace of the radical Enlightenment.

It's the survival of socialism, not Marxism, which is important; though it may turn out that Marxism has been such a major carrier of socialism that the survival of the one is impossible without the survival of the other. What is peculiar to Marxism is a fairly technical theory of the mechanisms by which one historical mode of production mutates into another. If the working class is to come to power, it is because this is the logical result of that mechanism. But you can believe in the need for the former without believing in the latter. Marxism is often spoken of as an indissoluble unity of theory and practice; but a non-Marxist socialist can support the kinds of practice a Marxist does without adhering to the theory. So this doctrine no doubt needs to be re-examined. In the last century, petit bourgeois nationalism quite often did some of the things, politically speaking, which Marxism recommends, such as overthrowing capitalist social relations. The issue is a complex one.

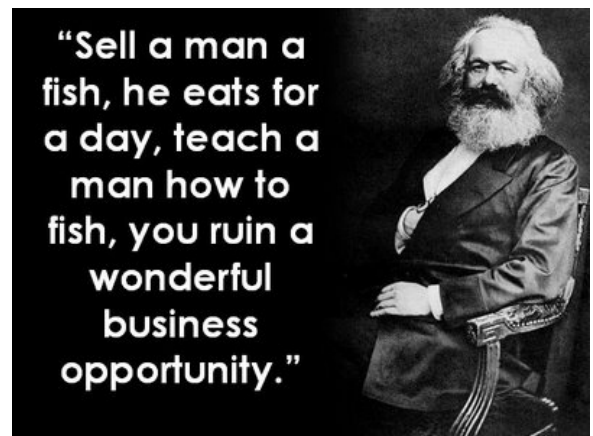
Nor is socialism theoretically bankrupt in the sense of being cleaned out of ideas. There are still plenty of good leftist ideas around the place: not least a fertile, suggestive body of work on what a socialist economy might look like, on how far markets would still be necessary for certain functions, and so on. One might add, too, that the 20th century did not witness the defeat of the revolutionary impulse, merely a change of address; in its middle decades it saw the victory of the most wildly successful radical movement of the modern epoch ' anti-colonialism, which swept the old empires finally from their seats of power. Socialism has been described as the greatest reform movement in history, but anti-colonial struggle has been far and away the most successful.

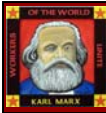
No, none of the reasons listed here are justifications for feeling blue. Nor is the belief that

the capitalist system is impregnable. Some disenchanted radicals may hold this view, but the IMF certainly doesn't. It's quite aware of how sickeningly unstable the whole business is. And globalisation deepens that instability; if every bit of the world is tied up with every other bit, then a wobble at one point can mean a spasm at another and a crisis at a third.

What, then, *has* the left got to feel blue about? The answer is surely obvious: it's not that the system is monumentally stable, just formidably powerful - far too powerful for us at present. Does this mean that the system will just go on and on? Not at all. It is perfectly capable of grinding to a halt without any help from its political opponents. Whether this is good or bad news is a debatable point. It doesn't take socialism to bring capitalism crashing down; it only takes capitalism itself; the system is certainly capable of committing hari-kari. But it does take socialism, or something like it, for the system to be brought down without plunging us all into barbarism. And this is why oppositional forces are so important: for resisting as far as possible the fascism, mayhem and savagery that are bound to arise from a major crisis of the system. Walter Benjamin wisely observed that revolution wasn't a runaway train; it was the application of the emergency brake. The role of socialist ideas is, in this sense, to protect the as-yet unborn future: to offer, not a storm, but a place of shelter in the tempest that is contemporary history.

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DOES ECOLOGY NEED MARX?

by **Martha E Gimenez**

Does ecology need Marx? I wonder, at this point, what ecology is, for it seems to be an umbrella term, like sexism or racism, which covers a variety of macro-level and micro-level phenomena produced by different causes and lends itself to the development of a wide variety of conflicting ideologies and theoretical frameworks. I would prefer to change the question to the following: Are Marx and Marxism contingent or essential in the struggles against environmental degradation and all forms of exploitation and oppression? Although in the eyes of environmental activists, they may seem irrelevant in the context of day-to-day struggles, the need for an all-encompassing theory capable of illuminating the necessary connections between seemingly separate problems will emerge in time, as activists learn from their experiences that there are capitalist structural barriers to the effectiveness of their individual behavioral changes and legal and political successes. This is why it is important that Marxists do more than engage in theoretical critique. They should be involved in specific struggles, learning from their experiences and sharing their learning with those whose views may be different but whose political goals might be the same. This does not imply, however, that theoretical work should be secondary to political involvement. On the contrary, as the world systemic nature of capitalism becomes increasingly visible, the accelerated nature of the circulation of capital and labor are creating the conditions for the emergence of regional transnational working-class organizations and movements. At the same time, the exploitation of nature and the circulation of waste, pollutants, viruses, infectious diseases, pests, plant diseases, and healthy animals and plants deliberately or unwittingly taken from their natural habitat intensify and highlight the global nature of most ecological problems. As the situation worsens at the local, regional, national, and world levels of analysis, it will call for the Marxist historical analysis of its conditions of existence and reproduction through time and will also

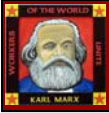
call for the development of regulatory agencies and planning. Marxist contributions to ecology that, despite their importance and timeliness, are today largely the concern of academics will at that time become even more relevant.

A careful reading of Marx and Engels' work leads to the realization that their political economy, firmly grounded on materialist premises, contains important theoretical categories and methodological guidelines for the theoretical analysis of the determinants of the current ecological predicament, and for the development of a Marxist ecology based on ecological principles central to Marxist theory. Inherent in the premises of historical materialism is the notion of the coevolution of nature and society. Human development, the unfolding of human potentials, and the emergence of new needs and talents presuppose the material production and reproduction of life and of means of subsistence, processes through which both humans and nature change and are mutually sustaining. Marx postulates the existence of a process of social metabolism between humanity and nature and identifies, under capitalism, the presence of a metabolic rift brought about by agricultural and trade practices that despoil the earth without replenishing its resources and rob whole regions of their natural conditions of production. Rejecting ecology's radical division between nature and society, according to which societies face insurmountable natural limits, Marx and Engels offer a materialist and dialectical theory of the relationship between humanity and nature. Natural limits are both material and constraints of social organization and human beings while, at the same time, operating through social conditions established by the level of development of the forces of production and the existing relations of production. In other words, to the abstract materialism inherent in the dominant ecological perspectives that, because of their undialectical standpoint, combine an idealist understanding of the causes of ecological problems with what amounts to a vulgar materialist understanding of natural limits, Marxism opposes a dialectical approach that preserves the

materialist side of nature and its laws while acknowledging the history-making capacity of humanity.

Marx said that the barrier to capital accumulation is capital itself and this is manifested in the periodic crises of overproduction and under-consumption, the progressive undermining of the conditions of production, and the ebb and flow of class struggles, setbacks, advances, and stalemates. The greater the destructive effects of the free market on nature, the more obvious the need for its antithesis (i.e., prevention, regulation, and planning). Upton Sinclair wrote *The Jungle* (1905) to highlight the inhuman conditions in which meatpackers worked and lived. However, as he said, instead of touching the hearts of the American people, he succeeded in touching their stomachs and the Food and Drug Administration was born. It is possible that environmental activists, struggling against the exploitation of nature and for a qualitative change in our relationship with the environment and other life forms may succeed, despite their current skepticism about Marx and Marxism, in releasing the collective energy needed to undermine the fetishisms of market freedom, competition, and unceasing economic growth in the public consciousness, thus paving the way toward social changes designed to end not only the exploitation of nature but the exploitation of labor as well. However, such changes do not happen automatically; in the absence of a widespread, ongoing, principled red-green dialogue, the most that is likely to be attained is an improvement in environmental conditions for the privileged. Does ecology need Marx? Is there any doubt?

Martha Gimenez <http://csf.colorado.edu/martha/> is associate professor of Sociology at the University of Colorado at Boulder. She is the author of numerous articles and book chapters on population theory, Marxist feminist theory, and US politics of racial/ethnic enumeration. She is the founding editor of Progressive Sociologist Network and Progressive Population Network. This contribution consists of excerpts from the closing section of an article with the same title in *Organization & Environment*, vol. 13, no.3 (September 2000), 292-304, and is reprinted herewith the permission of the author. The article was based on a talk given at the Socialist Scholars Conference, Borough of Manhattan Community College, City University of New York, March 2000.



REVOLUTION IS THE ONLY ANSWER

By **John Bellamy Foster**

The book *Marx's Ecology - Materialism and Nature* by John Bellamy Foster does much to reclaim a lost tradition of ecological thinking in Marxism. Mark Fischer speaks to the author about the relationship between red and green politics, ideas and traditions

The question of how Marxists relate to environmental issues - as Marxists rather than as born-again greens - is clearly a controversial one.

The answer to your question is complicated. There definitely is a danger in the sense that at least some of the views of the Greens - as a party-movement - are hardly progressive. There are some definite reactionary views mixed in there. So Marxists have to address them critically, like anything else.

Yet there is a lot to be learned from the Green perspective as well. Some parts are very radical, progressive and even revolutionary. There are leftwing and rightwing Greens. This is an added complication when we come to engage with them as Marxists. Some of those who identify themselves as Green take a very Malthusian position, as you know. They are effectively anti-population, anti-human and anti-development in a way that doesn't take into account the fact that there are whole areas of the earth where the people need development.

Of course, it has to be sustainable development, but in some third world countries development is vital. What is needed is not capitalist development, not industrialisation as we know it, but development nevertheless.

So an uncritical rejection of development is not correct. Nor is it right to look on population as the main problem. Certainly population growth is a problem, but once you identify it as the key problem facing us, you point things in a very reactionary direction.

In terms of Marxism and socialism in general, there is a perception that it came to ecological thinking late; that it was slow in encompassing this area of thought. This is simply not correct. I

make a distinction here between ecological understandings - which involve the interrelatedness, interdependence and co-evolution of human beings and nature (including ecological science) - and the development of what has been called ecologism, or Green thought. The latter is a particular political form and, though important, it is not the same as ecology or ecological science.

When we look at the real history of the emergence of ecological thinking and science, there can be little doubt that Marxists and socialists were forerunners of it. They were many of the principal figures in the development of ecological thought and science. So the notion that socialists came to this field late is completely mistaken - it's almost the exact opposite of the true history.

Obviously, the experience of the Stalinist USSR is an important factor in the explanation for that.

Of course. Yet the Soviet Union in the 1920s and early 30s had the most dynamic ecological science of any country on the planet. It had the greatest innovators and thinkers like Vernadsky, Oparin, Vavilov, Hessen and so on - but then most of these people were purged, executed or sidelined. Of course, Bukharin was very advanced in his ecological thinking and his fate is well known.

Partly as a result of socialist primitive accumulation in the 1930s, the Soviet Union turned against the ecological thinkers within the materialist tradition. That was a part of the much greater tragedy of the USSR.

But I think that we can make a mistake here. On the one hand, we say that socialists have some extra burden of guilt to carry in respect to the environment. That somehow socialists are not truly environmental thinkers - as evidenced by the Soviet Union, which had a very bad record in that context. But then, on the other, we don't critique the mainstream liberal tradition, as if it has a legitimacy we lack, as if it did not promote rapacious economic growth, waste resources, spread toxins, kill off species, induce global warming, etc - and often deliberately, without conscience, and on a planetary level.

Ecological thought, as it developed, was even more antagonistic to classical liberalism than classical socialism. There is no sense in which the liberal capitalist tradition was open to ecological thinking while socialism was not.

Surely part of the problem of the Marxist left establishing any sort of principled dialogue with the Green movement is that the 'Marxists' are quite ignorant of those healthy elements of our tradition.

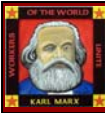
That's true. Also, it is a result of how we learned our Marxism. It certainly was a central question for Marx - something that was understood in the first decades after his death. It disappeared in the 1930s with Stalinism.

Western Marxism turned against science in the 1920s and 30s as a reaction to developments in both east and west. This was a period when ecological insights practically disappeared from the core of socialist thought - outside of the sciences. (It is important to acknowledge, of course, that the liberal-capitalist tradition was not forwarding ecological ideas in that period either.)

There are different ways to read Marxism and the most common in recent decades has been to ignore everything Marx and Engels wrote about materialism and science. Instead people concentrate on the texts more centred on philosophy that anticipated critical theory. We read the Economic and philosophical manuscripts but usually skip over what Marx had to say about nature. We read volume one of Capital, but we don't read volume three, where he addressed ecological issues in the context of his treatment of agriculture. We tend to approach his thought very selectively and one-sidedly.

It has been customary in recent decades to approach Marx in a way that sidelines these questions of his ecological thinking. And Engels too, who dealt even more directly with science - although I do think the most powerful ecological insights belong to Marx. Western Marxism became very anti-science in a way.

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For instance, we have the position of Lukács - admittedly not a consistent one - that the dialectic does not apply to nature. His thought was more sophisticated than that bald statement would imply, but that was the view commonly ascribed to him ...

A problem, because implicitly it poses an absolute dichotomy between humanity and nature.

Yes, western Marxism created that dichotomy, while Soviet Marxism killed off its ecologists. In both instances, Marxism lost its connection to genuine ecological science for a period.

The irony is that thinkers like Stephen Jay Gould, Richard Lewontin, Richard Levins and Steven Rose did carry on a Marxist tradition in science that was very dialectical. Gould, Levins and Lewontin (and they weren't alone - think of Haldane) became major figures in evolutionary theory, but the rest of the Marxist tradition ignored them. They carried forward a tradition of a dialectical socialist analysis of nature and its dynamics that had been part of the classical Marxist tradition.

If you look at the early development of ecological science, the leading figures - particularly amongst those relating ecology to society - were socialists and Marxists. For example, Ray Lankester, who was a younger friend of Marx's. He was the greatest

biologist in Britain of his day. Darwin had carried him on his shoulders when he was a boy; he was Huxley's protégé. He was the one Englishman at Marx's funeral. He came to Marx's house frequently, was friendly with Eleanor and they visited him at his home.

Gould wrote about Lankester but couldn't quite figure out their commonality - what brought them together was their shared materialism. Lankester was a very firm materialist and a socialist, of a Fabian variety. He read and was strongly impressed by Marx's Capital. He was the leading Darwinian thinker in the generation after Darwin and wrote some of the most powerful ecological essays of his day, focussing particularly on extinction and pollution in London. He influenced people like HG Wells, a friend of his as well as his student, Arthur Tansley - also a strong materialist and Fabian-style socialist.

Tansley developed the concept of the ecosystem and, in doing so, he relied on the work of Hyman Levy, a leading British Marxist scientist, and the materialist tradition going back to Epicurus. He was connected to Lancelot Hogben. All of these figures were in a struggle with general Smuts and his followers in South Africa, who were developing a racist ecological holism.

Anyway, the point I am trying to stress is that there is a whole line of

materialist, socialist ecological thought that actually became influential in the various scientific fields related to ecology. It traces a direct line of descent from Liebig, Marx, Engels and the British socialist and Marxist scientists. The whole area of thought was wrapped up in the concept of metabolism that Marx applied to ecological issues, and which came to be seen at the level of the organism as parallel to the concept of ecosystem, which Tansley developed.

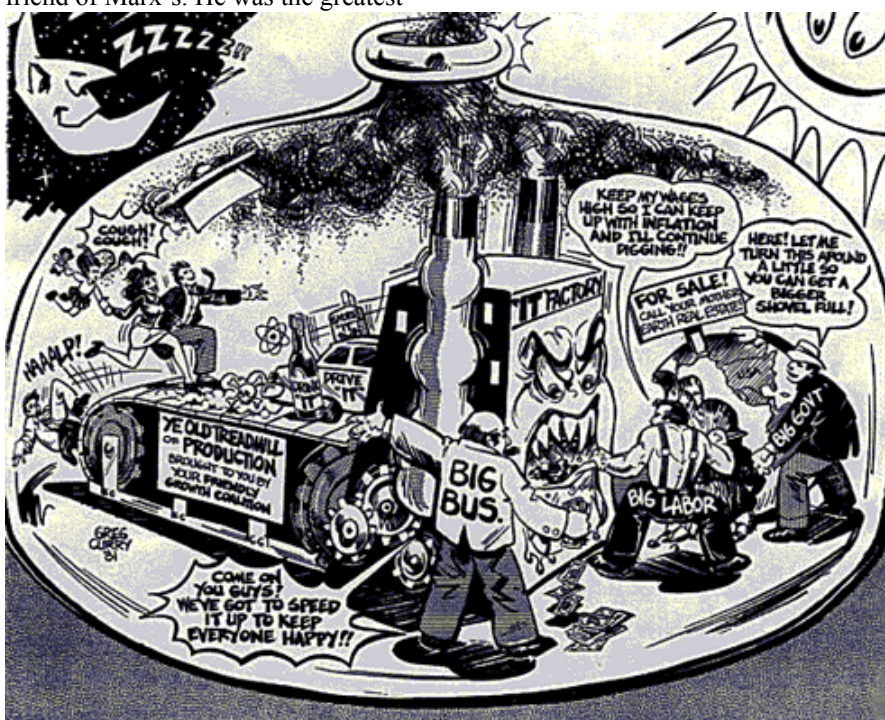
There was a kind of linear theoretical development in which socialists and Marxists were absolutely central. You can see this influence in the early work of the Odums in the United States. Rachel Carson drew her approach to ecology, when she put forth her version of this following the publication of Silent spring, from the theory of the origins of life introduced by Haldane and Oparin.

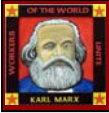
The left today is intellectually impoverished, by comparison. It doesn't know its own history, for a start. But also its rather philistine general culture doesn't allow it to interact with and comment on science in a worthwhile way. Of course, there are Marxist scientists - but they are 'specialists'. Marx and Engels, for example, read voraciously in the sciences and could comment with authority on its debates and insights.

One of the criticisms that has been levelled at Marx and Engels is that they rejected the early developments in thermodynamics and early attempts at ecological economics. Paul Burkett and I have been doing research on this question and have recently finished two papers that show, much to my surprise, that this is all false. They were very familiar with the material - they had read the early studies of thermodynamics and actually integrated them into their analysis in Capital and elsewhere.

All the allegations in this respect turned out to be false once we investigated them. What amazes me is how well read in science Marx and Engels were at every level - the classical Marxist analysis was very broad. They did not pretend to be major contributors to the natural and physical

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sciences, but they incorporated the best science of their time into their work, and critically appraised it through their materialism and the dialectic, which kept them from making serious errors. Marxism got narrowed down later on. The revolt against positivism that started in western Marxism in the 1920s with people like Lukács and Gramsci was very important, but ended up throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Science was expelled along with positivism.

In Britain, Christopher Caudwell was enormously advanced in his ecological discussions, but the main line of western Marxism found itself revolting against positivism to such a degree that it rejected whole integral parts of the Marxist tradition. For instance, I would say that Second and Third International thinkers made a lot of mistakes. But it is irrational to dump these intellectual traditions in their entirety - to fail to note the areas where they were doing really creative, pioneering work.

When I first read Bukharin's Historical materialism, I recognised that some aspects of it were mechanistic, but the dominant tendency within it, and materialist Marxism in general, was to try to overcome mechanism and build a dialectical materialism. In some places they did succeed and they produced powerful insights into the relationship between humanity and nature. Some of the chapters in Bukharin's Philosophical Arabesques - such as 'Living nature and the artistic attitude toward it' and 'Evolution' - are absolutely astonishing, even by present-day standards, in their appreciation of co-evolution and humanity and nature.

You mentioned the left and right trends within the Green movement, but wouldn't you say there is often a programmatic commonality between these two wings? The solutions to ecological problems are framed in terms of limitations being imposed on humans. Obviously, the communist notion of abundance doesn't imply that we want to see a world swamped in crap, but we should want to

actually increase humanity's impact on nature. We need a dramatic growth in our understanding of nature, our ability to utilise its laws for the benefit of both humanity and the environment. We see the potential in our species to establish a reciprocal, unalienated relationship with nature - we do not believe that humanity's impact must be kept to a minimum because it is inevitably detrimental.

I agree with all or most of this - though I do think it will be necessary for us to live lightly on the earth. This general understanding of a dynamic relation to sustainability (of a kind that capitalism is patently incapable of) is one that we must bring to the Green movement.

Francis Bacon has often been made the whipping boy of ecological politics. Of course, there are some justifications for a critical approach. Bacon said we have to "master" nature, but also that we can only do so by following its laws. There's a paradox within his thought, therefore. Some followers of Bacon, such as John Evelyn, virtually introduced the issue of conservation at a practical level. Even though the Baconians were accused of having this narrowly exploitative attitude to nature, you have that tradition coming from them. So again, it's a complex issue.

I think the only answer is to focus on sustainability and co-evolution. To recognise that human beings have a responsibility to establish a sustainable relationship to nature. But in this, we can't flee to nature - in some way retreat to some idyll where these problems did not exist.

In Marx's words, we have to regulate our metabolic interaction with nature as associated producers who are consciously and democratically planning. I don't see any other answer than that. It has to take sustainability as its criterion - as Marx himself explained. We have to be the custodians of the earth for future generations. In order to do this we have to change our whole set of priorities, which means a direct conflict with capitalism. We have to begin by ensuring that all people have adequate diets, clean water, sanitation, essential healthcare, etc, as part of a general programme of human and ecological sustainability. No such guarantees are possible within the context of capitalism.

Green politics, especially in the United States, descends into the notion that

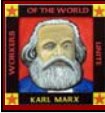
somehow we have to think like a mountain - the sort of view that is associated with Aldo Leopold, someone I greatly admire in many respects. But human beings can't think like mountains - they can only think like human beings. There is also an emphasis on our spiritual relationship to nature, which we all have and Bukharin actually discusses in Philosophical Arabesques.

But we have to understand the human relation to nature as a material problem if we are going to solve it in any way. We still have to meet human needs from our metabolic interaction with nature, physically as well as spiritually. We can't entirely abandon industrialisation: we have to change it. We can't retreat to some historical era where we were somehow more in harmony with nature: we have to go forward as a society.

Because socialists refuse to give up the notion of development altogether but seek rather to revolutionise its form, we are castigated as enemies of the environment by many Greens. I know there are many who call themselves socialists who effectively end up with very rightwing views in this sense - ignoring sustainability and promoting economic growth at any cost. This further generates misunderstandings between socialists and Greens.

Greens in the US tend to emphasise individualism. According to this view we should solve the problems of the earth by recycling and reducing our consumption. In terms of the structures of the system, this doesn't make very much sense at all. Having a new spiritual relationship to the earth is OK and acting as individuals to defend the earth is commendable, but if we can't change our material practices and social relations, then such spirituality and individual action is meaningless.

Marxists better understand the obstacles that capitalism poses to ecological change, and recognise that the only answer is a revolutionary one. There is still hope that the kind of ecological materialism that classical Marxism generated will increasingly converge with left green analysis and movements and create a stronger movement for human and ecological revolution - a movement that will have to be socialist to succeed.



THE CAPITALIST WORKDAY, THE SOCIALIST WORKDAY

by Michael A. Lebowitz

This text is from a speech delivered at the "Roundtable Discussion on the Reduction of the Workday" (Centro Internacional Miranda, Caracas, Venezuela, 24 April 2008).

As May Day approaches, there are four things that are worth remembering:

1. For workers, May Day does not celebrate a state holiday or gifts from the state but commemorates the struggle of workers from below.
2. The initial focus of May Day was a struggle for the shorter workday.
3. The struggle for the shorter workday is not an isolated struggle but is the struggle against capitalist exploitation.
4. The struggle against capitalist exploitation is an essential part but not the only part of the struggle against capitalism.

What I want to do today is to set out some ideas about the capitalist workday and the socialist workday which I hope can be useful in the current struggles in Venezuela and, more immediately, in today's discussion.

The Capitalist Workday

What is the relation between the capitalist workday and exploitation?

When workers work for capital, they receive a wage which allows them to purchase a certain amount of commodities. How much is that wage? There is nothing automatic about the wage level. It is determined by the struggles of workers against capital.

Those commodities which form the worker's wage contain a certain quantity of labour, and those hours of labour on a daily basis are often described as the "necessary labour" of the worker -- the hours of labour necessary for workers to produce the commodities they consume on a daily basis.

But, in capitalism workers do not just work their hours of necessary labour. Because they have been compelled to sell their ability to work to the capitalist in order to survive,

the capitalist is in the position to demand they work longer than this.

And the difference between their hours of necessary labour and the total work that workers perform for capital is surplus labour -- the ultimate source of capital's profits. In other words, capitalist profits are based on the difference between the workday and necessary labour; they are based upon surplus labour, unpaid labour, exploitation.

So, the more the capitalist is able to drive up the workday, the greater the exploitation and the greater the profit.

Marx commented that "the capitalist is constantly tending to reduce wages to their physical minimum and extend the working day to its physical maximum". How true. Marx continued, though, and noted "while the working man constantly presses in the opposite direction". In other words, class struggle: workers struggle to increase wages and to reduce the workday; they struggle to reduce exploitation by capitalists.

Of course, your workday is more than just the time spent between clocking in and clocking out. There is the time it takes you to get to work, the time it takes to buy the food you need to survive, the time to prepare that food -- all this is really necessary

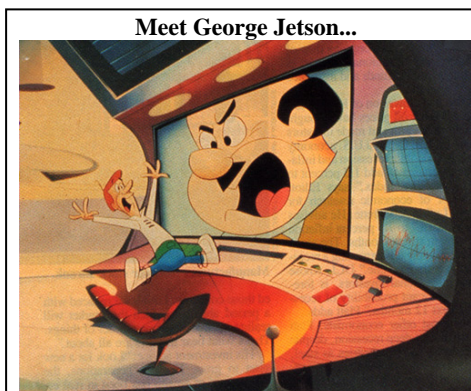
labour and part of the worker's workday. But since this labour is free to the capitalist, since it is not a cost for him, it is therefore invisible to him. So, when the capitalists want to drive down necessary labour by driving down wages (or by increasing productivity relative to wages), it is not the labour he does not pay for that he wants to reduce. Rather, he wants as much free labour as possible, as much unpaid labour as possible.

It is not surprising that workers want to reduce their unpaid labour for capital and to do so by struggling to reduce the capitalist workday. But it is not only the unpaid labour in the workday that is a burden for workers; it is also the paid labour that they are compelled to do for capital. In other words, the problem is not only exploitation. It is the way that capitalist production deforms working people. In the capitalist workplace, the worker works for the goals of capital, under the control of capital and with an organisation of production which is designed not to permit workers to develop their capabilities but, rather, has the single goal of profits. "All means for the development of production", Marx stressed about capitalism, "distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him" and "alienate from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process". In

other words, the process of capitalist production cripples us as human beings. Life in the capitalist workplace is a place where we are commanded from above, where we are mere tools that capital manipulates in order to get profits.

That is why we want to reduce the capitalist workday. That is why we cannot wait to escape. It is not only the exploitation, the unfairness and the injustice in the distribution of income. Time away from capitalist production appears as the only time in which we can be ourselves, a time when our activity can be free time, time for the full development of the individual.

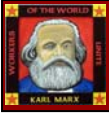
This is what it necessarily looks like within capitalism. But we have to recognise that so many of our ideas within capitalism are infected. The most obvious example is the (continued on Page 14...)



Division of labor within the workshop implies the undisputed authority of the capitalist over men, who are merely members of a total mechanism which belongs to him.

What is lost by the specialized workers is concentrated in the capital which confronts them. It is a result of the division of labor in manufacture that the worker is brought face to face with the intellectual potentialities of the material process of production as the property of another and as a power which rules over him.

Karl Marx, *Capital* vol. 1, pp. 476-77, 482



(continued from Page 13 ...)

phenomenon of consumerism -- we must buy all those things! What we own defines us. The socialist answer, though, is not that everyone should own the same things -- in other words, equalisation of alienation; rather, the socialist idea is to end the situation in which we are owned and defined by things.

The battle of ideas, which is central to the struggle for socialism, is based on the alternative conception of socialism. Its focus is not to reform this or that idea that has developed within capitalism but, rather, to replace ideas from capitalism with conceptions appropriate to socialism. So, is our idea of the workday within capitalism infected? And, can we get any insights into the workday by thinking about the workday within socialism?

The Socialist Workday

Firstly, what do we mean by socialism? The goal of socialists has always been the creation of a society which would allow for the full development of human potential. It was never seen as a society in which some people are able to develop their capabilities and others are not. That was Marx's point in stating clearly that the goal is "an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." And this is clearly the point, too, of Venezuela's Bolivarian constitution where it stresses in article 20 that "everyone has the right to the free development of his or her own personality" and in the explicit recognition in article 299 that the goal of a human society must be that of "ensuring overall human development".

In contrast to capitalist society, where "the worker exists to satisfy the need" of capital to expand, Marx envisioned a socialist society where the wealth that workers have produced "is there to satisfy the worker's own need for development". So, what is the nature of the workday in a society oriented toward ensuring overall human development?

Let us begin by talking about necessary labour -- quantitatively. There is the labour which is contained in the products we consume daily -- just like before. To this, however, we need to add the labour that workers want to devote toward expanding production in the future. In socialism, there are no capitalists who compel the performance of surplus labour

and invest a portion of the profits in the search for future profits. Rather, workers themselves in their workplaces and society decide if they want to devote time and effort to expanding satisfaction of needs in the future. If they make this decision, then this labour is not surplus to their needs; it forms part of what they see as their necessary labour. Thus, the concept of necessary labour changes here.

In a socialist society, further, we recognise explicitly that part of our necessary labour is labour within the household. In other words we acknowledge that our workday does not begin after we leave the household but includes what we do within the household. Article 88 of the Bolivarian constitution recognises the importance of this labour when it notes that labour within the household is "economic activity that creates added value and produces social welfare and wealth".

The concept of necessary labour and our workday within a socialist society also includes the labour which is required to self-govern our communities. After all, if socialism is about the decisions we make democratically in our communities, then the time we need to do this is part of our necessary labour. Similarly, if socialism is about creating the conditions in which we are all able to develop our potential, then the process of education and of developing our capabilities is also activity which is necessary.

When we think about the socialist workday, in short, we think about the workday differently. Our view of the quantity of necessary labour, for example, is not distorted by the capitalist perspective of treating as necessary only that labour for which capital must pay. That is the difference between the political economy of capital and the political economy of the working class. From the perspective of workers, we recognise as necessary labour all the labour that is necessary for "the worker's own need for development".

But the difference is not only quantitative. In socialism, the workday cannot be a day in which you receive orders from the top (even in strategic industries). Rather, it is only through

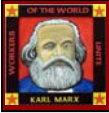
our own activity, our practice and our protagonism that we can develop our capabilities. Article 62 of Venezuela's constitution makes that point in its declaration that participation by people is "the necessary way of achieving the involvement to ensure their complete development, both individual and collective". In other words, in every aspect of our lives (the traditional workplace, the community, the household), democratic decision making is a necessary characteristic of the socialist workday; through workers' councils, communal councils, student councils, family councils, we produce ourselves as new socialist subjects.

Thus, when we look at the workday from the perspective of socialism, we see that the simple demand for reducing the workday is a demand from within capitalism. Its message is simple -- end this horror! This is an "infected" conception of the workday. It starts from a view of labour as so miserable that the only thing you can think of doing is reducing and ending it.

When we think about building socialism, however, we recognise that the demand is to transform the workday -- to recognise all parts of our workday explicitly and to transform that day qualitatively. Rather than only "free time" being time in which we can develop, from the perspective of socialism it is essential to make the whole day time for building human capacities.

In short, there are two ways of looking at the demand for the reduced workday: one way talks simply about a shorter work week and thus longer weekend vacations; in contrast, a second way stresses the reduction of the traditional workday in order to provide the time on a daily basis for education for self-managing, for our work within the household and our work within our communities. In other words, it is the demand to redefine and transform our workday.

The first of these is simply a reform within capitalism. For socialists, May Day should be the day to struggle for the whole worker's day, to struggle for the socialist workday.



WHY SOCIALISM DID NOT FAIL

On the Ninetieth Anniversary of the Russian Revolution by Sharat G. Lin

29 October 2007

When the Russian Revolution of October 1917 took place, it raised the hopes of the working class worldwide that a socialist state was possible. The civil war that followed plus the intervention of foreign powers devastated the economy, necessitating a postponement in the transition to socialist relations of production. The New Economic Policy was a stop-gap measure to sustain agricultural and industrial production in the face of war and potential famine. It was not until the 1930s that collectivization of farms and factories, and state ownership of the means of production, could be completed. The violence before and after October 1917 was taken as an indication that a peaceful transition to socialism was not possible because the propertied classes would not willingly give up their privileges.

On the contrary, when Boris Yeltsin effectively dissolved the Soviet Union in December 1991, allowing the republics to go their own ways, and vowed to transform Russia into a capitalist market economy, it surprised many that the counter-revolution could have happened with so little effort and largely without violent upheaval. Many on the left lamented the apparent collapse of socialism in Russia and withering away of socialist relations of production in the republics.

The 1917 capture of state power by the Bolsheviks was accompanied by workers winning control of factories and establishing workers' soviets. However, a careful examination of Soviet history suggests that the period from the end of the New Economic Policy (1929) to the beginning of the Great Patriotic War (1941) witnessed two seemingly contradictory trends. First, the consolidation of collective and state ownership of the means of production throughout the economy

prompted Joseph Stalin to declare that socialism had been achieved and that classes had been abolished. Second, Stalin's purges of the Bolshevik Party and dismantling of the soviets effectively overthrew workers' power and established the rule of the bureaucracy.

The bureaucracy's continued ideological adherence to the state playing a central role in the egalitarian redistribution of wealth provided a veil of "socialism" that led many on the left to consider the Soviet Union to be some sort of "socialist," "revisionist," or "deformed workers' state." The prevalent failure to recognize the bureaucracy as a ruling class derives, in part, from the bureaucracy being divorced from a polar position in the relations of production, e.g., it neither owns capital per se nor necessarily appropriates surplus for its own benefit. Nevertheless, state enterprises are under the direct control of managerial elites who appropriate surplus for reinvestment or for the state. They are the apex class in a "decapitated" relation of production that excludes an owner class, but includes a class ladder of managers, intellectuals (sellers of knowledge power), and workers (sellers of labor power). If enterprise bureaucrats clearly represent a

("Serve the State!") It certainly was not of the working class.

As the first president of post-Soviet Russia, Boris Yeltsin unleashed a wave of privatizations that sold gigantic state enterprises for a song, catapulting a handful of well-connected buyers into becoming the new capitalist oligarchs. Though once a top CPSU leader, Yeltsin, the bureaucrat, had no inherent class interest in capitalist versus state capitalist versus statist versus socialist relations of production. For Yeltsin, selling off state enterprises was a means of dissolving the power base of his opponents in the bureaucracy and consolidating his own power within that bureaucracy.

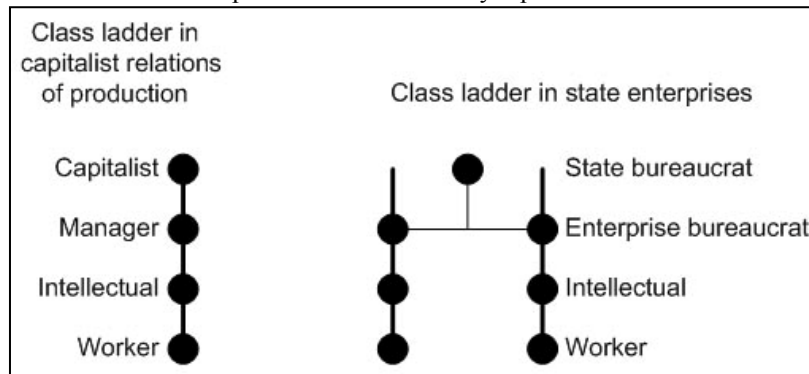
By the same token, Vladimir Putin has no inherent class interest in preserving private enterprises. His efforts in recent years to re-establish state control over key sectors of the economy -- oil (Rosneft), natural gas (Gazprom), oil and petrochemical transport (Transneft and Transnefteprodukt), automobiles (Autovaz), metals (VSMPO-Avisma), aviation (United Aircraft

Corporation), and shipbuilding -- served to dissolve the power base of free-market oligarchs who were challenging the power of the bureaucracy.

The zig-zags between market capitalism, state capitalism, and

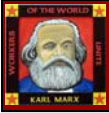
statism are not a consequence of one class overthrowing another each time, but rather of the bureaucracy itself vacillating on the relations of production. Yeltsin's privatizations and Putin's reassertion of state ownership of key means of production are neither counter-revolution nor revolution, but manifestations of the bureaucracy vacillating in its game of consolidating political power and neutralizing opposition.

Despite its defects and contradictions, the Soviet state for 45 (continued on Page 16 ...)



class because of their position in a relation of production, so are state bureaucrats, by extension, members of that bureaucratic class owing to their authority over enterprise bureaucrats and power to appropriate enterprise surpluses to operate the state apparatus.

Thus, workers and intellectuals alike were alienated from state capital and its appropriation. By the 1960s, this was clearly evidenced by widespread attempts to circumvent the system, including the black market and the underground economy. Without specifying which class truly held state power, the national slogan of the day was "Служите государству!"



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years provided an effective counterbalance to global imperialist hegemony, preventing the outbreak of major wars of unprovoked aggression by the U.S. government. But with the Soviet Union already weary of the war in Afghanistan and facing political turmoil at home, it was in no position to deter the first U.S. invasion of Iraq in January 1991. Since then, Russia has acceded to U.S. superpower hegemony, yet has continued to oppose U.S. aggression, extraterritoriality, exceptionalism, and blatant violations of international

law. As a bureaucratic state (as opposed to the U.S. capitalist state), Russia's worldview will continue to differ from that of the U.S. and the European Union in seeking accommodation rather than confrontation with developing countries and anti-imperialist movements.

For the left, the problem is not one of a "failure of socialism," but rather of a failure in the first place to continue the revolution to consolidate the socialist state and socialist democracy in the former Soviet Union. One lesson of the Russian Revolution for the project for twenty-first century socialism is that both state power and the relations of production must come

fully under workers' democratic control. While the Russian experiment in socialism may have floundered in the twentieth century, socialism itself did not fail. The movement for twenty-first century socialism has an historic opportunity and mandate to correct these mistakes and make true socialism possible.

Sharat G. Lin writes on global political economy, the Middle East, India, labor migration, public health, and the environment. This essay is a summary of a talk presented at a public forum marking the 90th anniversary of the Russian Revolution held in the Humanist Hall, Oakland, California on October 13, 2007.

FROM HISTORY'S PAGES

October 20, 1908

Tolstoy says the land belongs to all

A letter from Count Tolstoy to the Federation of Single Tax Leagues in Australia in reply to an address of respect and good wishes presented to him on the occasion of his 80th birthday.

Dear friends – Your address has deeply touched me. To my regret, I have done too little for the cause so dear to me, which unites us.

Of late I have been thinking more and more about it, and I will endeavour to express the teaching of Henry George [the US economist] as clearly, as briefly, and as accessibly to the great mass of land workers as possible. The injustice and evil of property in land has long ago been recognised. More than a hundred years ago the great French thinker, Jean Jacques Rousseau, had written: "The one who first fenced in a plot of land, and took upon himself to say, 'This land is mine,' and found people so simpleminded as to believe him, that man was the first founder of the social organisation which now exists.

"from how many crimes, wars, murders, calamities, cruelties would mankind have been delivered had some man then uprooted the fences and filled up the ditches."

The injustice of the seizure of land has long ago been recognised by thinking people. The realisation has become specially necessary, not only in

Russia but also in all so-called civilised states. The abolition of property in land everywhere demands its solution as insistingly as half a century ago the problem of slavery demanded its solution in Russia and America.

The supposed right of landed property now lies at the foundation, not only of economic misery, but also of political disorder, and, above all, the deprivation of the people. The wealthy ruling classes, foreseeing the loss of advantages of their position inevitable with the solution of the problem, are endeavouring, with all their power, to postpone as long as possible its solution.

But as 50 years ago the time came for the abolition of man's supposed right of property over man, so the time has now come for the abolition of the supposed right of property in land, which affords the possibility of appropriating other people's labour. The time is now so near at hand that nothing can arrest the abolition of this dreadful means of oppressing the people. Yet some effort, and this great emancipation of the nations shall be accomplished. I will be very glad if I shall be able to add my small efforts to yours. **Leo Tolstoy**

From The Guardian Weekly, Oct 2007



KATHMANDU

for **haisanlu**

I dreamed I saw the Spirit of Mao
Rising from the marble mausoleum
"Where you going and watcha gonna do?"

I asked as he went by
"I once set out for Anyuan," he said,
"Now I'm setting out for
Kathmandu."

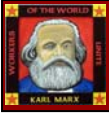
Youthful grace shone from the face
Of the Spirit of Mao Zedong
"Why are you going, can this be true?"

I asked the red, red sun
"The reason I went to Ruijin," he said,
"Is why I'm going to Kathmandu."

A cloud whisked him off ten thousand li
Across the land he loved
"You're up so high, how is the view?"
I asked and the ether replied
"Just as good as from Jinganshan," he said,
"And just as good as from Kathmandu."

There's rich again in China
Corruption stalks the land
"I'm going to see what Prachanda can do,"
The solemn voice went on
"I'm going to retrieve the spirit of Yan'an
And bring it back from Kathmandu.
I'll be coming back from Kathmandu!"

(Poet unknown)

**HOUSEWORK UNDER CAPITALISM:
THE UNPAID LABOR OF MOTHERS**By **Cindy L'Hirondelle***Off Our Backs*, Jan/Feb 2004

I've worked laying sod, painting cars, selling donuts, and flipping burgers. I have also lived and felt the invisibility of being "only a mom." Nothing compares with the stress of looking after small children, cooking for them and cleaning up after them. Housework gets no recognition, no status, and is the most wearing job I have ever done.

But the subject of household labor is seen as dull, and gets ignored even by progressive groups. Paid work gets recognition; it is "real" work. Yet the most common, exhausting, and tedious work is done for free and is invisible to those who fight against capitalism for social justice. As an anti-capitalist activist, I have attended countless meetings and protests, read stacks of alternative magazines-but I was unaware of the role that domestic labor played in the larger economic picture.

I found my first book on the subject at a closing-out sale in a feminist bookstore in Victoria several years ago. It was the cheapest book on the discount table at one dollar. The book, *More Than a Labor of Love* by Meg Luxton, examined three generations of housewives in Flin Flon, Manitoba. Even though I was intimately familiar and often exhausted by domestic labor (I am a single mother with three kids), I had never understood its significance. Capitalism is built on the backs of unpaid workers all over the world. Most of these unpaid workers are women and most of the unpaid work takes place in the home.

Domestic labor does two things: it reproduces humans-thus labor power-and it prepares workers to go to work daily. Canada estimated in 1994 that the value of housework, if it were paid, would be \$318 billion. The variety of jobs you must do when you look after home and children are endless: cook, maid, launderer, health-care provider, mediator, teacher, counselor, secretary, transporter of children and household supplies, etc. all this work goes on quietly, unheroically. Many women who toil away for no pay are ground into an early grave through the physical exertion of bearing and raising children while struggling against squalor, disease and poverty.

But we probably think of ourselves as workers only when we work outside of

home. This was evident during an



interview conducted by the historian Susan Stasser for her book *Never Done*. Stasser said an 88 year-old woman told her she could not believe that her unpaid work (as opposed to her "jobs") could have any importance to a historian.

One of the first women to challenge the view that domestic labor was not productive work was Maria-Rosa Dalla Costa, who wrote from Italy in 1972 that the housewife and her labor was the basis for the process of capital accumulation. Capital commands the unpaid labor of the housewife as well as the paid laborer. Dalla Costa saw the family as a colony dominated by capital and state. She rejected the artificially created division between waged and unwaged labor and said that you could not understand exploitation of waged labor until you understood the exploitation of unpaid labor.

Other feminist writers have criticized this viewpoint because it does not acknowledge that men directly benefit from having women work in the home. Heidi Hartmann writes in *Women & Revolution* that white union men early in the 19th century wanted women, children, and non-whites out of the work force because their presence lowered wages. They asked for a wage for men high enough so that their wives could afford to stay home and tend to the house and children. Hartmann sees this as a collusion between workers and capitalists. In this way, white men kept women home for their own personal benefit, and bosses-who realized that housewives produced and maintained healthier workers and future workers-got more docile workers. So the family wage

cemented the partnership between patriarchy and capitalism.

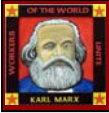
The tradition of women working for free in the home, and men working for household wages out, has changed. Most men do not get paid enough to support a family. Most women now have paid employment.

But, as Ruth Schwartz Cowen notes in her book, *More Work for Mother*, while the tasks that women do in the home have changed, the time spent on domestic labor has not. This is partly because domestic workers today are held to higher standards of cleanliness, have more cleaning appliances, spend more time as consumers (approximately 8 hours a week buying and transporting goods that were previously delivered), face greater pressure to provide enriching experiences for their children, have less help from adult relatives, and not nearly enough help from male partners. When both male and female household partners have full-time jobs, the woman still does significantly more housework than the man-15 more hours per week, totaling an extra month of 24-hour days each year.

As a single parent, I find myself trying to comply with two incompatible demands by society: 1) be a good mother and, 2) not be a leech and earn a living. So I do both in a compromised way. It is extremely difficult to be a good mother when you do not have enough money to do the job. It is extremely difficult to earn a living when you are trying to competently raise healthy children.

In *Feminist Issues* (Fall 1992), Reva Landau warns women that the consequence of leaving paid work for a few years to look after kids are lifelong economic penalties through missed promotions, training opportunities, and pension contributions. Men who have a female partner working in the home have an unfair advantage over women in the workplace, who do not have a free laborer at home tending to their needs. If men refuse to do their share of domestic work, women must go on strike. This is the idea behind the

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Global Women's Strike, started March 2000 (www.globalwomenstrike.net) It is estimated that women make up 52% of the adults on this planet and do 75% of the work required to maintain 100% of the population.

Organizers of the Global Women's Strike assert that whoever is doing all this work has real power to effect change. But, as Maria Mies acknowledges in her book *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, there must be solidarity between women in overdeveloped and underdeveloped countries if we want to make this change: "If one set of women tries to better its material condition as wage-workers, or as consumers, not as human beings, capital will try to offset its possible losses by squeezing another set of women."

Unfortunately, an underlying theme of some feminist literature seems to be that 1) women should have the "right" to exploit other workers, becoming overpaid capitalists, and 2) children should be mass-produced in daycare centers. Allowing both men and women an equal opportunity to be an oppressor is not a solution. Warehousing children so that parents can do jobs that exploit other people is not a solution.

Women who provide all this free labor in a capitalist system in which nothing else is free must stop being so nice. It makes us tired. And the logical consequence of being too tired is no special extras in the home and no volunteering at the school. Perhaps all volunteers should stop working for free, as it is the logical consequence of living under a market dominated value system. The only free work done should be revolutionary work. That includes

raising aware children. All other free work only strengthens a system that is killing us and the planet.

Those who are most oppressed by the rules and rulers should "work to rule"- do the least amount of unpaid work as possible, then strike. In British Columbia we are organizing a series of Womyn's Walkouts, based on some of the goals of the Global Women's Strike, with the demand to do away with the punitive and starvation-level welfare system and replace it with a universal guaranteed liveable income.

Unpaid labor is a taboo subject because acknowledging it would undermine one of the most important ideological foundations of capitalism. The owning class does not want to admit that they can only prosper by not paying for seventy-five percent of the true work of the planet.

THE GREAT MONEY-TRICK

(Dinner break – the kitchen)

CRASS: Wot's become of the Professor then?

HARLOW: P'raps he's preparin' his sermon.

EASTON: We ain't had no lectures from 'im lately, since he's been working on the droring-room

SAWKINS: Damd good job. Gi's me the pip to hear 'im, the same thing over and over again.

HARLOW: 'E does upset himself about things, don't he?

SAWKINS: Well, what's the use the likes of us worryin' our 'eads about politics?

HARLOW: I don't see that. We've got votes, so we ought to take some interest but I don't see no sense in this 'ere Socialist wangle that Frank's always talking about.

CRASS: Nor does no body else either.

EASTON: But 'e had a cuff the other day about money bein' no good at all. Goin' on about money being the main cause of poverty.

(Owen enters)

OWEN: So it is – the main cause of poverty.

PHILP: Gentl'men. Professor Owen is goin' to give us 'is well known lecture, Money as the Main Cause of Bein' Ard Up, proving as money an't no good to nobody. At the hend a collection will be took to encourage the lecturer.

CRASS: See. It's all very good saying these things. Provin' it is a different thing.

OWEN: Right. I'll show you the Great Money Trick. Now for the purpose of this demonstration I shall need the help of members of the audience. May I borrow your knife, sir?

(He collects knives from Harlow, Philpott, Eston)

OWEN: Has anybody got any bread they can spare?

(He adds the bread he collects to his own.)

OWEN: These pieces of bread represent the raw materials which exist naturally in and on the earth for the use of mankind; they were not made by any being, but were created by the Great Spirit for the benefit and sustenance of all, the same as were the air and the light and the sun.

HARLOW: Well, that's nice and clear.

PHILP: Clear as mud.

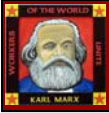
OWEN: Now. I am a Capitalist. And all these raw materials belong to me. Don't matter for now how I got hold of them, or whether I have any right to them. Fact is that all the raw materials are now the property of the Landlord and Capitalist class. That's me.

PHILP: Good enough.

OWEN: And you three (*Harlow, Eston, Philpott*) are the Working Classes; you have nothing and while I've got all this raw material, they are no use to me – what I need are the things that are made of these raw materials by Work; but I am too lazy to work myself, so I have invented the Great Money Trick to make you work for me. Now not only do I own all the raw materials, but these three knives stand for all machinery. All the tools of production; factories, railways

continued Page 19...

Editor: Humphrey McQueen suggests that this theatrical adaptation of Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* can be read aloud by activists as a form of political discussion.



(continued from Page 18...)

And these three coins, (takes three halfpennies from his pocket) stand for my Money Capital. Got it?

CRASS: We got it. Get on with it.

(Owen cuts one of the slices of bread into small square blocks)

OWEN: These squares represent the things which are produced by labour, aided by machinery, from the raw materials. Let's say three of these blocks make a week's work; and let's say each of these halfpennies is a sovereign. We'd be able to do the trick better if we had real sovereigns, but I forgot to bring any with me.

PHILP: I'd lend you some. But I left my purse on the grand pianner.

OWEN: Now you three say you are in need of work, and as I am kind hearted Capitalist, I am going to invest all my money in industries, to give you PLENTY of WORK. I'll pay you a pound a week, and for a week's work you must produce three of these square blocks. Then I give you a pound. I take what you produce, but you can do whatever you want with the pound.

Fair enough? Set to then.

(The men cut the pieces into threes.)

OWEN: Here's your pound. (He gathers the pieces to himself.) Now these blocks represent the necessities of life. Food, Housing, Clothing, Everything. Now you can't live without them, so you've got to buy them off me. And my price for one of these is - one pound.

(The men buy and devour the bread.)

OWEN: I'll have two 'cos I'm greedy. So I've four pounds in produce, me three sovereigns back, what you got?

PHILP: Nothing, I just ate it.

OWEN: Want to work then, do you?

MEN: Ye's course we do.

OWEN: Off we go, then.

(They repeat this several times, until a pile of wealth has accumulated for the Capitalist.)

(Owen suddenly grabs back the knives from the men)

MEN: Here, what's going on?

OWEN: Bad news, chaps. Owing to Over Production all my warehouses are glutted with the necessaries of life. So I've decided to close down the works.

PHILP: What the bloody 'ell are we to do then?

OWEN: That's not my business. I've paid your wages, fair and square. Given you PLENTY OF WORK for a long time. No more work at present. Come round in a couple of months.

HARLOW: But what about the necessaries of life? We've got to eat someat, an't we?

OWEN: Course you have. And I shall e very pleased to sell you some.

EASTON: But we an't got no bleedin' money.

OWEN Well, you don't expect me to gi' you my stuff for nothing, You din't work for me for nothing, I paid you. You should have saved something, Should have been thrifty, like me!

PHILP: Here, if you don't gi' us something, what's to stop us takin' it.

OWEN: I appeal to your sense of decency. Fair play.

PHILP: That don't wash wi' us, mate. We're hungry.

OWEN; If you are not more polite, I'll have to get my friends the police down here, and they may be forced to bash your faces in, so as to protect an honest man from villains.

HARLOW: Well, that about takes the biskit.

EASTON: What are we going to do?

PHILP: We'll have to 'ave an unemployed procession.

(They make a procession)

MEN: (sing)

We got no work to do

We got no work to do

We've been working too damned hard.

We've got no work to do.

(The crowd jeer at them, and try to spit in their hats.)

PHILP: We won't get nothing out of this lot. Let's try the old religious dodge, that always makes them part up!

HARLOW: Trim your feeble lamp ...

(The others join in the song. At the end, the kind Capitalist drops a coin in.)

PHILP: A sovereign! Bless you, sir.

OWEN: What are you goin' to do wi' it, my good man?

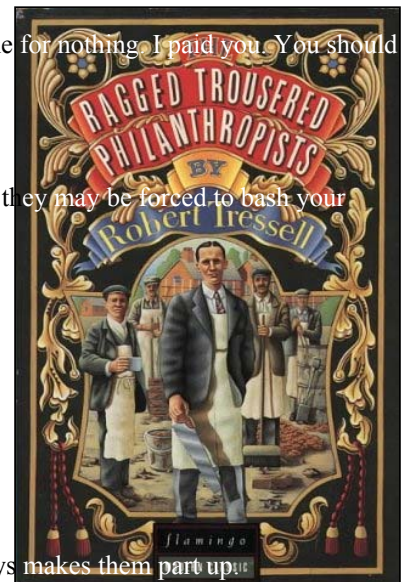
PHILP: Buy food.

OWEN: There you are. (He takes the coin back.)

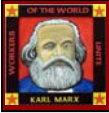
(The unemployed sing "For he's a Jolly Good Fellow")

HARLOW: Here, Mr Kind Capitalist, would you allow us to elect you to Parliament?

(BLACKOUT)



Adapted by **Stephen Lowe**
Published by Methuen 1983
From Robert Tressell
*The Ragged Trousered
Philanthropists*

**DIALECTICS FOR THE NEW CENTURY**

The following is the Introduction to a new book, *Dialectics for the New Century*, edited by Bertell Ollman and Tony Smith, published by Palgrave Macmillan, 2008

Introduction

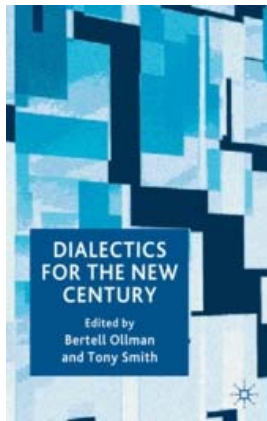
Bertell Ollman and Tony Smith

If one were to attempt to define in a single word the focus, so to speak, of the whole [Marx/Engels] correspondence, the central point at which the whole body of ideas expressed and discussed converges – that word would be dialectics. The application of materialist dialectics to the reshaping of all political economy from its foundations up, its application to history, natural science, philosophy and to the policy and tactics of the working class – that was what interested Marx and Engels most of all, that was where they contributed what was most essential and new, and that was what constituted the masterly advance they made in the history of revolutionary thought.

(Lenin, 1973, 554)

With such excellent press – for similar comments can be found in the works of Trotsky, Lukács, Gramsci, Luxemburg, Mao, and Sartre – one might have thought that, at least among Marxists, dialectics would be well understood by now and dialectical studies the norm rather than the exception. As we all know, this is not the case.

In an 1858 letter to Engels, Marx said that if time permits he would like to write something to clarify his rational reconstruction of Hegel’s dialectical method (Marx and Engels, 102). With the urgent demands of his life as a revolutionary and his work on political economy spreading far beyond its initial confines, Marx never found the time to return to dialectics. It was left for his followers to construct this dialectic from his widely dispersed remarks on this subject and from the use to which he put dialectics in his theories. Without Marx’s guidance, however, the chief result has been a century and more of bitter disputes that has left some Marxist scholars – Althusserians a



generation ago, those who call themselves ‘Analytical Marxists’ more recently – urging that we abandon dialectics altogether. But no idea can be grasped apart from its form, and the form of all of Marx’s theories is dialectical. Hence, so long as Marxism helps us understand the world, we will need to study dialectics in order to improve our understanding of Marxism.

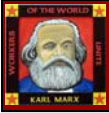
The present volume is not intended as an ‘Introduction to Dialectics,’ nor as a systematic restatement of what it is or of how to use it, nor as a survey of the main debates going on in this field, though something of each will be found in the following pages. It would be an exaggeration, too, to claim that the collection offers an adequate overview of the current state of dialectical thought, though several varieties of Marxist dialectics are represented here.

Instead, we have simply tried to showcase some of the more important Marxist thinkers now working on dialectics. It is not surprising, therefore, that – taken as a whole – what they have written also constitutes an unusual ‘Introduction to Dialectics,’ an uneven but still systematic restatement of what it is and of how to use it, a survey of the main debates in the field, and – through its variety – as good a picture of the current state of the art of dialectics as one is likely to find.

Is a brief definition of ‘dialectics’ possible? In the history of Western thought the term has meant quite different things in different contexts.¹ Dialectics in the Western tradition is customarily said to begin with Heraclitus. He insisted that the cosmos was in endless flux, in contrast to those for whom ‘true’ reality was immutable. For Socrates, dialectic had less to do with the dynamism of the cosmos than with the dynamism of intellectual discussion when pushed forward by challenges to the underlying

assumptions of interlocutors. Aristotle then systematized Socratic dialectic, treating it as a form of argument that fell somewhere between rhetoric and logic. While dialectical speech, like rhetoric, aimed at persuasion, Aristotle believed its efforts to overcome disagreements through rational discussion made it more like logic. Unlike logical argumentation, however, dialectical speech does not derive necessary consequences from universally accepted premises. Instead, by revealing the contradictions in particular arguments, it forces their modification or even abandonment, and moves the contending parties closer to a rational consensus. This notion of dialectics continued to hold sway in Western philosophy throughout the medieval and early modern periods. A major shift occurred with Kant. For him, ‘dialectics’ does not refer to a process by which discussions can advance toward rational agreement, but to the frustrating and inclusive results that arise whenever reason transgresses its proper limits by attempting to investigate the ultimate nature of things. In Kant’s philosophy, dialectics becomes an endless series of debates in which each side reveals the contradictions of the other without being able to resolve its own. Following Kant, Hegel concedes that as long as contending positions are taken as complete and independent in themselves, the opposition between them is irresolvable.

But why, Hegel asks, must we take the opposed positions as complete and independent? Why choose, for example, between ‘freedom’ and ‘necessity’? Another, far better option is available: to recognize that the apparently opposed positions only offer one-sided accounts of a complex reality. ‘Truth is the whole,’ he famously claims, and to be adequately comprehended we must find a place in our thinking for all these partial and one-sided truths. The key to Hegel’s notion of dialectic is the movement to a positive result in which previously antagonistic positions are reconciled within a higher-order framework (Pinkard, 1987). His *Science of Logic* is an unprecedented and unrepeatable attempt to show that all the fundamental categories of Western
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philosophy can be fit together in one coherent whole – once, that is, the contradictions which arise when they are taken as independent standpoints are rigorously confronted and resolved. In *The Philosophy of Right* Hegel attempted to show that neither a one-sided emphasis on the autonomous subjectivity of individual agents, nor a one-sided emphasis on the priority of the community over the individual, can adequately comprehend the reconciliation of both ‘principles’ found in the social and political institutions of modern society.

Marx himself testified to the importance of Hegelian dialectics in his own intellectual development, although it remains a matter of dispute what he took over from Hegel more or less intact, what he modified, and what he rejected. There is no dispute that Marx unequivocally rejected Hegel’s claim that the antagonisms of the modern order are adequately overcome in the modern state. Marxian dialectics is thus critical where Hegel’s is affirmative. Marx’s dialectics is also largely developed from the standpoint of engaged practical agency, rather than from the sort of detached intellectual contemplation that characterized dialectical thinking in the West from the Greeks through Hegel.

While extremely compressed and oversimplified, this sketch of the history of the term ‘dialectics’ in the West should be enough to warn readers not to expect a consensus on what it is. Introductions, however, are allowed to simplify if that helps to prepare new audiences for the complexities of the upcoming text, so – with apologies to those of our contributors who will disagree – here is dialectics, the potted version.

Dialectics is a way of thinking and a set of related categories that captures, neither misses nor distorts, the real changes and interaction that go on in the world or any part of it. It is also, therefore, a characterization of the world, including society, in so far as it possesses these qualities. It also offers a method for investigating a reality so conceived, and of presenting our findings to others, most of whom do not think dialectically. Taking capitalism as

our main subject of study, dialectics can’t be said to explain capitalism. Rather, it helps us see and investigate the capitalist relations and processes, of which we ourselves are part, as they have unfolded, are now unfolding, and have yet to unfold. Using dialectics – and with a lot of hard empirical research – we can develop a theory that can explain capitalism in its becoming. Marxism is such a theory.

Having risked this brief definition of ‘dialectics,’ we hasten to add that practically every aspect of it is contested. That emerges clearly from a glance at the major debates in the field: Is Marx’s dialectic a reflection of what the world really is (is it an ontology?), or is it a way of learning about the world (is it an epistemology?), or is it both? Does it apply to all of nature, including society, or only to society? Is it limited to organic interaction within the capitalist mode of production, or does it deal with historical change as well? Is it primarily a method of exposition, and that chiefly for Marx’s major work, *Capital*, or does it also involve a method of inquiry? And, of course, which one or couple of categories associated with dialectics – contradiction, internal relations, totality, identity/difference, quantity/quality, negation of the negation, etc. – is central to Marx’s account? Finally, how does Marx’s dialectic differ, if at all, from the view of dialectics presented in far more detail in the writings of Engels? While our volume is not organized around these debates, all of them receive some attention in the pages that follow.

A proviso and a challenge: There are serious limits to how dialectical our thinking can become in capitalist society. With its frequent upheavals of all kinds, no society requires dialectics as much, but it is also true that with its reified social forms and constantly expanding consciousness industry no society makes it so difficult for its inhabitants to think dialectically. Without these hindrances, dialectics would probably come easily to people. It is with this in mind that some have envisioned dialectics as the common sense of communism, when all such hindrances have been removed. The question we face, however, is, Can we help people think *more* dialectically

today? We can only try but try we must, since grasping more of the relevant connections and of the larger (and longer) picture – given the relation between dialectics and becoming class conscious – is a necessary prerequisite for bringing any communist future into existence.

This volume is organized to allow relatively easy entry and exit. Bertell Ollman’s essay presents the problems, both epistemological and political, for which dialectics serves as some kind of solution. His chief concern here is with how dialectics helps us understand and investigate potentiality, especially as it applies to the socialist and communist future that Marx sees ‘concealed’ inside the capitalist present.

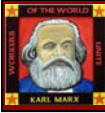
Richard Levins contrasts dialectics with systems theory, whose notions of mutual dependence and totality have often been confused with their ‘equivalents’ in dialectical thinking. For him, systems theory represents a positive though still necessarily limited attempt by a reductionist scientific establishment to come to grips with the problems posed by complexity and change.

While many ‘Western Marxists’ explicitly rejected the notion of a ‘dialectics of nature’ as ‘Engelsian,’ John Bellamy Foster argues that ecological Marxism, which stresses the internal relations between society and nature within a single totality, is much closer to Marx’s own dialectical ontology. It is also best suited for comprehending our society’s worsening alienation from nature and offers the only adequate framework for addressing the current ecological crisis.

Lucien Sève discusses the logical problems linear (non-dialectical) thinkers have in conceiving the process of emergence, a process of crucial concern in both the natural and social sciences. For him, only dialectics enables us to grasp emergence as a process that intertwines parts of what existed beforehand with the genuinely new qualities that come into existence during change.

David Harvey examines absolute, relative, and relational definitions of ‘space’ and ‘time,’ as well as the

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experience of 'spacetime.' The importance of keeping space and time in dialectical tension with each other is illustrated through analyses of complex phenomena ranging from 'Ground Zero' in Manhattan to the Marxian theories of value and class consciousness.

Fredric Jameson conceives of the dialectic as a way of thinking for the future that is but imperfectly realized in the present. Marx, Hegel, Derrida, Barthes, and Brecht are the main figures interrogated in his search for a contradiction-centered dialectic that is historically situated and completely open-ended.

István Mészáros' article reclaims the base/superstructure metaphor, which is usually associated with positivistic versions of Marxism, for a dialectical analysis in which the notion of totality plays the central role. After identifying the main structural constraints on thinking that come from the base, he examines the changes that would be necessary for the emergence of a totalizing consciousness adequate to the task of political transformation.

Michael Löwy discusses how Trotsky's, Lenin's, and Lukács' dialectical comprehension of the unity of opposites and the category of totality helped them to avoid economic determinism and to understand history as a contradictory and open-ended (rather than predetermined) process. Understanding the need for a dialectical synthesis between the specificity of particular social formations and the universality of world capitalism also protected them from all the temptations of nationalism.

Savas Michael-Matsas insists that dialectical method remains what Marx originally asserted it to be: a scandal and an abomination to the ruling class and ruling ideology. Appealing to Walter Benjamin's notion of a 'Now' that breaks with linear time, he develops a dialectic of negativity of globalized capitalism, revealing the latter's contradictions and transient nature.

Tony Smith argues for a dialectical connection between the (1) socialstate, (2) neoliberal, (3) catalytic-state, and (4) democratic-cosmopolitan models of globalization, with each addressing the 'immanent contradictions' of the previous model. He concludes that the irresolvable contradictions and social antagonisms of the capitalist global order can only be overcome by a socialist form of globalization.

Tom Sekine presents dialectics as the logic of capital (and *Capital*), a logic we can learn by listening carefully to capital as it 'tells' us its story. We can 'hear' it, because it is a story we ourselves have created by carrying out our social roles in the capitalist mode of production.

Christopher J. Arthur agrees with Sekine that Marx's dialectic is systematic and not historical. For Arthur, Marx's dialectic, like Hegel's, expresses the logical connections among concepts whose meanings reflect the equally interdependent conditions of the whole to which they refer (capital for Marx, thought for Hegel).

Nancy Hartsock wants to construct a dialectical method that would be of special interest to feminists. In pursuit of this aim, she devotes most of her attention to the dialectical theory of truth, the place of subjectivity and agency in history, and the relation between knowledge and power, particularly in the capitalist era.

Joel Kovel's article insists that the dialectic is not just a method for seeking the truth, but also a form of praxis. Starting with its history, he claims that dialectics arises in societies undergoing struggle, using the logic (whether formalized or not) of the struggle to help bring about needed change.

Ira Gollobin concludes our volume by making explicit the connection between dialectics and wisdom that others may have been hinted at but no one has developed. From the intellectual gropings of primitive man to the creation of Marxism, Gollobin argues, the development of dialectical thought is coextensive with the growth of wisdom.

Bill Livant's four short pieces, which are distributed throughout the book, show how one of our most creative Marxist teachers introduces his neophyte students to the 'mysteries' of identity/difference,

contradiction, essence/appearance, and dialectical motion.

Finally, the editors would like to thank David Laibman, the tireless editor of *Science and Society*, for his support in this project, which grew out of a special issue of the journal (Volume 62, Number 3, 1998) for which we were guest editors.

Note

1. Much work remains to be done to trace the many and varied contributions to dialectical theorizing found outside the Western philosophical tradition.

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LONDON

To celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of William Blake (27 November 1757), here is a poem that needs little introduction and gives you an insight into the soul of man under early capitalism, circa London 1780s. What you'll notice is how very little has changed in the intervening two hundred years or so. Here is the eponymous *London*:

**I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet,
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.**

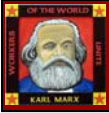
**In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear:**

**How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackening church appals,
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace-walls.**

**But most, through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage-hearse.**

*"Our demands most moderate are –
We only want the earth!"*

- James Connolly



POETRY

The Song of the Shirt

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A Woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread--
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with the voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the "Song of the Shirt!"

"Work! Work! Work!
While the cock is crowing aloof!
And work--work--work,
Till the stars shine through the roof!
It's O! to be a slave
Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save
If this is Christian work!

"Work--work--work
Till the brain begins to swim,
Work--work--work
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in a dream!

"O, Men with Sisters dear!
O, Men! with Mothers and Wives!
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives!
Stitch--stitch--stitch,
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A Shroud as well as a Shirt.

"But why do I talk of Death!
That Phantom of grisly bone,
I hardly fear his terrible shape,
It seems so like my own--
It seems so like my own,
Because of the fasts I keep;
O God! that bread should be so dear,
And flesh and blood so cheap!

"Work--work--work!
My labour never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread--and rags.
That shatter'd roof,--and this naked floor--
A table--a broken chair--
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there!

"Work--work--work!
From weary chime to chime,
Work--work--work--
As prisoners work for crime!
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain
benumb'd,
As well as the weary hand.

"Work--work--work,
In the dull December light,
And work--work--work,
When the weather is warm and bright--
While underneath the eaves
The brooding swallows cling,
As if to show me their sunny backs
And twit me with the spring.

"O, but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet!--
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet;
For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that costs a meal!

"O, but for one short hour!
A respite however brief!
No blessed leisure for Love or Hope,
But only time for Grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread!

"Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Work, work, work,
Like the Engine that works by Steam!
A mere machine of iron and wood
That toils for Mammon's sake--
Without a brain to ponder and craze
Or a heart to feel--and break!"

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A Woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous
pitch,--
Would that its tone could reach the
Rich!--
She sang this "Song of the Shirt!"

Thomas Hood (1799-1845)

g'day friends

don't know whether poetry says anything to youse, but this poem by thomas hood is a powerful reminder of where our [oz & brit] faction of the working class as come from & if capital wins out with AWA's & \$10's & lest per hour. Then 'tis where we're heading for again.

this poem by tom hood was published in the london punch in 1843 & while thru our heroic & deadly hard struggles, we achieved boozh-wah rights steadily i.e. until about 1980 when the neocons went on the offensive [while we slumbered] sucking us into their slow moving whirlpool & drowning those hard won rights year by year. nevertheless the song of the shirt cud well be written [may be it is] today about working conditions of workers working on the southern periphery of the imperial core.

jim

Note

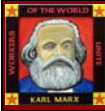
The poem was inspired by an incident which had newly drawn public attention to the condition of some workers in London. A woman with a starving infant at the breast was charged at the Lambeth Police-court with pawning her master's goods, for which she had to give two pounds security. Her husband had died by an accident, and left her with two children to support, and she obtained by her needle for the maintenance of herself and family what her master called the good living of seven shillings a week. (Jerrold).

It was a powerful attack on worker exploitation and was immediately reprinted in the London Times and other newspapers across Europe. It was dramatized by Mark Lemon as The Sempstress, highly praised by many of the literary establishment, including Charles Dickens it was printed on broad sheets and cotton handkerchiefs.

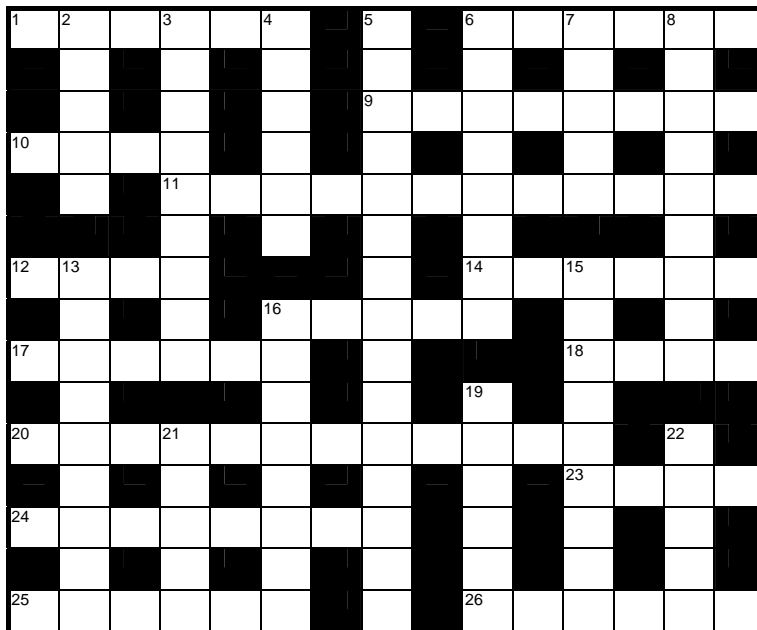
An English poet of the Romantic Era and early Victorian age it was common in his day for women and children to work 14-hour days for starvation wages. Sad to say that today it's still common for women and children to work 14-hour days for starvation wages even though more than two hundred years have passed. Only the location of the exploitation has changed.

During the 19th century a large part of the European and particularly English people rose to the middle class marking a clear contrast against those left behind at the bottom of the economic ladder. One of the results of this was that sweatshops were viewed as became the target of social reform movements. With an increasing number of people rising to the middle class, the contrast presented by those at the bottom of the social and economic ladder became unbearable to many. *The Song of the Shirt* became an of the impetus of popular opinion and frequently used to support the liberalized labor laws in England. Today it has become a literal translation making it applicable in Guatemala, Thailand and West Africa.

"On our earth, before writing was invented, before the printing press was invented, poetry flourished. That is why we know that poetry is like bread; it should be shared by all, by scholars and by peasants, by all our vast, incredible, extraordinary family of humanity." Pablo Neruda



SURPLUS VALUE Cryptic Crossword No. 02 - Set by Gramsci



Across

- 1. See 5 down (6)
- 6. A ruffled shrike makes a piercing sound (6)
- 9. He wrote a saga about an old city in America (8)
- 10. See 13 down (4)
- 11. Vernadsky's work is her best hope, I imagine (3,9)
- 12. Eastern flower is strange – a reflection! (4)
- 14. Ingredients are got for barley drink (6)
- 16. The main impulse is forward about a hundred (5)
- 17. God set about with no imagination (6)
- 18. Make *need* your perfect home (4)
- 20. The bairns and tots I delivered with no hands were my responsibility (12)
- 23. High murmur! (4)
- 24. Hibernating supporters! (8)
- 25. Emphasis on church nuncio initially caught in act (6)
- 26. He fixed the bracket (6)

Down

- 2. Escape from a vacuum (5)
- 3. Speak about nude modelling, but it's kept to oneself (9)
- 4. Worn down by return of the French illustrator (6)
- 5, 1ac. The land is for cattle, Epicurus said. Slurp away, wrote Engels (3,10,2,6)
- 6. Trips over a mortar carrier – that's careless (8)
- 7. The collar seems uneven (5)
- 8. Separation process using air mixed with shredded lettuce to extract carbon (9)
- 13, 10ac. Team works to get oil made in olden times near earth's fissure. It represents man's break with nature (9,4)
- 15. They prevent demolitions by inexperienced barbarians with no guts (5,4)
- 16. I feel I see two books being republished (8)
- 19. Tell a whopper to important old agricultural chemist (6)
- 21. In that respect, time is where I'm at (5)
- 22. Toxic gas is round the area (5)

Frederick Engels

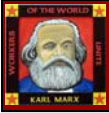
Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first.

The people who, in Mesopotamia, Greece, Asia Minor and elsewhere, destroyed the forests to obtain cultivable land, never dreamed that by removing along with the forests and collecting centres and reservoirs of moisture they were laying the basis for the present forlorn state of those countries.

When the Italians of the Alps used up the pine forests on the southern slopes, so carefully cherished on the northern slopes, they had no inkling that by doing so they were cutting at the roots of the dairy industry in their region; they had still less inkling that they were thereby depriving their mountain springs of water for the greater part of the year, and making it possible for them to pour still more furious torrents on the plains during the rainy seasons. Those who spread the potato in Europe were not aware that with those farinaceous tubers they were at the same time spreading scrofula.

Thus at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature – but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly.

The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man, 1876.



HATING THE RICH

March 20, 2007

Go Ahead, Hate Them, It's Good for You

By **Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz**

The rich are not like you and me." "The poor will always be with us." Get real and accept it we are told. Give alms and aid to the poor, tax the rich. Establish private foundations, be a responsible trust baby and give. You've heard it all, and maybe even believe it in your heart. But, it's toxic thinking. I have a suggestion for clarifying our consciousness: learn to hate the rich. Hate, yes. You can dress up the language and call it rage. But, hate is a concept underrated. Everyone does it, but no one wants to admit it, usually hating the wrong person. Hate is the opposite of love. Do you love the rich? Like the rich? If not, than maybe you can learn to hate the rich. I don't mean shame the rich in order to get money out of their guilt, as has been a long practice on the left and among non-profits. I mean NOT taking money from the rich, isolate the rich, make them build tall walls around their estates and corporate headquarters as the people force the rich to do in Latin America. How dare they have plate glass windows! We are held back and diminished by the claim that hating is bad for us, bad for everyone. You can hate the act but not hate the person. You can hate wealth or capitalism but not the rich. It's a ridiculous logic that keeps us hating and blaming ourselves for not being rich and powerful. Anyway, it's not consistent; it's all right to hate slavery and slave-owners, fascism and Hitler, etc. Why not hate the rich, the

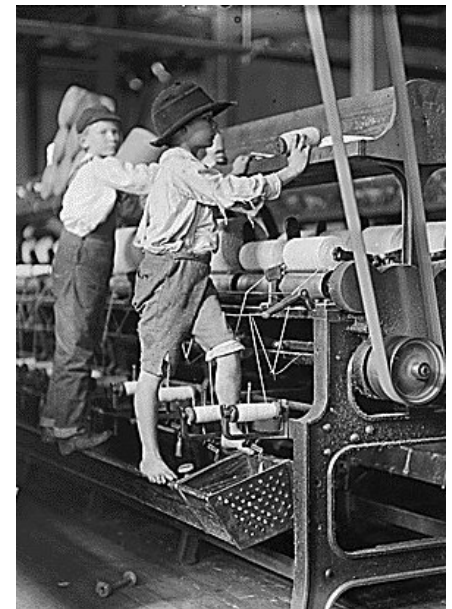
individual rich, not an abstract concept?

Ah, but who are the rich? We have to be careful about that, living in a country that does not admit to class relations, and class is subject to little analysis even on the left. It's not a matter of income per se. And it's essential in hating to target the enemy and not some front for the enemy. High income can certainly make a person full of herself, and most US citizens who live on high fixed or hourly incomes due to circumstances of a good trade union or a professional degree have no idea that they aren't rich. In polls they say they are in the top fifth of the income ladder, and they aren't. A majority of US citizens don't want to tax the rich more, because they think they will be rich one day. They won't. The rich own not just a mortgaged house and a car, maybe a boat or a cabin in the woods or a beach house to boot; rather they own you. Even the cash and luxury soaked entertainment and sports stars are not the rich; they certainly deserve contempt and disgust, but not hatred. Don't go for scapegoats--Jews, Oprah, Martha Stewart. Hatred should be reserved for those who own us, that is, those who own the banks, the oil companies, the war industry, the land (for corporate agriculture), the private universities and prep schools, and who own the foundations that dole out worthy projects for the poor, for public institutions--their opera, their ballet, their symphony, that you are allowed to attend after opening night. My oldest brother, who like me grew up dirt poor in rural Oklahoma, landless farmers and farm workers, rebuts my arguments by saying that no poor man ever gave him a job. That says it all. The rich own you and me.

In all the arguments about the crimes of the Judeo-Christian-Muslim religions, rarely is their greatest crime ever discussed--the leveling of class, rich and poor are the same in god's sight. What a handy ideology for the rich! The same with US democracy with its "equal opportunity" and "level playing fields," absurd claims under capitalism, but ones held dear by liberals. Hating the rich means also hating the state, the United States of America that is the ruling corporate body of the rich.

Why are we so silent about this, grumping over the increase in the income gap, trying to figure out how to narrow it? What do we expect, that the rich will empower the people to overthrow them as they almost did in response to the labor movement in the 1930s or the Civil Rights Movement with the War on Poverty? Not again will they make that mistake. I'm not saying we shouldn't point to it as evidence of the crimes of the rich, but we should not delude ourselves that the rich will give up their ownership of us. So, we need to stop longing for the return of the New Deal or savior Roosevelt. Passionate, organized hatred is the element missing in all that we do to try to change the world. Now is the time to spread hate, hatred for the rich.

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz is a longtime activist, university professor, and writer. In addition to numerous scholarly books and articles she has published two historical memoirs, *Red Dirt: Growing Up Okie* (Verso, 1997), and *Outlaw Woman: A Memoir of the War Years, 1960-1975* (City Lights, 2002). "Red Christmas" is excerpted from her forthcoming book, *Blood on the Border: A Memoir of the Contra War*, South End Press, October 2005. She can be reached at: rdunbaro@pacbell.net

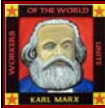


Here is a picture of some workers exercising their free economic choice in the paradisaical, pre-New Deal world of unrestrained capitalism

The rich will do anything for the poor but get off their backs. Karl Marx



I OWN YOU



Answers to Crossword. Across: 1. See 5dn 6. Shriek 9. Epicurus 10. See 13dn 11. The Biosphere 12. Amur 14. Orgeat 16. Scend 17. Stodge 18. Eden 20. Obstetrician 23. Buzz 24. Sleepers 25. Accent 26 Gusset.

Down: 2. Avoid 3. Unuttered 4. Eroded 5,1. The Dialectics Of Nature 6. Slipshod 7. Rough 8. Elutriate 13,10. Metabolic rift 15. Green Bans 16. Sentient 19. Liebig 21. There 22 Ozone.

Did You Know?

The following snippets relate to some of the clues and answers to the cryptic crossword.

Epicurus – the ancient Greek materialist philosopher whose work and whose ideas, as primarily expressed in Lucretius’ poem De renum natura (On the Nature of Things), were the starting point for Marx’ own materialism. Marx wrote of or about Epicurus and Epicurean materialist philosophy in his seven Notebooks on Epicurian Philosophy and his subsequent doctoral thesis (1839-1841), and in The Holy Family (1845) and The German Ideology (1846), both written together with Engels.

Liebig – Marx’ systematic investigation into the work of the German agricultural chemist Justus von Liebig, which grew out of his critique of Malthusianism, was what led Marx to his central concept of the “metabolic rift” in the human relation to nature – his mature analysis of the alienation of nature. The work of Liebig, with emphasis on the circulation of soil nutrients and its relation to animal metabolism, as well as Charles Darwin’s bio-historical work, led to the emergence of modern ecology in the mid-nineteenth century.

Vernadsky, V.I. – one of the two greatest Russian ecologists of the 1920’s and 1930’s (the other was the plant geneticist, N.I. Vavilov), Vernadsky achieved international renown for his analysis of the biosphere and as the founder of geochemistry. He published The Biosphere in 1926. As Lynn Margulis et al have written in the Forward to the English translation of his book, he was “the first person in history [to] come to grips with the real implications of the fact that the Earth is a self-contained sphere.”

The Dialectics of Nature – published from Engels’ unfinished manuscript.

Metabolic rift – Marx’ theory of the “rift” in the “metabolic interaction between man and the earth,” that is, the “social metabolism prescribed by the natural laws of life” (quotes from Capital).

(Information taken from the book Marx’ Ecology: materialism and nature, by John Bellamy Foster, Monthly Review Press, 2000.)

“...it is only possible to achieve real liberation in the real world... by employing real means... slavery cannot be abolished without the steam-engine and the mule and spinning-jenny, serfdom cannot be abolished without improved agriculture, and... in general, people cannot be liberated as long as they are unable to obtain food and drink, housing and clothing in adequate quality and quantity. “Liberation” is an historical and not a mental act, and it is brought about by historical conditions, the development of industry, commerce, agriculture, the conditions of intercourse [Verkehr]...”



Liberated territory by the people of Nepal

April 25, 2008 (Reuters) - Nepal's former Maoist rebels won 220 seats in the 601-member assembly, results showed on Friday, making them the largest party and giving them a chance to form a minority government.

Voting for a special assembly meant to write a new constitution was a mix of a first-past-the-post system, for 240 seats, and proportional representation, for 335 seats. The new cabinet will nominate 26 members.

The election commission said counting of votes for all 575 elected seats was over. Some 25 parties are represented in the assembly.

The following shows the final number of seats won by various political parties in the April 10 election:

Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) 220

- Nepali Congress 110
Communist UML 103
Madheshi People's Rights Forum 52
Terai Madhesh Democratic Party 20
Sadbhavana Party 9
National Royalist Party 8
Communist Party of Nepal (M-L) 8
Other parties and independents 45



Society does not consist of individuals but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand. Karl Marx

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Editorial Thank you. Thank you also to all those Praxis Network members who sent in articles, and other contributions and suggestions. We try to use as much of this material as we can. But we reserve the right to edit articles where necessary to fit the layout of the newsletter. Such editing will be done in a way that, hopefully, doesn't change the essence of the articles. The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the individual members of The Praxis Network.