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RELAY

MAY / JUNE 2005

A SOCIALIST PROJECT REVIEW



VATICAN WITHOUT A POPE * SOCIALISM WITH RELIGION
BRAZIL'S LANDLESS WORKERS' MOVEMENT (MST)
MASSIVE CHANGE * CARBON TRADING

\$2

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About Relay

Relay, A Socialist Project Review, intends to act as a forum for conveying and debating current issues of importance to the Left in Ontario, Canada and from around the world. Contributions to the re-laying of the foundations for a viable socialist politics are welcomed by the editorial committee.

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About the Socialist Project

The Socialist Project does not propose an easy politics for defeating capitalism or claim a ready alternative to take its place. We oppose capitalism out of necessity and support the resistance of others out of solidarity. This resistance creates spaces of hope, and an activist hope is the first step to discovering a new socialist politics. Through the struggles of that politics – struggles informed by collective analysis and reflection – alternatives to capitalism will emerge. Such anti-capitalist struggles, we believe, must develop a viable working class politics, and be informed by democratic struggles against racial, sexist and homophobic oppressions, and in support of the national self-determination of the many peoples of the world. In Canada and the world today, there is an imperative for the Left to begin a sustained process of reflection, struggle and organizational regroupment and experimentation. Neither capitalism nor neoliberalism will fade from the political landscape based on the momentum of their own contradictions and without the Left developing new political capacities. We encourage those who share this assessment to meet, debate and begin to make a contribution to a renewed socialist project in your union, school and community. For more information on the Socialist Project check our web-site at www.socialistproject.ca or e-mail us at socialistproject@hotmail.com.



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Putting a Price on Fresh Air

Patrick Bond and Rehana Dada

Is undue influence being exerted over government by what former Trade and Industry director-general Zav Rustomjee termed, in his PhD thesis, the minerals-energy complex' (big mining houses, minerals smelters, petrochemical firms, and Eskom)?

The case of global warming is instructive, particularly in the wake of Pretoria's October 2004 climate change policy, which promotes World Bank-designed 'carbon trading'. That approach endorses the idea of the right to pollute as a property right granted free to big business, and then to trade in pollution rather than reducing industrialised country emissions.

There are two troubling consequences:

Instead of reducing their carbon emissions, local mining and minerals firms will continue to be recipients of vast state subsidies, especially low-priced Eskom electricity, along with public infrastructure investments like those envisaged for the proposed Coega aluminum smelter.

In addition, the carbon-trading strategy to address global warming could well exacerbate other environmental problems in centres like Durban.

This is diabolical, because energy-intensive megaprojects create very few jobs, and the bulk of their profits flow to beneficiary firms' financial headquarters in London and Sydney. They also churn out carbon dioxide at one of the highest rates in the world, making South Africa today 20 times more CO₂-intensive per unit of per capita gross domestic product than even the U.S.

If the toothless Kyoto Protocol is ever strengthened, countries like China, India and especially South Africa will have to play rapid catch-up on emissions reductions. Yet subsidised megaprojects are making Pretoria's transition into a responsible world energy consumer all the harder.

In fact, an international carbon trading system is simply not feasible, in spite of government and business arguments reported by Janet Wilhelm ('Profits from fresh air', M&G, 10 December 2004). Emissions trading equates two processes which are scientifically untenable, permitting CO₂ emissions to be mitigated by credits for carbon 'sequestration' (i.e.,

absorbing carbon through 'sinks' such as timber plantations), 'avoided emissions' or 'emissions reductions'.

This means not only giving big minerals-energy firms an allocation of free emissions rights. In turn, the same firms will gain greater access over - and with it, the capacity to commodify - air, land, water, timber and other goods.

To illustrate - one high-profile pilot carbon trading project in Brazil involves planting eucalyptus plantations as a carbon sink. Aside from the fact that plantations are not permanent carbon stores, there is huge uncertainty about how the biotic cycles can stabilise carbon released from fossil fuels.



In any case, about 25% of the increase in atmospheric CO₂ over the past 250 years or so is a result of the destruction of forests. If anything, indigenous forests - not alien timber plantations - should be reestablished and protected as part of climate change mitigation.

The 'green deserts' of eucalyptus trees favoured by carbon traders cause destruction of soil structure and release of soil carbon, displacement of people, loss of biodiversity and serious disruption of water systems.

When these trees are old enough, they are felled and turned into charcoal for the steel smelting industry, and the firm then receives additional carbon credits for substituting mineral coal. Ironically, this process leads to the production of Brazilian cars, which worsens global warming.

In South Africa, the World Bank's primary emissions trading pilot is the controversial Bisaser Road dump in Durban's (Indian/African) Clare Estate neighbourhood.

That dump emits methane which can be captured and turned into a minor amount of electricity to augment the eThekweni metro's supply. But the electricity produced costs more than double the rate that Eskom charges, so the project is not economically feasible without World Bank subsidies.

According to Carl Albrecht, research director at the Cancer Association of SA, 'Clare Estate residents are like animals involved in a biological experiment.' Cancer victim Sajida Khan documents 70% of neighbouring households with tumor cases, not to mention severe respiratory problems.

However, eThekweni intends making money off the dump when a \$25 million World Bank investment begins this year. By not factoring in Khan and her community's health crisis, the Bank termed the dump 'environmentally friendly' in 2002. Because of past broken promises, Khan doesn't believe the metro council's vaguely-worded November 2004 decision to close the facility: 'They treat us like fools, but we will keep fighting.'

The Bank's Prototype Carbon Fund manages monies from 17 corporations and several carbon-intensive Western governments. Because of investments such as Bisaser Road, these polluters will face reduced pressure to cut emissions. South Africa is thus a willing co-conspirator in a farcical non-solution to the worst environmental disaster our descendants are likely to face.

Numerous alternatives exist, were governments and international agencies serious about global warming: regulation, taxation, support for existing low-fossil-carbon economies, energy efficiencies, development of renewables and non-fossil-fuelled technologies, responsible tree planting, and other strategies that do not involve commerce and do not presuppose that big business already owns the world's carbon-cycling capacity.

These alternatives should be supported by officials like minerals and energy minister Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. In addition to a rethink on carbon trading, Pretoria should end subsidies for continued exploration, extraction, exploitation and burning of fossil fuels, and urgently begin to make deep cuts in carbon emissions. It should respect, not attack - as Mlambo-Ngcuka did last February - the World Bank's 2004 Extractive Industries Review, which advised the Bank to cease its fossil fuel investments. The Bank rejected the advice last August.

However, because minerals-energy-complex corporations and the World Bank have set the agenda, South Africa will probably become a leading guinea pig for what can only be described as the privatisation of the air. **R**

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Dada is an environmental journalist.



The Durban Declaration on Carbon Trading

As representatives of people's movements and independent organisations, we reject the claim that carbon trading will halt the climate crisis. This crisis has been caused more than anything else by the mining of fossil fuels and the release of their carbon to the oceans, air, soil and living things. This excessive burning of fossil fuels is now jeopardising Earth's ability to maintain a liveable climate.

Governments, export credit agencies, corporations and international financial institutions continue to support and finance fossil fuel exploration, extraction and other activities that worsen global warming, such as forest degradation and destruction on a massive scale, while dedicating only token sums to renewable energy. It is particularly disturbing that the World Bank has recently defied the recommendation of its own Extractive Industries Review which calls for the phasing out of World Bank financing for coal, oil and gas extraction.

We denounce the further delays in ending fossil fuel extraction that are being caused by corporate, government and United Nations' attempts to construct a "carbon market", including a market trading in "carbon sinks".

History has seen attempts to commodify land, food, labour, forests, water, genes and ideas. Carbon trading follows in the footsteps of this history and turns the earth's carbon-cycling capacity into property to be bought or sold in a global market. Through this process of creating a new commodity - carbon - the Earth's ability and capacity to support a climate conducive to life and human societies is now passing into the same corporate hands that are destroying the climate.

People around the world need to be made aware of this commodification and privatization and actively intervene to ensure the protection of the Earth's climate.

Carbon trading will not contribute to achieving this protection of the Earth's climate. It is a false solution which entrenches and magnifies social inequalities in many ways: →

The carbon market creates transferable rights to dump carbon in the air, oceans, soil and vegetation far in excess of the capacity of these systems to hold it. Billions of dollars worth of these rights are to be awarded free of charge to the biggest corporate emitters of greenhouse gases in the electric power, iron and steel, cement, pulp and paper, and other sectors in industrialised nations who have caused the climate crisis and already exploit these systems the most. Costs of future reductions in fossil fuel use are likely to fall disproportionately on the public sector, communities, indigenous peoples and individual taxpayers.

The Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), as well as many private sector trading schemes, encourage industrialised countries and their corporations to finance or create cheap carbon dumps such as large-scale tree plantations in the South as a lucrative alternative to reducing emissions in the North. Other CDM projects, such as hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) -reduction schemes, focus on end-of pipe technologies and thus do nothing to reduce the impact of fossil fuel industries' impacts on local communities. In addition, these projects dwarf the tiny volume of renewable energy projects which constitute the CDM's sustainable development window-dressing.

Impacts from fossil-fuel industries and other greenhouse-gas producing industries such as displacement, pollution, or climate change, are already disproportionately felt by small island states, coastal peoples, indigenous peoples, local communities, fisherfolk, women, youth, poor people, elderly and marginalized communities. CDM projects intensify these impacts in several ways. First, they sanction continued exploration for, and extraction, refining and burning of fossil fuels. Second, by providing finance for private sector projects such as industrial tree plantations, they appropriate land, water and air already supporting the lives and livelihoods of local communities for new carbon dumps for Northern industries.

The refusal to phase out the use of coal, oil and gas, which is further entrenched by carbon trading, is also causing more and more military conflicts around the world, magnifying social and environmental injustice. This in turn diverts vast resources to military budgets which could otherwise be utilized to support economies based on renewable energies and energy efficiency.

In addition to these injustices, the internal weaknesses and contradictions of carbon trading are in fact likely to make global warming worse rather than "mitigate" it. CDM projects, for instance, cannot be verified to be "neutralizing" any given quantity of fossil fuel extraction and burning. Their claim to be able to do so is increasingly dangerous because it creates the illusion that consumption and production patterns, particularly in the North, can be maintained without harming the climate.

In addition, because of the verification problem, as well as a lack of a credible regulation, no one in the CDM market is likely to be sure what they are buying. Without a viable commodity to trade, the CDM market and similar private sector trading schemes are a total waste of time when the world has a critical climate crisis to address.

In an absurd contradiction the World Bank facilitates these false, market-based approaches to climate change through its Prototype Carbon Fund, the BioCarbon Fund and the Community Development Carbon Fund at the same time it is promoting, on a far greater scale, the continued exploration for, and extraction and burning of fossil fuels - many of which are to ensure increased emissions of the North.

In conclusion, 'giving carbon a price' will not prove to be any more effective, democratic, or conducive to human welfare, than giving genes, forests, biodiversity or clean rivers a price.

We reaffirm that drastic reductions in emissions from fossil fuel use are a pre-requisite if we are to avert the climate crisis. We affirm our responsibility to coming generations to seek real solutions that are viable and truly sustainable and that do not sacrifice marginalized communities.

We therefore commit ourselves to help build a global grassroots movement for climate justice, mobilize communities around the world and pledge our solidarity with people opposing carbon trading on the ground.

Signed 10 October 2004
Glenmore Centre, Durban, South Africa

Socialist Project Pension Forum

Herman Rosenfeld

On Sunday, April 11th, the Socialist Project and the Ontario Left Labour Network organized a day long forum on *Pensions and the Labour Movement: Challenges, Needs and Strategies*. This was the first of a planned series of discussions to be organized over the next year on issues affecting the working class. The purpose of the forum was to address a number of challenges: the ongoing attacks on public pensions in both Canada and the US; threats to workers from restructuring and workplace closures; and efforts to have some voice in the administration and control of public sector worker pension plans.

The initial panel included Chris Rude, teaching at York and formerly of the New School in New York City, and Cara MacDonald, from the Canadian Auto Workers Pension and Benefits Department.

Rude debunked the Bush administration's claims to prevent the potential insolvency of the Social Security public pension system in the US, as nothing more than an effort to delegitimize and undermine the system. Partial privatization of individual social security accounts – one of the options Bush is pushing – would bankrupt the trust fund set up to supposedly protect the system. The proposed reforms would also seriously affect the 25% of US wage earners who now rely on the public pensions system for 70% of the replacement costs of their previous income.

Rude argued that the system's solvency can be addressed by increasing the wages of US workers and reducing the unemployment rate. Even more, he called on the left to pose its own approach for improving public pensions. Ultimately, "we should call for what we need to live, not for a percentage of our market incomes."

The CAW's MacDonald began her presentation by describing the centrality of the public pension system in Canada, for providing protection that is portable, efficient, with broad coverage and under public control. As well, it has played a major role in reducing poverty for seniors. No one 'gave' Canadians the public pension system – it was the result of a long and bitter struggle led by Labour unions, churches, anti-poverty and social justice groups.

MacDonald talked about efforts to undermine the public system, through the popularization of an anti-state and pro-market ideology, and the tying of CPP investments to the stock market. She called this an "agenda to transfer billions of dollars from public control to the financial industry and weaken the collective voice."

After a series of questions and comments from partici-

pants, the second panel, made up of Kevin Skerritt, from the Canadian Union of Public Employees' research department; Rolf Gerstenberger, President of the Steelworkers Local 1005 at Stelco, in Hamilton; and Jim Stanford, an economist with the CAW, began.

Skerritt addressed the situation of public sector unions that are involved in jointly managed, multi-employer pension funds. He began with a critique of the ideological claim that that worker participation in pension fund management somehow signifies a progressive modification of the system. Pension funds are not a tool for challenging capital and it is illusory to think that workers can find capitalists who are more "ethical" or progressive than others. On the other hand, he described how worker joint management of pension funds can be used to oppose corrupt efforts by employers to skim-off benefits that should be going into workers' pension cheques. Ultimately, Skerritt called for more public and less employer based pension plans and for defence and strengthening of the public system. Where there are jointly-managed plans, there should at least be an "anti-neoliberal" investment policy. The state should play a greater role in regulating

"No one 'gave' Canadians the public pension system – it was the result of a long and bitter struggle..."

corrupt practises.

Gerstenberger described the struggle to defend the pensions of the 3500 workers at Stelco's Hilton Workers in Hamilton in the face of the corporation's CCAA situation. Stelco demanded a 20% cut in wages and benefits and the local leadership refused, forcing the Steelworkers' to back them up. Gerstenberger began a series of weekly meetings with the membership that strengthened their resolve and confidence. This was crucial, as the local has so far successfully prevented the company from imposing the kind of mass attack on pensions that workers in the US steel industry were forced to accept. As Gersenger noted, "we didn't want to give in to the pressure to give up "legacy costs", in order to be competitive."

The day finished off with Jim Stanford, the left economist from the CAW. Stanford described the CAW's upcoming campaign on worker pensions. He talked about the fact that, "pensions are important to workers, something we can mobilize around." The campaign includes a new "Pension Charter, and demands to support defined benefit plans; public pensions; laws to force employers to develop pension plans; legislated protection for workers' pensions, among others. **R**



Once More Around with the Liberals:

Influence, Corruption and the Gomery Inquiry

Robert MacDermid

At the center of the Gomery inquiry are important questions that get lost in the daily drama of testimony from past and current prime ministers, cabinet ministers, top political advisors, top bureaucrats and ad company executives made rich by the sponsorship program. The cast is a reality TV producer's dream of power and ego, backroom

figures, entrepreneurs and a lot of money. And all in the setting of 'saving a nation' – the scandalous use of Federal moneys to influence Quebec voters – mixed with a bit of saving themselves. Throw into that mix the effect of testimony on a Liberal minority government that plays a daily game of manipulating House of Commons'

procedure to prolong its life and it is not surprising that some things get little attention.

The Auditor General's Report of November 2003 on the Sponsorship Program started the Inquiry and still poses its central questions. Almost eight months into the hearings we are not a great deal closer to answers or identifying those responsible for the wrongdoing Sheila Fraser identified. The Report found that the Sponsorship Program was largely hidden, that is kept *secret*, from Parliament and elected representatives; that the government broke its own rules in awarding contracts; that money going to ad firms was routed through Crown corporations in an attempt to hide its final destination; that documentation that supported the expenditures of \$250 million dollars was inadequate or missing, possibly with the intent to avoid access to information requests; that something like \$100 million dollars in commissions may have been paid to predatory advertising firms; and that financial oversight procedures completely failed to "detect, prevent or report violations."

The way administrative procedures and laws were ignored calls into question yet again the new public management mantra of neo-liberal 'reforms' that has swept through Ottawa in the last 20 years slashing government capacity and jobs and replacing those with contracted out services with the promise of costs savings and the boast of better service delivery. Similar neo-liberal reforms in previous federal and provincial administrations have coincided with growing government secrecy, 'self-regulation,' poor financial oversight, lack of political accountability and the corruption of the democratic process. Canadians have not forgotten the influence peddling and corruption charges that ended the



Nicholas Kahn &
Richard Selesnick

last Mulroney Conservative administration.

The Inquiry has demonstrated that the rules governing the awarding of contracts were not followed – a very old and recurring story in Ottawa. What emerges from this and other audits, shows that governments are often unable, perhaps sometimes even unwilling, to exercise proper control over the quality and cost of the services being delivered by private contractors. The promised savings due to efficiencies are increasingly in need of demonstration. If governments cannot properly specify the terms of simple advertising tasks and oversee the provision of those services how can we expect the same thing to be done for much more complex tasks?

The way in which key figures in the scandal ignored the requirements to register as lobbyists and then showed surprise when the Commissioner suggested they could be liable for large fines indicates that attempts to control lobbying have been only partly effective and maybe even illusory. As the contracting out of services has increased, lobbyists have multiplied with apparently diminished disclosure of their activities. The Register has had limited value but it did hold the promise of the disclosure of all lobbying activities, that fig leaf is surely gone now.

The need for better whistle blower protection legislation is obvious. The current government's stalled promise to pass this legislation is not likely to come to much and the legislation itself has been criticized for being too weak. There is a complicated relationship between public servants, cabinet ministers, those minister's responsibilities to the House of Commons and the responsibility that both elected politicians and less clearly, public servants have to Canadian citizens. Whether we

ever did or could have a public service where employees feel sufficiently protected to speak out when the greater good is being ignored is a complicated question, but this scandal shows that such a goal is even further from reality.

The Auditor's Report and the Gomery Inquiry have underlined the growing climate of secrecy in Ottawa. Vital information about the Sponsorship Program was hidden in a calculated way from both access to information inquiries and from the Auditor General. This is not a new trend. As more and more government services are contracted out, public oversight is sacrificed to the secrecy 'required' to protect 'competitive' advantage.

Witnesses at the inquiry have admitted to breaking Federal and Quebec party and campaign finance laws. There have been admissions that employees were given money to give to the Liberal party or asked to make contributions in return for later reimbursement in the form of bonuses, a practice that is a violation of election finance law that requires contributors to contribute their own funds. The inquiry also heard that companies paid salaries to individuals who did nothing but work for the Liberal party or its Quebec branch. Large contributions were also allegedly made to the Parti Quebecois and the Liberal party of Quebec in apparent violation of Quebec provincial campaign finance laws that prohibit contributions from corporations and limit contributions from individuals to a maximum of \$3,000. And there has been some contested testimony that contractors were asked for kickbacks to the party in return for securing contracts.

These kinds of abuses of the law shouldn't surprise anyone. I once had a Conservative party bagman describe to me the illegal practice of giving money to employees to give to the Tory

party in return for claiming the tax credit that could amount to hundreds of dollars. The surprise isn't that these things happen, it is that they happen so casually, so openly, so ordinarily that they reveal a belief that any limitations on money in politics are somehow illegitimate. And for 'national unity' in Quebec after the 1990s referenda, apparently anything goes.

All the above lawbreaking will confirm for many the futility of rules that try to produce ethical behaviour and thwart no-holds barred market behaviour in government and public service. The long history of corruption and scandal reaching back to Confederation and in more recent times including provincial administrations is BC, Saskatchewan, and Ontario, is evidence that this is endemic in liberal democracies. Continuing to expose the ineffectiveness of rules that are meant to separate the market from government will serve to show them inextricably intertwined.

Perhaps no less futile was the underlying rationale of the Sponsorship Program, the contemptuous notion that Quebecois could be converted to federalism by print ads and Canada sign and logo displays. Could anyone see this as a serious policy for dealing with the legitimate and democratic aspirations of Canadian citizens living in Quebec for self-determination? Can we really advertise others out of claims to sovereignty? It is this bankrupt notion and the reaction of Quebec voters to it that may well be the lasting legacy of the whole affair. **R**

Robert Macdermid teaches political science and is active in the York University Faculty Association.

The Empire & Neo-liberalism:

Here, There & Everywhere

Bryan Evans



The launch of the **2005 Socialist Register** gave rise to two important events on the Toronto left in March with each attracting more than a hundred participants. The first, of course, was the **Socialist Register** itself and the second was the Phyllis Clarke Annual Memorial Lecture.

The 2005 **Socialist Register**, entitled **The Empire Reloaded**, builds upon the themes of the previous year's volume by presenting a number of case studies unpacking the ways and means by which the new imperialism penetrates the major regions of the world. A panel discussion, chaired by the **Register's** co-editor Leo Panitch (with Colin Leys), introduced the key theme which link the two editions. That is, U.S. imperialism is most marked not so much by its military power as the extent to which the U.S. state itself has penetrated other states and economies.

Sam Gindin posed the question: "Is the American empire in decline?". He argued that the American empire is clearly not strong enough to meet the needs of people, nor is it powerful enough to prevent crises. Yet it remains strong and powerful enough to *contain* any resistance and to *manage* the crises so as to limit their duration and spread. This capacity is based on both the structural depth of the American empire and the relative weakness of the American working class (which leaves the American state with a great deal of room to maneuver when crises seem to be emerging).

The point is that we cannot base our politics on an abstract theory of 'inevi-

table' capitalist crises or on momentary economic facts like an American trade deficit; crises cannot be understood apart from the dominance of the American empire and the state of the class struggle. The issue is to find an appropriate politics that moves people to take on capitalism independent of any crises. If we cannot – given the everyday failures of capitalism to meet our needs and its barrier to bringing out the best in us – activate ourselves now, a new 'crises' is hardly going to put us in motion (and it may in fact only make people long for the earlier period of relative stability). The crisis, in short, is not so much that of the American empire as that of the left.

Focusing on the cultural dimension, Scott Forsyth discussed Hollywood's global domination as a key feature of American imperialism's strength – the 'soft power' of cultural imperialism but also the leading edge of giant media transnationals – with record revenues from films to TV to music to fashion to electronics and domination of most national cultural markets. In the characteristic blockbuster action films that define Hollywood now, America is always 'reloaded' – always mighty and victorious – but also 'overloaded' – vulnerable and weak, in need of superhero rescue.

Varda Burstyn noted that in today's world many of the features of George Orwell's novel *1984* and Aldous Huxley's futurist book *Brave New World*, long thought to be counterposed visions, coexist and mutually reinforce one another. From *1984* we have dire

poverty of the majorities; obscene wealth and control of a tiny elite; brutal repression – death and torture in the colonies; a gulag system of prisons in the U.S.; constant war with friends who were enemies, rationalized by a real juggernaut of a propaganda system (embedded journalism, monopoly controlled journalism and fake, government generated journalism); and, more and more, a surveillance society, both governmental and commercial, that would have made Orwell's Inner Party – the tiny elite that ruled in *1984* – drool with envy.

From *Brave New World*, we have consumerism as a way of life, and with this, a refinement of marketing, using the most advanced scientific and medical tools, that truly achieves the mental conditioning and manipulation of Huxley's world; seductive, mind-numbing soma culture and the developing technologies that could make the eugenic bio-classes of Huxley's world a reality. However, she argued, prescient as these authors were, neither foresaw in their futures the scope, the depth and the terror of the crisis of our biosphere.

She concluded by saying that given these problems, there has never been a stronger argument for socialism. However, simply putting forward the idea of socialism as economic redistribution and social justice would not be enough to win away the hearts and minds of large numbers of people from neo-liberalism. Only a new vision, a *visionary* vision, of a green, just, economy, would be sufficient to break

the ideological defeatism of “there is no alternative.” So the socialist movement must, she declared, transform itself as it seeks to transform the world.

Ursula Huws characterized the past quarter century as one where we have been all-but submerged by the destructive tsunami of neo-liberalism. Ideas which once seemed far-fetched when pronounced by Reagan and Thatcher became progressively accepted as not just normal but self-evident as we heard them repeated by international organisations like the IMF and the World Bank, then by centrist political parties and bodies like the EU, then by social democrats like Blair and Schroeder and now even from the mouths of trade unionists and governments we thought were progressive and anti-imperialist like those of South Africa or Vietnam.

And while our welfare states and ‘commons’ were being devastated, what were our intellectuals doing? Were they putting forward clear and rational critiques of this vandalism? Unfortunately for the most part they were not. As the wave of destruction swept through our public

spaces, a parallel tsunami of deconstruction crashed through our universities. Far from being places where knowledge is shared and freedoms are protected and counter-arguments are developed, they have become Balkanized sites of commodification, confusion and competitiveness.

Robert Pollin, who also gave the Phyllis Clarke Lecture at Ryerson, asked “Is the U.S. empire today operating from strength or weakness?”. There are strong elements of both, and the overall answer depends on one’s perspective. The U.S. economy is weak in terms of its capacity to generate broadly-based well-being. The growth of GDP, and especially, of jobs, was dismal in Bush’s first Presidential term.

Officially-measured poverty has been rising every year under Bush relative to the previous Clinton administration. The U.S. is running large trade and fiscal deficits, and this is exerting heavy downward pressure on the U.S. dollar. The occupation of Iraq has been an ongoing fiasco. The U.S./IMF-led push for global neo-liberal economic policies has produced slower economic

growth, increasing global inequality, and more poverty (the case of China is the exception here, but China doesn’t operate under neo-liberal policies). But from the other perspective one primary reason the U.S. is running a large fiscal deficit is that the Bush administration has succeeded in cutting taxes for the rich.

The other reason is that he is financing the Iraq war while simultaneously cutting taxes on the rich. He has managed to do these things and still get re-elected as President.

U.S.-based multinational corporations are experiencing high profits; and the more the U.S. exerts itself militarily, the stronger the position of U.S. firms in the global economy. Global neo-liberalism remains ascendant as an economic policy approach. In short, the U.S. government, and U.S. capitalism more broadly, are successful today in their goals of increasing power and generating rising profits globally. But in the process of achieving these ends, conditions are worsening for working people and the poor, both in the U.S. and globally. Thus, the real answer to the question as to whether the U.S. is strong or weak depends on the extent to which popular resistance builds against U.S. imperial power and the global neo-liberal regime. To the extent the resistance builds, the capacity of the U.S. empire to operate will unravel.

It must be said that the images and tone set by the various speakers left one feeling rather overwhelmed by the magnitude of the challenge the socialist left confronts at this moment in history. There was a sense of ‘heavy air above’ as the participants dispersed. One newcomer to such events and socialist politics in general commented “well, what do we do?”. And is that not the perennial question of the cause that never dies? Perhaps another edition of the **Socialist Register** will respond. The critical analysis is indispensable. Though so armed, the question remains – ‘what is to be done?’. **R**



The Death of Pope John Paul II

Carolyn Watson interviews
Aurelio Alonso Tejada in Havana

On Saturday 2 April 2005 Pope John Paul II passed away, not long after suffering heart failure during treatment for an infection. The media that had been reporting the Pope's declining health immediately began coverage of candlelight vigils, memorial masses celebrated worldwide, and ultimately his funeral. The impact of John Paul II's death was felt around the world. In Havana Cuba, where I had arrived only hours before the Pope's death, there was a memorial mass held the following day in the Cathedral San Cristobal attended by Fidel Castro. To gain a broader understanding of what the death of a Pope, John Paul II in particular, really meant I decided to interview Cuba's foremost scholar of the Catholic Church, Aurelio Alonso Tejada. The text that follows has been taken from our conversation.

What is the significance of the Pope's death for the Catholic Church?

The death of a pope has always been important for the Catholic Church as an institution. Catholicism is perhaps the religion as an institution most political with a conception of power throughout its history, so the death of a pope signifies the end of one period and the beginning of another. John Paul II has had a great significance in a socio-political context because his papacy coincided with the rise of neoliberalism, the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe, although it has not disappeared entirely, and he has therefore been creative, laborious, intelligent, and productive in this field. What happened after 1990 in Europe with the collapse of socialism was not what the Pope hoped for. The situation in Eastern Europe turned into savage capitalism with the mafia not only in Russia but in Poland, his country that he visited frequently. So he had to change his discourse in many ways because of the level of deception in what happened. He was very reactionary, very conservative, but he did rectify some things with an objective reason. This of course does not change the damage he has done to the left.

How are new Popes elected and what are your thoughts on possible candidates?

John Paul II's replacement will be chosen from among all the cardinals, however, during his papacy John Paul II made a point of not promoting members of the Church further to the left than himself. This practice means that regardless of who is elected, he will not be more progressive than the previous pope, but he could be more conservative.

The most likely candidates are the Italian cardinals, followed by the European cardinals, and then the North American cardinals. Although Latin America actually has the largest number of cardinals in a particular geographic region, it is not likely that any of them would be elected because the papacy has been traditionally North-centric and in particular inclined toward Italy. There is also a prejudice toward candidates from the third world. The last forty-five popes before John Paul II were all Italian and there is a desire to return the papacy to the Italians who have dominated it for the last five hundred years. The new pope will have to be someone from the local churches, one of the bishops, not someone from the bureaucracy because John Paul II set a precedent in travelling extensively, and being in contact with people not only in the Church, but also with the people of those regions.

Can you foresee any major changes in Latin America as a result of John Paul II's death?

It is difficult to say whether a new Pope could have a significant impact in Latin America. The Bolivarian Revolution and Hugo Chavez are catalysts for real, fundamental change in the politics of the region, which the Church could see as problematic in the region. The probability of the Sandinistas being elected again in Nicaragua could also have a significant impact on regional politics. Another possible source of discontent for the Catholic Church and the new Pope is the potential for Cuba, Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina to form a socio-political pact that would create solidarity between progressive-left governments. This kind of movement could provoke some kind of reaction from the Vatican, which is the most conservative it has been since before Vatican II. John Paul II took measures to avoid the possibility of there being space for Marxism or revolutionary movements, not only through what he said, as happened in Nicaragua, but in who has been appointed to higher levels of the Church hierarchy. The local churches would, therefore, follow the line of the Vatican.

What has the Pope's death meant for Cuba?

The death of John Paul II will not change anything in Cuba. Because of the measures he took throughout his papacy to maintain a conservative political position, there will most likely be some continuity with regard to the Church's attitude toward Cuba and the revolution. The Church has



always been involved in the politics of Cuba, and that is unlikely to change, but the amount of influence that it has had since the revolution has been very limited and will continue to be so. There was a perception that the Pope's visit to Cuba in 1998 would put an end to the revolution, but that was just media speculation. As far as the Cuban people are concerned, what people felt when John Paul II passed away was an emotional and social connection to his visit. The majority of Cubans who went to the Plaza of the Revolution to see the Pope went to see the spectacle as a form of internal tourism, not because they were all devout Catholics, although there were some.

As Aurelio Alonso made clear to me during the course of our conversation, the death of Pope John Paul II raises more than just the question of succession. Progressive or left members of the Church have not been promoted to positions of influence, let alone power, which has meant that in the last twenty-five years the little space there once was for revolutionary or Marxist movements no longer exists. This could have a profound impact in regions such as Latin America where there has been a recent revival of left-progressive politics at the national level, were the Church to become involved in internal or external attempts to contain them. Only time will tell. But the continuity with conservative fundamentalism represented by the election of the German Cardinal Ratzinger as the new Pope Benedict XVI is hardly promising.

Ratzinger was elected Pope in the third round of elections (there can be as many as six rounds). Ratzinger's name had come up during my conversation with Alonso Tejada, however, he quickly discounted Ratzinger as a likely candidate for being more conservative and reactionary than anyone else in the Church. Alonso Tejada also believed that he had burned too many bridges as Cardinal to receive enough votes to be elected Pope. In a recently written article titled "Bush in Washington and Ratzinger in Rome," Alonso Tejada has explained this surprising choice as a decision to get closer to the President in Washington. In spite of many of his past errors in judgement, John Paul II was critical of the US, most

recently regarding the war in Iraq. Alonso Tejada believes that a growing deficit in the Vatican and a desire on the part of the US presidency to at least have someone in Rome acritical of its international policy, has led to what appears to be an unlikely alliance.

Ratzinger for his part, has already begun to hint at the direction he will take the Church. The name he has chosen for his papacy is Benedict XVI. Benedict XV was Pope between 1914 and 1922, the same period which saw Benito Mussolini's rise to power, with the support of the Catholic Church. Following this period, World War II erupted, accompanied by the Holocaust. During this period the Vatican was known for its conspicuous lack of sympathy for Jews trying to escape Nazi Germany and occupied territories. These kinds of Vatican-political alliances have also continued into the more recent past, as occurred in the 1980s between Ronald Regan and John Paul II. Can the developing world survive another such alliance? It is of course entirely possible that Ratzinger's election could produce a backlash among Catholics and Catholic churches in developing regions that could create more progressive trends or tendencies within the Church. But, was Ratzinger not part of Germany's Hitler Youth? **R**

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Socialism With Religion

Report by Carolyn Watson

When Fidel Castro delivered his first speech in the city of Santa Clara a few days after the triumph of the 1959 revolution, someone released a handful of white doves into the crowd. One of the doves landed on Fidel's shoulder and remained there as he spoke. To practitioners of Santería, an African-derived religion, this event presaged a positive future for Cuba. In Santería, white represents Obatalá, the son of God. The white dove landing on Fidel's shoulder was a sign that he had been chosen by the gods or orishas to lead Cuba. As well, the colours of the flag belonging to the 26 July Movement were red and black, the colours of Elegguá, the orisha of the crossroads. Elegguá's presence meant fundamental change. The *santeros* were on the side of the revolution.

The above vignette serves to illustrate several important points that Jorge Ramírez Calzadilla, Aurelio Alonso Tejada, Aníbal Argüelles Medero, and Juana Berges, four Cuban scholars of religion who gave a presentation on socialism and religion 31 March at OISE, sought to emphasize: religious expression was not suppressed, nor did it wither away after the triumph of the revolution; religious practice and belief has always been and continues to be very diverse in Cuba; and practitioners of popular religions were frequently the most enthusiastic supporters of the Cuban Revolution.

One of the most important reasons that practitioners of popular religions eagerly supported the revolution, Jorge Ramírez Calzadilla explained, was because they were often among the poorest and most marginalized of Cuban society and benefitted greatly from the revolution's programs that sought to create equality. Significantly, because popular religions in Cuba arose from within a group of people and did not emanate from a dominant, hierar-

chical institution, although they may have had roots in such a religious tradition, there were no conflicts or hostilities originating with a remote and centralized leadership that considered the Cuban Revolution a challenge to its authority.

All four speakers pointed out, however, that, while people were free to believe and practice the religion of their choice, believers were not allowed to join the Communist Party until 1991 when the Party Congress determined that believers could also be socialists and revolutionaries. Aurelio Alonso Tejada indicated that the policy of not allowing believers to form part of the Communist Party had been inherited from the Soviet Union decades earlier and was rectified after its collapse. Today, belief in any religious tradition will not prevent anyone from joining the Communist Party.

As well as providing the Toronto audience with information that the scholars thought important to convey, they also addressed issues raised by the audience during the question period. One question dealt with women's role and place in Cuban society and the ways in which Cubans dealt with this tension. Juana Berges responded first by stating that women as a sector have been the focus of the most attention, received the most discussion, and generated the most policy during the course of the revolution. This is not to say, she insisted, that Cuban women do not still face challenges and contradictions. For example, during the Special Period it was, and still is, often the women who left careers and returned to the home in order to help sustain the family, while the men remained in their positions or found other work. With regard to religion, however, Berges noted the large number of female ministers in different Protestant religions and saw this as an important gain for women in terms

of prominence and leadership in society, as well as in their religious communities.

Aníbal Argüelles Medero also highlighted a recent trend in Santería that is giving more prominence to women. Traditionally only men are allowed to become babalaos or high priests and, until recently, only babalaos could use certain methods of divination and initiate people into the religion. Now, however, women are beginning to learn and practice divinatory methods that they were previously restricted from exercising. Women are also now able to initiate people into Santería, although they are still unable to become babalaos. It appears that the extensive discussion and legislation directed at women and to solving at least some of the obstacles they have traditionally faced over the last forty-six years have had a substantial impact in reforming institutions whose leadership has been customarily dominated by men.

Another interesting question dealt with the diversity of religions in Cuba. Ramírez Calzadilla listed some unexpected practices such as New Age, Rastafarianism, and Islam as small but growing religions in the island. Although, due to as yet small numbers of adherents, these newer religions often lack houses of worship, such as a mosque, Ramírez Calzadilla assured the audience that all were free to worship in the buildings available to them, which are often private homes at the present time.

Perhaps the most valuable element of the evening was the ability of the four scholars to put developments among socialism and religion into a historical context that offered some explanation as to why certain things occurred and how they were able to transpire in the way they did. **R**

Venezuela, We Are With You: New Coalition Founded

nchamah miller

In Toronto on April 13th 2005, more than 150 persons gathered to commemorate the anniversary of President Chavez' triumphant return to the Presidency of Venezuela following a failed coup d'état attempt by his political opponents three years ago. The celebration marked the massive and unconditional outpouring of Venezuelan's to the streets demanding the release of their democratically elected leader, who had been sequestered by an alliance of leading business figures and rogue officers, with the tacit support of the US government.

At the same time, history was made in Toronto at the April 13th gathering by drawing all four corners of the left and parts of the centre to form a new Bolivarian coalition in support of the struggle of the Venezuelan people. They partook in a cultural-political event in full camaraderie, with speeches from the Venezuelan consular office and Bolivarian activists, cultural performances, as well as a film on the political situation in Venezuela. This wide front underlies the recognition of the importance of the social and political processes taking place in

Venezuela, the ripple effect of these changes in Latin America, and the nexus for political radicalization of the political landscape in Canada.

The Bolivarian Revolution is galvanizing left and centrist political forces in Canada often fragmented by the petty protagonisms of some of their cadres. Not that everyone accepts all the events in Venezuela uncritically. But the message of unity for action is not falling on deaf ears in Canada. Montreal has also formed a coalition of forces to commemorate April 13th and Vancouver will likely follow suit. **R**

Toronto Declaration

In December 1999, a new constitution, proposed by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, was overwhelmingly ratified in a country-wide referendum (receiving almost 80 per cent of the votes cast). This is just one of eight occasions since 1998 where the people of Venezuela have democratically indicated their support for Chavez. Several of these elections, and the most recent Presidential Referendum, were monitored and endorsed by international election observers from around the world (including Canadians), and the Organization of American States.

In response to the most recent victory for Chavez (defeating a recall referendum in August of 2004), Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, wrote in a letter to Chavez: "We laud your efforts to strengthen the Venezuelan constitution

and your commitment to end decades of social exclusion for the majority of poor Venezuelans. We reject the strategies adopted by your adversaries and the intervention of outside powers to support them."

The August recall referendum was just one of a series of attempts — supported by business and the rich in Venezuela and with the tacit backing of the United States — to remove Chavez from office — most dramatically in a military *coup* in April of 2002, which only failed after a massive, popular uprising by workers and the poor in Venezuela, whose overwhelming support for Chavez forced the *coup* leaders to back down.

Therefore, we the Coalition "Venezuela We Are With You" have come together with the following aims:

To oppose any foreign political, economic and military intervention into the affairs of the Venezuelan people;

To support the Venezuelan people's right to self-determination;

To counter the misinformation about the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela coming from the mass media;

To call on social, labour and political organizations in Canada to support the democratic and social achievements of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela;

To call on the Canadian government to, a) promote aid and trade with Venezuela; and b) oppose intervention by the United States or other foreign powers into the political affairs of Venezuela.

- Asociacion Ixim-Uleu
- Canada-Cuba Friendship Association
- CASA Salvador Allende
- Center for Social Justice
- Circulo Bolivariano "Manuelita Saenz"
- Coalition Against War and Racism
- Colombia Action Committee
- Comite de Base EP-Frente Amplio

- (Uruguay)- Toronto
- Comite de Base FMLN- Toronto
- Communist Party of Canada
- Free the Cuban Five Committee – Toronto
- Fightback
- Guatemala Community Network- Toronto
- Hands Off Venezuela Campaign- Toronto
- International Socialists

- JVP Canada (Sri Lanka)
- Partido Comunista de Chile-Toronto
- Socialist Action
- "Socialist Alternative - Committee for a Workers International"
- Socialist Project
- Socialist Voice
- Socialist Youth

It's Back:

The Anti-war Movement Regains Its Vitality

Ernest Tate

The March 19th day of global protest against the occupation of Iraq demonstrates again that the international anti-war movement remains a vital component of the resistance against American aggression in Iraq. As has been the case since the war began, popular support around the world for resistance to the war seems to be proportional to the various governments' closeness to the American government or to the degree of divisions in the left about how to campaign against the war.

Approximately 2500 turned out in Toronto (more on that later), but in London, England, over 100,000 rallied in Trafalgar Square, greater than many had expected, but down substantially from the incredible 2,000,000 prior to the invasion. Next to the U.S., Britain is the main occupying power in Iraq. In Rome, 80,000 mobilized, even though Berlusconi is now making noises about pulling Italy out.

There was no mass mobilization against the war in Paris, France; but many activists travelled to Brussels, Belgium, to participate in a protest against "neo-liberalism and the war", part of the European left's campaign against the proposed European Constitution and against attacks upon social programmes. The absence of specific activities mobilizing against the war in France reflects political differences over this issue between two of the major left political groups in Europe, the International Socialists in Britain and the League Communiste Revolutionnaire in France, about the relative importance of the anti-war struggle for the anti-capitalist left. Over the past three months, France has seen a rise in class-consciousness amongst working people.

In the United States, the anti-war movement organized protests in 735

towns and cities, twice the number of the previous year, and included a protest of approximately 4500, organized by United Peace and Justice (UPJ) in La Fayetteville, North Carolina, significantly, home of the 2nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, which is active in Iraq. Approximately 20,000 mobilized in San Francisco, with another 25,000 demonstrating in Los Angeles (but we should be cautious with these figures; there has been a tendency of the organizers to over-estimate the numbers). In New York, where the movement is divided between the UPJ and Act Now To Stop War and Racism (ANSWER), the latter initiated a rally of 4500 in Central Park after a march led by black activists from Harlem down the centre of Manhattan. The UPJ did not support this activity. The previous year's protest had 100,000. Aside from the divisions in the movement leading to a lower response, it would also seem that the pro-war consensus built by John Kerry in last year's Presidential campaign has yet to breakdown. Many anti-war activists, including leaders of UPJ, supported Kerry as "the lesser evil".

In Toronto, 2,500 rallied, a substantial reduction from last year's approximately 7,000. Even though there were anti-war protests in twenty seven communities across Canada, the movement is experiencing a lull. We saw this last summer when the Coalitions' emergency protests outside the American Consulate drew fewer and fewer people.

Shortly before the scheduled start of the March 19th rally, with only a scattering of people in City Hall Square, there was concern among the organizers that the event would be very small. But then, in a feeder march, several hundred students, carrying their ban-

ners and placards, poured into the square, lifting the spirits of everyone with their infectious enthusiasm. This was followed by groups of trade-unionists, many with Steelworkers and Canadian Autoworkers' banners and flags. They had packed the Steelworkers Hall for an anti-war breakfast meeting sponsored by the Steelworkers' Toronto Area Council with support of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council.

When the crowd around the speakers' platform began to swell, happiness could be seen on the faces of many activists in the Coalition. The experience for most of the people who participated was worthwhile and positive. It also showed that the anti-war movement in the Toronto area is very much a political fact of life.

The Toronto protest was more significant than the low numbers indicated, however, as it was notable for a high proportion of youth and a good feeling of optimism and solidarity. In the weeks before the action, Coalition activists could see that the immigrant community was not responding as it had on previous occasions. The Mosques had not mobilized as in the past.

It's possible the recent elections in Iraq — orchestrated by the imperial occupier — may have caused uncertainty and hesitation among sectors of the immigrant communities, who in the past turned out in large numbers. And it is also a fact that, in the eyes of many, the massive, world-wide opposition to the war seems to have had limited effect on the course of war, re-enforcing the notion that seemingly, it's impossible to influence American policy. Nevertheless, there has been

an important cultural shift in Canada about Iraq. And aware that it could be a “wedge” issue in the next election, the Martin government has shifted away from participation in the American Star Wars missile defense system – after a fight in parliament led by the NDP — and has turned down the American request for active military participation in Iraq, even though Canada, in an understanding with the Bush administration, has 1200 troops in Afghanistan to take the pressure off the U.S. there.

In the weeks ahead, the anti-war movement will be making an assessment of the recent March 19th activities. In this discussion, we should be cautious about ideas which suggest the reason people have not mobilized is that the activities are not “militant” enough, nor sufficiently confrontational to get media publicity. This was suggested by Walden Bello, executive director of Focus on the Global South, to the Vancouver anti-war rally. These ideas, no matter how well intentioned, tend to ignore the objective factors that weigh

upon us in the broader Canadian society. There are no short-cuts to winning mass support. The only way we will influence government policy on the war is to build the biggest possible opposition among working people. That goal should determine our tactics. We have to be patient. American imperialism, with its arrogance and hubris, will always go too far. It will make mistakes and miscalculations and deepen the unease among the great majority of people about this war.

We must also guard against a narrowing of the Coalition, not only in fact, but in appearances. This is already a risk facing the Toronto movement when Bob Ages, of the Council of Canadians and Susan Sprott of the Canadian Autoworkers - two key people in the Coalition - re-locate to Vancouver. There is a danger that in the present lull, the Coalition will increasingly take on the appearance of being a “front” for its most active and leading organization, the International Socialists, who have played a critical role in building

and leading the movement. This danger could be seen in the I.S.’s enthusiasm for getting people to go to the recent Cairo Conference. In this, the I.S. and the Coalition looked interchangeable.

Over the past year or so, the Toronto movement has been actively campaigning to give moral and political support to obtain asylum for American war resisters who have come to Canada to escape the clutches of the American military. Campaigns expressing such elementary expressions of solidarity are critical and will keep the movement alive. This was seen in the large crowd of activists who mobilized outside a Toronto courthouse recently, to give support to a young man who had come to Canada to escape the war. In the future, we will see many more of these young soldiers in our midst. This will be an important activity of the anti-war movement as the war continues. **R**

Saying No to Neoliberalism in France and Canada

Socialist Project

It has been some time now since there was any major progressive challenge in the western capitalist countries to the anti-social direction of our societies. In France such a challenge is emerging in the form of a ‘NO’ vote in the current French Referendum on the neoliberal-consolidating institutional reforms in the proposed European Union constitution. The business, political and social elite supporters of the constitution are attempting to isolate that opposition by characterizing it as simply backward-looking and nationalist. The continued political pursuit of neoliberalism with the backing of elite opinion is indeed fuelling the insecurity and xenophobia that the hard Right is exploiting. But this should not be mistaken for the political rebellion unfolding in France. And it makes the Left’s resistance to the proposed EU constitution all the more urgent.

There is, once again, the argument

from the ‘YES’ supporters that there is no alternative to further globalization and free market reforms. Much like NAFTA, the proposed European constitution embeds neoliberal ideas as basic law, allowing private property rights and the market to prevail over democracy and national parliaments and sovereignty.

Solidaristic support from abroad for the Left in France against its demonization by the Right for standing against neoliberalism and elite opinion is, in this context, vital. Unions, social movements, and Left political parties in France are leading this inspiring struggle and rejecting the cant that there is no alternative to neoliberalism. They are insisting that the French people have taken an independent course before, can do so again, and that ‘another world is possible’ and it is time to take that direction. Enough is enough. These developments in

France are part of the international frustration with, and an international struggle against, capitalism’s increasingly anti-social nature and the false promises of neoliberalism. This is a critical voice in the global social justice movement reclaiming the terrain of democracy. There is right to say ‘NO’ to neoliberalism in the referendum in France and thus ‘yes’ to social justice.

The struggle in France today for the right to say ‘No’ is a struggle that the Canadian Left and social justice movement knows well from our own struggles against free trade, neoliberalism and the elite forces in favour of globalization. And we support these same struggles in France today in defiance against those who say there is no alternative. **R**

The Mauist Cultural Revolution:

Massive Change as a Neoliberal Utopia

Tanner Mirrlees

For much of the 20th century, there was a belief in the ability of humans to use technology, science, and aesthetics to move society towards a more developed, enlightened, and equitable future. Bourgeois modernists believed in progress, but progress within capitalism. Faster cars, more aerodynamic can-openers, and advertising images for the latest commodities all registered as signs of modern progress for the bourgeoisie. For socialist modernists, this bourgeois conception of progress was impoverished. Real social progress meant directing technology, science, and aesthetics toward the abolishment of the social relations of capitalism. Social change occurred when working peoples needs were met, when working people moved beyond the limitations of capitalism.

Today, the ideal of massive socialist change, so popular during the modern era, has been undercut by postmodern doctrine, which supports a number of politically debilitating claims: we can't make distinctions between true and false, right and wrong, good and bad, because everything is relative. =We, schizophrenic and child-like, are unable to historicize our present class identities, let alone imagine and struggle toward a post-capital-

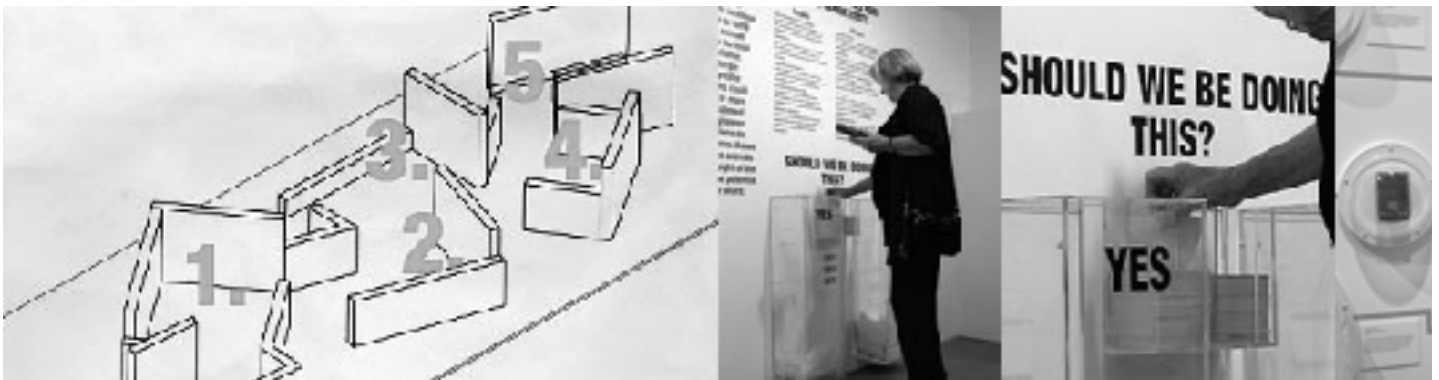
ist future. Politics (with a capital P) is dead, the market rules the world (and so what?), and a socialist praxis that is oriented by the possibility of a massively different future will fail (if not lead to "totalitarianism").

The popularity of the postmodern doctrine has diminished since its initial embrace by academics in North America and Western Europe in the last quarter of the 20th century. From the remnants of the postmodern condition, a nostalgia for a bourgeois conception of technological, scientific, and aesthetic progress has emerged. This modernist nostalgia pre-ordains utopia and imagines social revolution but is devoid of a political desire to challenge and move beyond capitalism. Such nostalgia characterizes curator Bruce Mau and the Institute Without Boundaries' most recent cultural production: *Massive Change*. The exhibition is comprised of a pricey book (published by Phaidon Press) a new line of Umbra kitchen-ware commodities (four tumblers, four bowls and four plates inscribed with consumable statistics about biodiversity and urban growth), a visually stunning art-exhibit (commissioned by the Vancouver Art Gallery, now showing at the Art Gallery of Ontario), and an in-house marketing

campaign (that raised attendance at the Vancouver Art Gallery by 20%). *Massive Change* desires to change the world without massively changing capitalism.

The *Massive Change* art exhibit features eleven thematic gallery-like installations or what Mau appropriately calls "design economies." Each gallery showcases how design is integrated with and responds to a variety of the world's humanitarian and developmental challenges. The "Urban Gallery" responds to the deterioration of urban life with giant glass spheres containing images of city sprawl, pollution and homelessness. Graphed on to each sphere are humanistic questions such as "How can we provide shelter for the entire world?" and "How can cities be sustainable?" Behind these glass spheres, a five-minute video is repeatedly projected onto a 56ft long cityscape sculpture. This gallery asks important questions of its audiences, but dilutes the political and economic causes of urban decay. The neo-liberal policies that have decimated municipal ministries, withdrawn funding from social programs, and normalized homelessness and unemployment, are mystified by this gallery's postmodern qua humanist work.

The "Information Gallery,"



with information input devices of all kinds (telephones, headsets, computers) mounted on the wall, resembles a Bell outlet at the local shopping mall. This gallery evokes the global villagism of Marshall McLuhan with its tacit belief that information technology is eradicating territorial divisions and connecting all humanity. Such McLuhanesque imaginings are debunked by “The Aviation Wall,” which graphically illustrates the imperialistic concentration of information technology and media within North American and Western European countries

Supporters of the military-industrial complex’s production of new weapons of mass-destruction often rationalize their position with references to the beneficial “trickle-down-effect” of commodities from the weapons manufactures to consumers in the civilian market. The “Military Gallery” explores the consumer benefits of the military-industrial complex. Giant 22-foot panels representing the everyday commodities that have their origins in the military-industrial complex ask questions like “will we shift from the service of war to the service of life?” Binary distinctions between the service of death and the service of life do not appear very progressive when juxtaposed against the neo-conservative ideology of the American empire, which makes no distinction between the service of war and the service of life: in the war on terror, war serves the life of liberal capitalism.

Everybody knows that the earth’s resources are finite, that over-production and over-consumption have

done irreversible damage to the natural world, and that the ecological crisis is moving humanity toward the end-of-history. The “Manufacturing Gallery” responds to capitalism’s destruction of the natural world by advocating the recycling of post-consumer waste into new use-values. This gallery, with its belief in market reflectionism (that production is determined by effective consumer demand) intimates that artistic creations such as a curtain assembled from garbage might resolve (or at least slow down) the global environmental catastrophe. It is imagined that the garbage curtain, which converts waste into a new household use-value, will slow down effective consumer demand for new commodities and in turn, slow down capitalism’s wasteful production of commodities. Policy proposals for the rational planning of industrial production and the regulation of corporations are trumped by proposals to recycle waste into garbage curtains and a neo-liberal faith in the invisible hand of the market. The curtain’s two month production-time suggests the limits of such creative recycling for most working people.

The tampering with and commodification of life has caused much ethical and moral anxiety. “The Living Gallery” responds to such anxieties and ostensibly seeks to stimulate a public debate about them with sculptures, information, and visual representations of trademarked flesh-products (a laboratory-grown nose cartilage), genetically modified crops (such as the Vitamin-A rich Golden Rice), and genetically modified species (the ‘featherless’ chicken). A voting station

with two transparent boxes, one labelled YES and the other labelled NO, is situated in this gallery’s final room. The voting booth encourages gallery participants to express their political perspective on corporate biotechnology by asking them: “should we be doing this”?, Will the ballots be tallied and factored into corporate decision-making processes? Will the outcome of this important vote result in new government policies on such issues? Casting a ballot here is about as politically effective as voting with your dollar by purchasing a Starbucks hot chocolate rather than a Second Cup latte. The aestheticization of “public choice” compensates for the lack of real public input into the governance of such corporate affairs. It empowers gallery audiences by instilling in them a (false) belief that their ethical perspective really matters to the corporations responsible for the administration of life.

The final gallery is entitled “Wealth and Politics.” Yet the actual mode by which wealth (value) is produced in the world (exploitation), and the way by which the political apparatus (the state) upholds this mode of wealth production to serve the class interests of its chief appropriators (capitalists), is obscured. Indeed, “The Wealth and Politics gallery seeks to “redefine the way we think of these topics by defining wealth outside of the realm of currency and politics as the systems that are improving the lives of people the world over.” →



Following this gallery's post-structuralist language-play, audiences can forget about class politics! Now that the currency (wages) workers receive for their labour-power doesn't signify as wealth, no one needs to worry about the unequal exchange involved in this process or struggle to achieve more equitable modes of wealth redistribution. Now that corporate technology and postmodern design culture are part of a system that is efficiently improving the lives of people around the world, traditional notions of politics—government policy-making, control of the legal apparatus, and party battles for state power—can be forgotten. The politics of this gallery, with its gigantic balloons hung from the ceilings and walls painted with statistics about the world's massive changes, are deceiving. They pacify gallery audiences with feel-good information about massive change while further distancing them from an understanding of the dire economic realities and oppressive political structures that prevent massive change from happening.

According to Mau, *Massive Change* "is conceived in the tradition of the manifesto. It is a public declaration of the current state of design, a call to recognize its potential and a challenge to accept responsibility for design culture in the contemporary world." Yet, sponsored by American Express Foundation, Teknion Corporation, and St. Joseph Corporation, and designed by a small group of Mau's cultural producers *Massive Change* is more of a branding tool for global corporations than a meaningful and inclu-

sive "public declaration." Indeed, "American Express is proud to once again sponsor *Massive Change*," states Beth Horowitz, president and CEO of Amex Canada Inc. "*Massive Change* explores innovation. This is a territory very much in line with our focus at American Express on driving and enabling full and rewarding lives through our products and services."

Massive Change suggests that global human improvement and global sustainability, through design, new technology and scientific innovation, is not only possible, but is already happening. Mau's residual bourgeois modernist faith in the ability of humans to use the technology, science, and aesthetics to change the world is summed up in statements such as the following: "*Massive Change* is not about the world of design, but of the design of the world." Mau's cultural revolution may move his followers beyond the cynicism, nihilism, and apathy of postmodernism. But it does so by affirming the neo-liberal belief in the integrated global marketplace and corporate-led technological innovation as the motor of massive change. Thus, the massive change proposed by Mau's cultural revolution meshes well with neoliberal common-sense about the free-market and corporate globalization.

Yet, the political significance of *Massive Change* and Mau's cultural revolution should not be discounted. The historical existence and tremendous popularity of *Massive Change*, which effectively yokes a residual modernist desire to improve the human

condition to the new technologies and corporate designs of the postmodern market, reminds socialists that people can still be affected and moved by the idea of "massive change." History is not over. A widespread social transformation and utopian future world is still fathomable. The text of eleven manifesto-like posters, produced by Bruce Mau's Institute Without Borders, represents the quasi-utopian essence that permeates the design economies of *Massive Change*:

"We will make visible the as yet invisible"; "we will eliminate the need for raw material, amass intelligence, and banish all waste from manufacturing"; "we will provide food and health worldwide"; "we will provide free access to all global knowledge systems"; "we will eradicate poverty"; "we will seamlessly connect all energy, intelligence, material, and capacity"; "we will apply innovation in killing for living in peace"; "we will design intelligence into material and liberate form from matter."

Embedded within *Massive Change*'s corporate-like mission statements are the utopian desires, hopes, and fantasies that global capitalism unleashes, but fails, along with so many well-intentioned organizations that imagine social revolution without class struggle, to realize. **R**

Massive Change is on view at the Art Gallery of Ontario until May 29th.



Cultural Deceptions: The Popular and the Obscure

Karl Beveridge

The left has always been suspicious of artists. And artists have always been suspicious of the left particularly in its more organized forms. While many artists have supported left causes, the relations were always strained and problematic.

Connections between the arts and the left were further complicated by the appropriation of popular cultures by the mass media industries. Capitalism soon looked like the girl next door. Aligned against this were independent artists attempting to work outside the corporate marketplace. While many saw themselves as lone individuals fighting mass conformity, these artists attempted two broad strategies. The first was to reclaim popular language from various forms of folk music to documentary photography and film to the dime novel. The second was to defy the commodification of art itself from Cubism and Dada to Pop Art and Conceptualism. The problem with the first strategy is that while the content of such work may be different from corporate messages, the forms and look tend to be similar. The problem with the second is the reverse. While the forms may appear to be radically different, the contents are comprehensible only to the initiated or those with the time to figure them out namely the leisure class.

The first strategy, the use of popular forms, is where left political content is most often articulated. There are two problems. First, corporate media are able to spend millions on the production of their art, whereas most politicized art is done on a shoestring - usually from the artist's own shoe. This is the problem of production values. The second is that the political is simply seen as one option among many - be they stories, films or paintings about murder, corporate greed, flowers, sex, war, poverty and so on. This is the problem of commodification. Every once in a while, an artist is able to get around these limitations: a Carl Beam or Lillian Allen. Most often, people go to see politicized artworks, not because it will capture and excite a different sensibility, but because it simply presents a good, and sometimes clever, illustration of an argument.

The second strategy is more complex and equally problematic. A major thrust of modernism and post-modernism has been the development of various strategies against the commodification of the artwork noted above. The form of such work has both attempted to reinvent language and to work against the reduction of that language to a commodity. The problem is that this has resulted in a zero sum game in which the absolute obscurity of meaning is all that is left as each new form has been appropriated and commodified by the market. Andy Warhol, once ridiculed as a hoax, is now celebrated as one of the great American

artists. A crisis was reached in the mid-1970's when visual artists disposed of the art object altogether and expression resided in a concept of a work that was literally embodied in the artist. One memorable exhibition involved an artist who simply turned up in a gallery and anything that he may or may not have said was the work of art. In this process form became the content, the content being an implied statement about commodification itself. While political in its stance, it ended up saying little about the world in which it was made.

While postmodernism resulted from this crisis and at-



Carl Beam

tempted to challenge the linear progress of modernist thought, it also questioned the ability of art, and communications in general, to state anything beyond its own means of representation, thus even limiting the conceptual. The arts, as well as the mass media, then began a process of recycling historic forms and styles, finally delivering the arts solidly into the commodity market. Check out Toronto's Queen St. West gallery scene. Political content entered into some of the work being produced under the rubric →

of post-modern plurality, but it tended to remain conceptually ambiguous.

In the 1960's and 1970's a number of artists in different parts of the world, especially in theatre, began to develop what has become known as community arts. It proposed that art be developed with the participation of those who were either the subjects and/or audience of the art work. Some of these projects grew out of political movements (Augusto Boal and the Theatre of the Oppressed), some out of the social/cultural movements (the various mural movements) and some came from artists looking for alternatives to the art market.

Like any field, community arts has many different theories and practices. It has been called "cultural democracy", "community cultural development" (by the Rockefeller Foundation), "peoples' art" etc. In its broadest definition it includes everything from community recreational classes to public intervention art; from people making puppets, to political murals and labour choirs. The majority of community arts uses popular forms and language. While important to building community identity and solidarity, it rarely challenges mainstream culture.

Within community arts, a number of artists have recognized the need to bridge popular language and a critical form. A form that challenges both the conventions of popular culture and the arts. In fact, it is the anchoring of art in a community that can allow the bridge to be constructed. The

engagement of the participants in the process of creating a work allows the very issues of language and form to be re-worked. The participants can take part in the development of a critical dialogue. The creation of the work is as much about the subject of the work (the community) as it is about culture and the art work itself. It is in this direct relation between artists and communities that the process of commodification can be modified.

Of course, none of this can happen with one or two projects. Community arts has to be sustained with a community over a long period of time. Ideally, it would become a normal practice in which artists work with communities on an on-going basis. It's not only that such art challenges the commodification of art and creative experience, but the informal cultures of communities, their everyday rituals and beliefs, its 'spirituality', in the secular sense of that word, is what forms the very basis of a more formal artistic expression. All art is produced within a community. Unfortunately, the communities that most artists work in today are either their own the arts community; or the corporate communities of culture Disney, Warner and the rest of the gang. Not unlike the left, artists need to re-connect to the communities that are the basis of everyday life. And it just may be that culture provides the road map for the transformation of daily life. **R**

PEACE IN THE PARK?

Latin American Art in Toronto

Laura Allen

It was one of my greatest pleasures to find the re-emergence of Latin American art in west Toronto recently. Here I experienced the wonderful feelings of joy and warmth that I get from my Latin roots. I am referring to the *Latin America 2005 Art Exhibition* presented at the Etobicoke Civic Centre from March 3d to April 1st, 2005. Art work by 62 Latin Americans residing in Canada was on display. The art show is the second Annual Juried Exhibition of Visual Artists presented in Toronto by Fundarte Latino America, a non-profit cultural organization that promotes Latin American artists in Canada and seeks to develop public involvement with Latin American culture.

The annual event included a variety of themes, materials and techniques. For example, the painting *Figure in Red* by Teresa Luna used oil; Guilloume Peres used brass for *Mi Viejo* (My Old Man); Luma Rojas's *Window* employed watercolours; and *Nefertiti* by Rosarios Russo was sculpted in marble. Other pieces used acrylic, charcoal, glass and photography.

Latin America 2005 showed great contrast and dynamism and offered the public different experiences and interpretations by the artists. Most of the themes were related to the

historical, social and cultural background of the artists. I would like to highlight a pastel by William Cardona, a Colombian-born artist, titled *Huichitecas*. It emphasizes traditional dresses of two indigenous Mexican women and allows us to appreciate the characteristic liveliness and colourfulness of the Mexican people, and suggests that living in Mexico for many years highly influenced Cardona.

Finally, I would like to mention the piece *Peace in the Park* by Andrés Correa. Born in Canada to Colombian parents, the artist takes us to a place of diversity and equality and projects a feeling of peaceful co-existence amongst people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. In my opinion, *Peace in the Park* reflects a deeply entrenched desire for peace, but that this is far from being a reality for the peoples of Latin America. **R**

Laura Allen is a member of the Toronto Bolivarian Circle Manuelita Saenz.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Reviewed by Douglas Williams

Michael Radford's disturbing new film adaptation of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, starring Al Pacino as Shylock, Jeremy Irons as Antonio, Joseph Fiennes as Bassanio and Lynn Collins as Portia, is a barometer of contemporary social attitudes: it ambiguously condemns anti-Semitism (while remaining oddly insulated from it), embraces gay relationships that aren't in the original, endorses entrepreneurial ambition, and sanctions social climbing. This accommodation to fashionable bourgeois attitudes does nothing to counteract the essential racism of the original.

I searched for the play among Shakespeare's tragedies and was surprised to find it listed as a comedy. But, if there was anything funny about anti-Semitism between 1500 and 1935, it's hard to imagine the play being staged for laughs today. As comedy, it misfires completely.

Shakespeare probably never met a Jew: King Edward I drove all Jews out of England in 1290. In popular culture they became an invisible, Godless threat, perpetually conspiring to gain unfair advantage (or worse) over innocent Christians. Using this caricature, Shakespeare attempts, with typical success, to humanize the play's tragic central character, Shylock. But he's still a disturbing stereotype, and consensus calls the play anti-Semitic. Consequently, some of Shakespeare's champions try to banish this curse through the magic of interpretation.

Shylock is hated for rejecting the moral pretensions of Christianity. In this context he's a demon: at his trial, he torments the Venetians by pointing - with courage and clarity - to their practice of slavery, their vengefulness, and their rampant marital infidelity. He refuses to explain the motive for his infamous demand for Antonio's pound of flesh, and insists on the protection of the law. But the law betrays him, strips him of his wealth and enforces his conversion to Christianity, precisely because he is a Jew.

The clarity of Shylock's argument reveals genuine understanding of his predicament on Shakespeare's part: trapped in a Christian theocracy, Shylock resembles a militant secularist, centuries ahead of his time. But Radford, as both screenwriter and director, fails to overcome the play's conceptual problems and take advantage of its most provocative aspects.

At first, his intentions seem innocent enough. Non-Shakespeare factoids outline social conditions for Jews in 16th Century Venice: barred from owning land, forbidden craft guild membership and confined to "getos", they are allowed by the state to engage in usury (Christians are barred from the profession of money-lending), thus reinforcing their "sinful" mercenary reputation. Then Antonio, the title's

Christian merchant, spits on Shylock the Jew, in the street. The director has made his sympathies clear - hasn't he?

Radford portrays a decadent world where Venetians, obsessed with money and upward social mobility, are blissfully content to live with their own hypocrisy. However, he cuts important scenes from the play (Lorenzo and Launcelot fatuously debate who's naughtier - Lorenzo for raising "the price of hogs" by converting a Jew, or Launcelot for "getting up of the negro's belly," i.e., impregnating a Moor) which underline the racism and venality of the Venetians. Is his motive "political correctness" - a desire to cleanse the play of offensive elements - echoing the views of those who want to ban the novel *Huckleberry Finn* for using the word "nigger"? Or are his motives even more misguided?

Following the outrage of Shylock's trial, Radford



switches to romantic comedy in the final act, in which entrepreneurs Antonio and Bassanio succeed in securing their futures through Bassanio's marriage to the aristocratic Portia. Is it to foil the ugliness of the trial that Radford substitutes a gay (i.e. progressive) interpretation of the men's friendship both in line readings and framing? Except for a single shot of the defeated Shylock standing outside his synagogue, the frothy, titillating world of these final scenes encourages us to forget the tragedy of Shylock and share the fun. It's an alarmingly nasty shift in mood, and it raises the question of Shakespeare's intention: is he hiding an expose of the ruling class behind a sour comedy that portrays their vicious indifference to human suffering? Or is he simply siding with the Venetians? It feels like the latter.

While the text of the play lies cold - and ambiguous - on the page, Radford's interpretation of the story compounds the growing unease I felt while watching. It's →

only Shylock's actual words - in support of secular justice - that argue his case. Downplaying their racism and portraying the Venetians as fun-loving romantics - *after what they have done to Shylock* - amounts to tacit endorsement. What else are we to think?

Several productions have rightly set the play in Nazi Germany. It's easy to imagine Antonio, Bassanio et al. as opportunistic young Nazis; the clever Portia works well as an aristocratic fascist, toying sadistically with her Jewish victim, while knowing beforehand that the legal cards are stacked against him. And the celebratory moments after the trial, literally paid for by Shylock's victimization, would find no contradiction in Nazi practice. (There is a form of agreement on this point: Austria saw some 50 conventional presentations of *The Merchant* in 1939.)

Traditional staging of the play (and film) inevitably taps into still-vital anti-Semitic feelings among non-Jews:

it's embarrassing to people who don't want to be seen as racist. Radford's approach falls into this trap. In attempting to camouflage this failure by invoking a lazy Susan of capitalist media-endorsed social attitudes, he seems to expect us to ignore the appalling chauvinism of the protagonists. With a triumph that might please The Apprentice's Donald Trump, we watch Antonio's and Bassanio's ascendancy from entrepreneurial squalor to the aristocratic pleasures of Belmont. Are we to ignore that it's entirely at Shylock's expense?

Despite the gilded imagery and skilled performances, this fatal flaw makes the film - by any but the most corrupt standards - unwatchable. Box office need for a "feel-good" ending simply can't be achieved with *The Merchant of Venice*. Attempting to do so makes for a bafflingly contradictory experience at best, and a thoroughly revolting one at worst. **R**

Hydro: Jamie Swift and Keith Stewart's "soft path alternative" fails to tackle hard realities

Sheldon Macgillivray

Hydro: The Decline and Fall of Ontario's Electric Empire
By Keith Stewart and Jamie Swift
Between the Lines, Toronto: 2004
Paperback: \$24.95, 256 Pages, 1-896357-88-1

Informative, critical and daring, *Hydro: The Decline and Fall of Ontario's Electric Empire* offers readers an in depth analysis of one of this province's most contentious policy issues. The authors, Jamie Swift and Keith Stewart limit themselves to no small task, "...the need to produce a volume that, we hope, will inform a democratic debate and help strive after an electricity that will not poison the planet" (*Hydro*, pp. x).

Clearly written for the general public, engaging with *Hydro* is relatively easy. The book looks for answers to the collapse of Ontario's electricity giant through a careful analysis of its 90 year track record, and lays the blame on a mixture of near-sighted policy, ideology and ignorance.

The state and public ownership get mixed reviews within this book. The authors are critical at times of any state involvement in Ontario Hydro. Their "green alternative" theme, and calls for a reduction in nuclear and coal power throughout the book leave the reader exposed to strong criticism of the role of Ontario's political parties in endorsing "hard path" alternatives on the one hand, while neglecting "soft path alternatives" on the other. To clarify, "hard path alternatives" include primarily nuclear, coal and non-renewable forms of electrical generation while "soft path alternatives" include

primarily conservation, solar, wind and natural gas.

The Conservatives are soundly criticized for what can only be described as corruption, embezzlement and free-loading during the privatization of Hydro. The NDP are criticized for the appointment of Maurice Strong, who is often recognized as being an avid environmentalist but also a strong advocate for neo-liberal policies. Strong split the monopolistic Ontario Hydro into smaller units, and it was this "breaking up" of the large public utility (amongst other factors) that the authors believe led to privatization and deregulation.

Their analysis of the Liberal government is largely an account of recent steps taken to return the utility to public ownership and effectively end the experiment in privatization. Swift and Stewart reveal the lack of direction so often associated with the McGuinty government; having no clear policy on our nuclear crisis, how to meet a reduction in green house emissions in the recently ratified Kyoto Protocol, and how to replace coal generation by 2007. They do support Ontario Energy Minister Dwight Duncan's most recent energy policy, which calls for increased conservation and sustainable development.

A central theme of the book is the need for increased ecological sensitivity and environmental sustainability. Using accounts of either failed deregulation and privatization attempts in California, Alberta, and Ontario, or continuously problem-plagued and unprofitable systems in Britain and Chile, the authors reveal how soft path alterna

tives as simple as conservation would have wrested these respective electrical systems from the perils of deregulation and privatization. After sketching examples of failed deregulation and the adverse effects such as energy price spikes, rolling blackouts, cutting-corners on maintenance, and price fixing, the authors return to California to demonstrate the merits of public ownership of electric utilities. The authors effectively demonstrate that deregulation and privatization in California was largely unnecessary if the state had initially opted for a soft path alternative. The effects of an aggressive conservation strategy in California in the wake of deregulation and a return to public ownership saved over \$14 billion in electricity costs and reduced demand by 7.5% in the past 10 years.

The authors are very critical of the hard path alternatives of nuclear and coal power, arguing them to be dangerous, costly and environmentally devastating. For instance, nuclear power has a devastating cycle of inefficiency with operating troubles piling up until only 4 out of 21 reactors are still in operation in Ontario after only 25 years. Their criticism of the nuclear hard path alternative is supported by the vast empirical evidence they incorporate into the book. Besides the questionable safety of nuclear power, the authors clearly show the lack of foresight and responsibility of the politicians of the 1970s and 1980s as they grew the Hydro empire beyond the limits

of sustainability. Unlike Sir Adam Beck, Ontario Hydro's founder, their visions of a vast nuclear infrastructure did not consign to posterity or sustainability.

The authors begin the book east of Toronto at Darlington Nuclear Power Plant in 1979 where the "green guards" are demonstrating against nuclear power warning of its extraordinary costs as well as being an unsustainable and environmentally dangerous choice. We follow these activists through deregulation failures amidst some soft path and conservation based successes, to end the book in a room full of veteran green guards still advocating the soft path alternative, reflecting on their 25 years of protest against "hard path choices", and silently acknowledging that they did in fact, "Tell them so."

Hydro is a careful analysis of the rise and fall of an energy empire. However, the authors do not adequately provide the necessary framework for a soft path alternative nor do they impart the reader with the enthusiasm to pick up such a cause.

I admit I was discouraged by the negative focus of the book, and was left feeling that hard path advocates had largely succeeded during the past 25 years by implementing coal and nuclear programs. Perhaps that is the case, but to the average reader, this focus would have a debilitating rather than an empowering effect. Their consistency and detail is excellent but much like the debate surrounding capitalism and neo-liberalism today, the authors fail to provide a bridge from suggestion to solution or the alternative to its implementation.

Advocating the soft path is necessary but the authors do not go far enough in successfully articulating what a movement that would bring it into being would look like, a key partner of the "democratic debate". This leaves the book falling somewhat flat in its initial purpose of democratizing the hydro issue. The book fails to elaborate the soft path as clearly as it detailed the rise, decline and collapse of Hydro. Granted, that account does de-rail to some extent the argument for hard path alternatives (such as re-starting nuclear plants to displace coal) and brings the average reader up to speed on Ontario's electricity system, but Swift and Stewart do not bridge initiative and participation that would then lead to increased public involvement in the hydro debate.

A meeting of veteran green guards in 2004 sounded much like the 1979 meeting and leaves the

reader wondering whether this suggests that the fight for soft path choices has not only been largely ignored, but given the past 25 years outlined in the book, been largely ineffective.

This book is an excellent source of information regarding the Ontario Hydro story. It achieves its stated purpose of mapping the reasons behind the rise and fall of Ontario's electric utility. I feel however that the underlying theme of soft path versus hard path loses its effectiveness in the authors' inability to situate it in a larger context. The author's soft path alternative is not developed by clearly explaining how it will be able to confront and defeat centres of economic and political power. Moreover, neo-liberalism and continentalism are two important lenses through which to view the Ontario Hydro debacle, but for the most part are largely ignored. Time will tell whether Swift and Stewart achieve their main purpose in igniting a new democratic debate about soft choice alternatives. **R**



Power and the State

John Holloway

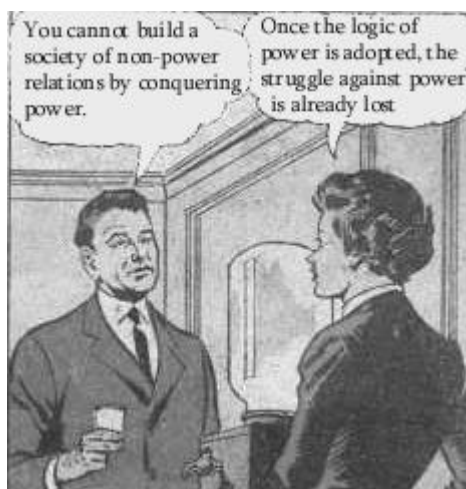
The following is a transcript of John Holloway's speech to the London Social Forum in October. An opposing view by Phil Hearse, also presented at the London Social Forum, is found on page 28.

1. I assume that we are here because we agree on two basic points. Firstly, capitalism is a disaster for humanity and we urgently need a radical social change, a revolution. Secondly, we do not know how such a change can take place. We have ideas, but no certainties. That is why it is important to discuss, respecting our differences and understanding that we are all part of the same movement.

2. In this discussion, we start from where we are, from a confused movement, a cacophony of rebellions, loosely united in this Social Forum. The question is how we should continue. Should we organise as a party? Should we focus our struggles on the state and in winning influence within the state or conquering state power? Or should we turn our back on the state in so far as we can and get on with constructing an alternative? I want to argue that we should turn our back on the state in so far as possible.

3. This is a question of how we organise and where we think we are going. The state is a form of organisation, a way of doing things. The state is an organisation separate from the rest of society. The people who work in the state (the politicians and the functionaries or civil servants) work on behalf of society, for the benefit of society, as they see it. Some are better than others (I have no doubt that Bertinotti is better than Berlusconi), but all work on our behalf, in our name. In other words,

they exclude us. The state, as an organisational form, is a way of excluding us, of negating the possibility of self-determination. Once we are excluded, we have no real control over what they do. Representative democ-



racy reinforces and legitimates our exclusion, it does not give us control over what the state does. Many of the worst atrocities are justified in the name of democracy.

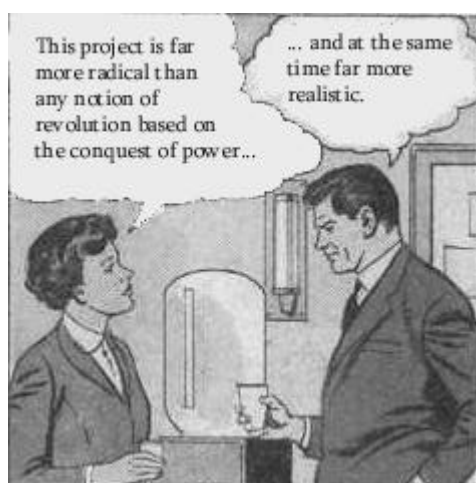
If we focus our struggles on the state, we have to understand that the state pulls us in a certain direction. Above all, it seeks to impose upon us a separation of our struggles from society, to convert our struggle into a struggle on behalf of, in the name of. It separates leaders from the masses, the representatives from the represented, it draws us into a different way of talking, a different way of thinking. It pulls us into a process of reconciliation with reality, and that reality is the reality of capitalism, a form of social organisation that is based on exploitation and injustice, on killing and destruction. There is one key concept in the history of the state-centred left, and that

concept is betrayal. Time and time again, the leaders have betrayed the movement, and not necessarily because they are bad people, but just because the state as a form of organisation separates the leaders from the movement and draws them into a process of reconciliation with capital. Betrayal is already given in the state as an organisational form.

Can we resist this? Yes, of course we can, and it is something that happens all the time. We can refuse to let the state identify leaders or permanent representatives of the movement, we can refuse to let delegates negotiate in secret with the representatives of the state. But this means understanding that our forms of organisation are very different from those of the state, that there is no symmetry between them. The state is an organisation on behalf of, what we want is the organisation of self-determination, a form of organisation that allows us to articulate what we want, what we decide, what we consider necessary or desirable – a council or communal organisation, a communism. There are no models for how we should organise our drive towards self-determination. It is always a matter of invention and experimentation. What is clear is that the state as a form of organisation pushes in the opposite direction, against self-determination. The two forms of organisation are incompatible.

When I say “state”, I include parties or any organisation that has the state as its main focus. The party, as a form of organisation, reproduces the state form: it excludes, it creates distinctions between leaders and masses, representatives and represented; in order to win state power, it adopts the agenda and the temporalities of the state. In

other words, it goes against the drive towards social self-determination which I think is the core of our struggle. Note that I am saying to Fausto and to Daniel and to Hilary “I don’t think the party is the right way to organise”. I am not saying “I don’t like you” or “I will not cooperate with you”, nor am I saying that struggles that take another route (such as the case of Venezuela) are therefore to be condemned. I am simply saying that in thinking of the way forward, party organisation or focussing on state power is the wrong way to go, because it implies a form of organisa-



tion that excludes and imposes hierarchies, that weakens and bureaucratises the anarchic effervescence of the drive towards self-determination that is the core of the current movement against neo-liberal capitalism.

4. What does it mean to turn our back on the state? In some cases, it means ignoring the state completely, not making any demands on the state, just getting on with the construction of our own alternatives. The most obvious example of that at the moment would be the Zapatistas’ shift in direction last year, their creation of the Juntas de Buen Gobierno, the creation of their own regional administration in a way that seeks to avoid the separation of administration and society typical of the state.

In other cases, it is difficult to turn our back on the state completely, be-

cause we need its resources in order to live – as teachers, as students, as unemployed, whatever. It is very difficult for most of us to avoid all contact with the state. In that case, what is important is to understand that the state is a form of organisation that pulls us in certain directions, that pulls us towards a reconciliation with capitalism, and to think how we can shape our contact with the state, how we can move against-and-beyond the state as a form of doing things, refusing to accept the creation of hierarchies, the fragmentation of our struggles that contact with the state implies, refusing to accept the language and the logic and perhaps above all the temporality of the state, the times and rhythms that the state tries to impose on us. How do we engage with the state without slotting in to its logic, without reproducing its logic inside our own movement? This is always a difficult issue in practice, in which it is very easy to get drawn into the logic of achieving particular concrete aims and forget the impact on the dynamic of the movement as a whole. I do not think it is a question of reclaiming the state, although I have a lot of respect for many of the struggles that are covered in Hilary’s book, but I think the idea of reclaiming the state is wrong: the state is an alien form of organisation – it is not, and cannot be, ours.

5. In all this the question of time and how we think about time is crucial. On the one hand the state imposes its temporality on us all the time, with its rhythm of elections and its changes of regime which change little or nothing: “Wait till the next election and then you can change things; if you want to do something now, then prepare for the next election, build the party”. On the other hand, the Leninist revolutionary tradition also tells us to wait: “Wait for the next revolutionary occasion or the next downturn of the long wave, wait until we take power and then we shall change society; in the meantime, build the party”.

But we know that we cannot wait. Capitalism is destroying the world and destroying us at such a rate that we cannot wait. We cannot wait for the election and we cannot wait for the revolution, we cannot wait until we win state power in one way or another, we have to try and break the destructive dynamic now. We have to refuse. Capitalism does not exist because the evil ones, the Bushes and Blairs and Berlusconi, create it. Capitalism does not exist because it was created a hundred or two hundred years ago. Capitalism exists today only because we created it today. If we do not create capitalism tomorrow, then it will not exist tomorrow. Capitalism exists because we make it, and we have to stop making it, to refuse. This means breaking time, breaking continuity, understanding that something does not exist today just because it existed yesterday: it exists only if we make it.

In thinking about alternatives to the state, I think refusal has to be the pivot, the key. But it is not enough. To maintain our refusal to make capitalism, we have to have an alternative way of surviving. The refusal has to be accompanied by the creation of a different world, the creation of a new commons, the creation of a different way of doing things. Behind the absolute here-and-now of refusal there has to be another temporality, a patient construction of a different world. There is no model for this. The only model is the multiplicity of experiences and inventions of the movement of resistance against capitalism. This multiplicity, this cacophony of struggles and experiences should be respected, not channelled into a party, not focussed on the winning of state power. The problem is not to take power, but to construct our own power, our own power to do things differently, our own power to create a different world. **R**

John Holloway is a professor at Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla.

Take the Power to Change the World

Phil Hearse

The following is a transcript of Phil Hearse's speech to the London Social Forum in October. An opposing view by John Holloway, also presented at the London Social Forum, is found on the preceding page.

Subcommandante Marcos focussed this debate in the 1990s by his declaration that the Zapatistas refused, as a matter of principle, to fight for state power. I don't want to attack Marcos too much, because in my opinion the real start of the anti-globalisation movement and the fightback against neoliberalism was the Zapatista uprising on 1 January 1994. But Marcos and those who think like him are wrong to believe that anti-capitalist social transformation is possible without dealing with the question of state power, by simply turning your back on the state.

This can be seen by looking at some crucial contemporary social struggles. First, Argentina. In my opinion in the last four years the social and political struggle in Argentina has been the most advanced in the world. When the Argentinean economy collapsed in December 2001, a direct result of 'dollarisation' and extreme neo-liberal policies, the savings and livelihood of millions of working class and middle class Argentineans was expropriated. This led to a massive social explosion.

As a consequence a massive process of self-organisation developed, including the formation of neighbourhood and factory committees, the occupation of factories, which continued production under workers' self-management, the *piqueteros* movement, and many other forms of struggle. Self-organisation on a massive scale, while all the capitalist parties and leaders were completely discredited. But where is this movement today? It has largely disappeared or even been co-opted into gov-

ernment work projects at poverty wages.

Naomi Klein wrote a widely published article in which she said the decline of the mass movement was because of the sectarianism of the far-left organisations. She claims they brought their ideological arguments and petty squabbles into the movement, and as a consequence the masses became bored and frustrated and went home.

I don't discount the possibility that there is an element of truth on what she says about these organisations, but it is not the fundamental problem. The basic problem is there was no big anti-capitalist party capable of uniting the movements and struggles in an overall project for taking the power. That's my criticism of the Argentinean left groups – that despite all the opportunities they failed to create such a party on a united basis, when they have had more opportunities in the past 30 years than in most countries.

The decline of the Argentinean movement is a massive tragedy because for a time in that country there was a real vacuum at the top, and an anti-capitalist way out of the crisis was possible. Now we just have capitalist normalisation and the return of the corrupt and right-wing Peronists. As James Petras has put it, "The original strength of the popular uprising – its spontaneous, mass, autonomous character – became its strategic weakness,

the absence of a national leadership capable of unifying the diverse forces behind a coherent program aimed at taking state power." (This article is available at www.rebellion.com)

The same problem is posed in a different context in Venezuela. In 2003 the London *Observer* newspaper published a very interesting article reporting from the massively self-organised barrios in Caracas. The reporter told of how the people were taking over the schools and utilities like water and electricity,



organising literacy campaigns and so on. One militant told the reporter "We don't want a government like that of Hugo Chavez to represent us, we want to *be* the government." This article also told of some hostility to the Bolivarian circles among some barrio activists, accusing them of dragging politics into the struggles.

I sympathise with these anti-government and anti-state feelings, but ultimately they are a dead-end and a trap. Why is there this tremendous Bolivarian process, this enormous level of struggle against the right wing and the bourgeoisie, in Venezuela? *Because*

of the election of a left-wing government. Where have all the resources come from for the literacy campaign, the pension and wage increases, the free children's breakfast programme? From the government, of course.

If you say we must turn your back on the state and power, then it becomes a matter of indifference, completely irrelevant, if Hugo Chavez is defeated in the right-wing referendum, because all that is about the state and doesn't concern us.

In reality, if Hugo Chavez had been defeated in the August 23 referendum it would have been a massive defeat for the Bolivarian revolutionary process - in fact it would have ended it in a carnival of reaction. Vast numbers of the working class and the poor understood this and did not turn their backs on Chavez and their revolution. They came down from the barrios in their millions to vote for Chavez and deal the hysterical bourgeoisie, the reactionary petty-bourgeoisie and US imperialism a fearful political blow.

Now I don't say that Chavez, a left-wing populist, is the final answer to socialist transformation in Venezuela. I say we defend him against the right wing. But to progress towards the victory of the Bolivarian revolution the Venezuelan masses need to create their own self-organised system of national administration. That's not turning your back on the state, that's creating a different kind of state and a different kind of power.

You can see the same thing in Mexico. The Zapatistas have created their own self-organised space in the highland villages of Chiapas, formally declaring their own independent municipalities in September 2003. All that is true. But it is the product of very particular circumstances, of geographical isolation and the fact that these communities are defended by the whole of Mexican civil society. For the moment, it is too politically dangerous for the Mexican bourgeoisie to launch any kind of all-out attack. In the future, this could easily change.

However, autonomy has not solved the problems of the Zapatista base com-

munities. They are impoverished communities, and the people there share the same problems of health, of nutrition and of living standards of poor people in many other parts of Mexico. Because the Zapatista movement raises questions which cannot be solved simply at the level of their own communities, or even at the level of the whole of Chiapas. To bring the indigenous people of Chiapas out of poverty, you need social transformation at (at least) an all-Mexico level.

I will pose John Holloway a question. The Zapatistas have created their own liberated zone, through their own uprising. But suppose the same thing happened all across Mexico - the masses rose up and took control of their own workplaces and communities. Now, shouldn't these self-organised communities in Veracruz, in Monterrey, in Mexico City, in Guadalajara - shouldn't they talk to each other? Plan their futures together? Co-ordinate their economic plans in an overall plan of social development of Mexico? Elect recallable representatives to an all-Mexico assembly to decide these things? Co-ordinate their response to the massive counter-revolutionary wave which is sure to hit them from inside and outside the country?

Obviously they should. If they simply turn their back on the Mexican capitalist state without replacing it with something else, well the capitalist state will not turn its back on them. But if they do create their own national, self-governed co-ordination, than they will have created what is the slogan of the whole of the militant Mexican left - "Un gobierno obrera, campesino, indigena y popular" - a workers', peasant, indigenous and popular government. Not only that: they will have created an alternative form of power, an alternative form of state. Exactly what Marx called the 'Commune state'.

John Holloway rejects both any alternative form of state and any form of political party. In my opinion the refusal to form political parties of the left, and a refusal to fight for any alternative form of state power, are both disastrous choices.

Today in many parts of the world there is an enormous crisis of political representation of the working class and the oppressed, as a result of the old social democratic and Stalinist parties going off to the right. This threatens the presence of the working class in the national political arena, and far from being a positive thing, this has a negative impact not only on the national political discourse, but on the struggles and mass campaigns as well. To see this, look at the example of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP).

The SSP now has six deputies in the Scottish parliament and a significant electoral impact (up to 10% of the vote). Is this a bad thing, a diversion? I don't think so. In fact the activity of the SSP deputies, who are always on the picket lines outside factories, who have led the campaign against racist immigrations laws and the Iraq war, and who are regularly being arrested protesting outside the Faslane nuclear submarine base, is a positive factor in the struggles, and not counterposed to it.

Equally the existence of Ridondazione Comunista in Italy or the United Left in Spain is, for the moment at least, a very positive factor for the struggle. I agree with Antonio Gramsci: the political party is the 'modern prince'. Social struggle always strives to find a political representation, and this we cannot turn our backs on. Today means not trying to find largely mythical autonomous spaces in which we can try to hide from the state, but building united left parties on an anti-capitalist basis to propel the struggle forward. Another world is possible, *but not without a revolution.* **R**

Phil Hearse is an editor of Socialist Resistance. His critique of John Holloway is available at www.marxsite.com.

Reclaiming May Day

Len Wallace

“If, uprooting from its heart the vice which dominates it and degrades its nature, the working class were to arise in its terrible strength, not to demand the Rights of Man, which are but the rights of capitalist exploitation, not to demand the Right to Work which is but the right to misery, but to forge a brazen law forbidding any man to work more than three hours a day, the earth, the old earth, trembling with joy would feel a new universe leaping within her.”

- Paul Lafargue, *The Right to be Lazy*, 1886

For a number of years, many of us in North America have tried to reconstitute May Day and its traditions as an international day of working class celebration. Unfortunately, for too many years, the tradition has been drowned in ideological mystique of support for a State or Party.

The origins of May Day are found in the upsurge of mass, radical and revolutionary working class movement in North America. It is rooted in the struggle by workers to shorten the work day, specifically the Eight Hour Work Day movement.

The heart of the movement was in Chicago and organized primarily by the International Working Men’s Association heavily influenced by those proclaiming adherence to principles we today would call “anarchist” (many of them would often refer to themselves as communists or revolutionary socialists).

Working under severe and inhumane conditions, workers in their tens of thousands demanded the reduction of working time. Massive demonstrations and rallies were organized much to the consternation of business powers, the city’s corrupt officialdom, and police who believed capitalism was threatened by this upsurge of working class activity. They envisioned revolution in its wake.

Business, government and the newspapers carried a campaign of slander against the IWMA leadership and the workers, portraying them as violent terrorists. The terror, however, was on the side of official power.

The working class demand was simple enough, echoed in the chorus of a song:

*Eight hours for Work,
Eight hours for Rest,
Eight hours for What We Will!*

The radical elements of the movement (anarchist, socialist, etc.), urged the abolition of capitalism as the ultimate objective while the immediate demand for Eight Hours was for the very physical survival of the working class.

On May 3, 1886, Chicago police fired upon striking workers at the McCormick Reaper Works Factory. Four workers

were killed, many injured in the following melee. The anarchists organized a mass meeting on May 4 to protest police brutality against the strikers. The poster was titled “REVENGE - Workingmen to Arms!!” (the word “Revenge” added by the typesetter).

The mass rally of 3,000 workers was peaceful, well organized. As the last speaker took the stage and the meeting was breaking up police decided to charge the remaining crowd. A bomb was thrown by a person or persons unknown landing between police and workers. One policeman was killed instantly, seven died later, 60 were wounded. Police began a shooting spree into the crowd killing a number of workers. Up to 200 may have been injured.

A reactionary reign of terror ensued as police began arresting labour leaders, organisers, radicals. The State’s Attorney Julius S. Grinnell argued, “Make the raids first and look up the law afterwards.”

Eight well known Chicago anarchists were imprisoned and charged, not with murder but with conspiracy to commit murder. Seven of them had not even been at the rally. Only two had actually been at the rally, one as a speaker on the podium.

The eight were brought to trial in front of a prejudiced jury. The State’s Attorney urged, “Convict these men, make examples of them, hang them, and you save our institutions.” Without evidence against them, but branded as radicals, revolutionaries and subversives (the newspapers describing them as “Dynamarchists”, “Bomb Slingers”, “Red Flagsters” and “serpents”) they were sentenced to execution by hanging.

Four of them - Albert Parsons, Auguste Spies, George Engel and Adolphe Fischer - were executed in 1887. Louis Lingg committed suicide in prison. Two had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment.

The last words of Auguste Spies on the gallows still remains with us: *“The time will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today.”* To this day the Chicago police still work to stifle any effort of anyone trying to build a memorial to those martyrs at the spot of the tragedy.

It was in 1889 that May 1st was chosen as the official day of working class protest. The conservative leader of the craft dominated American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers, sent a delegate of the Seaman’s union to the Second Labour and Socialist International’s founding Congress who urged rallies for the Eight Hour Day. The congress anointed May 1, 1890 as the day for the world’s workers to set down their tools and strike.

The fate of May 1st as the day of action of the working

class underwent transformation in subsequent years as it became tied to the then self-described official marxist movement, first under the control of various Social Democratic parties. After the Bolshevik coup in Russia 1917 it became more and more identified with the new state and its growing authoritarianism. With the advent of official “Marxism-Leninism” (and Stalinism) it became a celebration of the State itself.

Several other factors led to the decline of May Day: the resurgent power of Capital and the decline of insurgent working class action and revolutionary movement; the consequent decline of independent class cultural activity; channelling of working class energy to formal reformism within the boundaries of Capital; the loss of class historical memory, dismissal of working class history and even the dismissal of the very concept of class.

Official histories conveniently forget the significance of the original demand for shorter working hours. It was not just a call for the normalization of the working day. It was a direct challenge to the power of Capital itself.

Nineteen years prior to the Haymarket events, Karl Marx had presented a compelling review of the plight of the overworked working class to establish the Ten Hour working day in his work, *Capital*. This struggle was a “protracted and more or less concealed civil war between the capitalist and the working class.” It was a battle between Capital’s “vampire thirst for the living blood of labour” and the workers’ need for free time, disposable time. The tendency of any system of production based on capital would be to make the working day 24 hours long:

“Capital therefore takes no account of the health and the length of life of the worker, unless sociology forces it to do so.”

Ten years earlier in his notebooks titled “Grundrisse”, he wrote that the only solution to the problem would be for workers to appropriate their surplus value (the famed “Expropriation of the Expropriators” he wrote of in *Capital*).

138 years after the first publication of *Capital* and 117 years after the Haymarket events, the reality of an overworked, overstressed working class rears its ugly head. Today, even if hours of work for the needs of

capital were cut, capital itself has insidiously encroached upon every moment of our lives. The “Eight Hours For What We Will” - the time for family, rest, leisure, relaxation, self-development, art, culture, etc. - is manipulated to feed the needs of capital, its consumption, reproduction and expansion. The assault by capital is total, not only a matter of hours spent at work, and escapable only in momentary fragments as long as capital endures.

In 1895 England’s Walter Crane produced a print of a garlanded working woman wearing a gown and cap of Freedom. Notes on the garland read –

No Child Toilers

Production for Use Not for Profit

Shorten Working Day & Prolong Life

No People Can Be Free While Dependent for Their Bread

Art and Enjoyment for All

Hope in Work & Joy In Leisure

Those slogans and goals have still not been met and are just as apt today as they were in 1895. Perhaps it is time to resurrect the old IWW demand for a Four Hour Work day.

It’s time to reclaim and rekindle May 1, even if in a small way as the worker’s own day of celebration of the struggles we have won, honest admission of our defeats, and the determination to carry on. Not for any State or any political party, but for a celebration of the potential of the working class itself in order to sustain a vision beyond capitalism. **R**



Lula: Between a Social Movement and a Political Party

Joao Pedro Stedile, leader of the Landless Rural Workers-MST was interviewed at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil in January 2005. This edited transcript is part of a discussion with Greg Albo, Leo Panitch, Carlos Torres and Carolyn Watson for Relay Magazine.

Relay: At the end of Chavez's speech, when he praised Lula, you did not clap or stand. Was that a signal to the MST members and the left in general, including Lula's supporters, or a sort of pressure to bring Lula back to a more leftist position?

Stedile: When Chavez concluded his speech, he sent a message to Lula and to a splinter group (the PSOL*), not to me or to the MST, so why did I have to react to it? Therefore the content of his message was, 'if you like me you also have to accept Lula'. Some people might want to use this situation to create the perception of a existing race for the mantle of leadership in Latin America, which is not case. So the expectation of the PT was that hopefully Chavez would not address issues that could create tensions in Porto Alegre, such as the IMF policies, the GMO controversy, the FTAA, etc. Throughout his speech Chavez asserted that his contradictions were not with Lula or the PT and gave a radical speech without attacking or criticizing hot political issues of Brazil. Moreover, he praised Lula publicly, although the people are aware of the differences between the two of them. Chavez emphasized his views and what he believes in without confronting Lula's or the PT's agenda.

Is important to understand that the current correlation of forces in Brazil and the political alliance that brought

Lula to office after fifteen years of harsh neoliberal policies, also produced a decline in mass mobilization. This is contrary to what Eric Hobsbawm asserts, which is that the left can only win elections as an outcome of an increase in mass mobilization. This has been in fact the case during the twentieth century in many countries; when the people fight for their rights there are increased chances for the left to win office.

In the case of Brazil this happened the other way around, Lula won the election with the mass movement in decline. Why did it happen that way? It happened mainly because a sector of the Brazilian bourgeoisie was frightened by the crisis in Argentina. Lula's victory is the result of three main factors. The people did not want neoliberalism any longer, and even if Fernando Enrique Cardoso, Lula's predecessor would have appointed Jesus as a presidential candidate he would not have won. The bourgeois sector is scared by the Argentine crisis, and turned to Lula whose career profile and credentials gave him political credibility. Finally, the electoral campaign was not very political, the main slogan of the PT was "Now is Lula's turn (time)". Nor was a project or a new proposal outlined by the PT. In that context, even we who knew Lula's history believed that he was going to head a left government, but the electoral context did not allow a government of the left.

Instead, a coalition that represents the political center was elected. In Lula's government you find right-wing ministers, liberals, and unfortunately they controlled the economic portfolio and other minor ministries. You can also find some ministers from the left, in the land reform ministry for instance and

in few other areas. The issue is that the social and political organizations of the left did not notice Lula's evolution, it took them two years to realize what exactly was happening with the government. What really happened is that the program was not a program of the left, the program was "Now is Lula's turn (time)". The alliance that took office was not of the left and the composition of forces in society was not favorable to the left, we were, and we still are under conservative hegemonic forces. This is more evident in the economic sector, in the government, in the mass media, in universities, in the church. That political context could not have led to something different.

Relay: What you are saying might be correct, but how do you assess the increase in the PT electoral support, the victory in several municipalities, the development of the participatory budget process, etc. Even the parties left of the PT got more votes and there was also mobilization in many cities of Brazil!

Stedile: That is classical propaganda so common on the left. In Brazil there was a decline in electoral turnout. Although the PT increased its electoral share and elected more city officials and members of the parliament, that in itself does not mean that you are building a favorable balance of forces, that does not mean more mass organization.

Relay: When we were here three years ago and witnessed what was going on, and in talking with long-time members of the PT about the prospects of Lula's government, they stated that change was afoot. But we left Brazil

persuaded that the PT was going to follow the social democratic tradition and become an electoral party. Even the MST was optimistic about the new government; how did you approach the MST members regarding electoral and political support for Lula?

Stedile: At the time we believed that Lula's election could have been a spark to trigger the resurgence of mass movements. If he won the election it would create hope and then build into something else, and with Lula's victory the MST membership believed that that was going to be the case. Yet, we did not ask for anything, indeed we intensified the grassroots organizing perceiving that the conjuncture was positive for us; at the time we had thirty thousand families in camps and we jumped to mobilize two hundred thousand families who managed to occupy unproductive lands. Except we were the only organization doing that, and it was not enough to reanimate the masses. That is what we are still trying to do now.

Please allow me to continue with my view of the present conjuncture. First, our relationship with Lula and his government. We understand that a political party is either in office or in the opposition. We are not a political party, the MST is a social movement and the characteristics of both are essentially different. Therefore as a social movement we are independent and autonomous, we do not need to be either for or against Lula. That is not our role, that is a problem for the political parties. What we do is organize, educate, mobilize, and form cadres. In that sense when the government does something good we praise it and when they implement neoliberal policies then we give them a hard time, albeit not aimed at the government but at the specific policies. But, what is the way out of the current situation?

The government is still implementing neoliberal policies and we know the outcomes of these policies which can only deepen social differences in society. For instance, due to agreements with the IMF, the government trans-

ferred in its two years in office, roughly eighty billion dollars US to the banks as interest payments. The government said they wanted to help the poor by creating a family voucher to fight hunger and allocated 20 dollars per household on a monthly bases to six million families. This amounted to, in the same two years, six billion dollars US. That is what the government is doing. The government's politicians and ministers are aware that this represents further wealth concentration but the will of the president is not enough to change that, not even the PT's will is enough, they don't have the strength to implement changes.

Consequently, change and transfor-



mation will not 'come down' from the government. On the contrary, when a government relies on the congress and the congress is dominated by conservative forces the tendency is to move further to the right. For us in the social movements we have only one way out: first, we need to build a long term strategy with a political agenda and design a social force within that strategy. What are the implications of this? And second, we need to open a debate at the grassroots level related to the building of an alternative project, and that represents a major challenge since it implies defeating the neoliberal project.

That is for the time being since the correlation of forces do not yet exist for a socialist project in a country which depends on international financial capital. Therefore, we need to formulate a new economic proposal for a transition process that can create conditions to answer to the real and concrete needs of the population.

Relay: Are you implying that the prospect of socialism is not envisioned by anyone today in Brazil?

Stedile: Well, the Trotskyist groups argue that now is the time for socialism, otherwise barbarism will be the answer. Socialism now, as if it was just a matter of will. We do want to build a socialist society but in a real and pleasing life, which is also a integral part of my vision of today's socialism. The problem is not to find the final alternative to capitalism; the issue is to have answers for what we need today. The second task is to form and educate cadres that are able to make a concrete analysis of the Brazilian reality, also in that sense we have issues with our organic intellectuals, in general, they are rigorous in the analysis of the Brazilian reality. But our intellectuals, our friends in academia got used to writing a couple of pages in bourgeois periodicals and with that they are happy. And the third task is to invigorate the social struggle for people's demands to create a new social movement that can further the conditions for the reanimation of the masses. That is what can change the constellation of forces. Only then the government will be forced to turn to the left. Without a reanimation of the social movement the government will remain as it is; a useless instrument for the people.

Relay: But that represents a new and lengthy process?

Stedile: That is true, this can be a long process but it can also be quick, we don't know that. Another issue is that if that process takes too long it is possible that we in the social left →

might be forced to vote for Lula again to stop the neoliberal right-wing which is projecting a strong come back, acknowledging that Lula's government will be a centrist one. As you might be aware the recent municipal election in Sao Paulo and in Porto Alegre reflected that when the right wing works together it can win elections in Brazil. Even the banks did not contribute money to the PT campaign, their approach was 'you did the job we needed you to do' so now give us back the post because we can continue the job ourselves now.

Relay: Do you mean that there is no way out of the current conjuncture in which Lula seems to be caught between the left and the right?

Stedile: No necessarily, what we are saying is that the only way out, given the conjuncture, is to create a new

project for the left and beyond and to work in education and mobilization. Along with that we are proposing the creation of a new social front which we call "Coordination of Social Movements." The front represents the convergence of most of the social left groups and organizations, some are moderates and others more radical, from labour unions, students, church based groups and the MST is more or less in the middle of them. "Coordination" is moving slowly because we all agree that unity is more important than speed. We are 'sectors' of the social movement and we function and operate as such, having in mind that we are not an organization. Some social leaders are involved, but this is for the time being a social front from which an alternative project can emerge based on a common agenda at the country-wide level. During the first year of working

together the only agreement we reached was related to the struggle for employment.

At present we are moving forward, the agreement has been expanded to the fight against the economic policies of the government and in that process we make the moderates understand that we must act and work together. Also in the same process we promote the need for building an alternative project, which will not emerge from the current political parties but from the social realm. **R**

Transcript and Translation by Carlos Torres.

*The PSOL (Party for Socialism and Freedom) is a splinter tendency of the PT

The Training of MST Political Cadres:

MST

This text is taken from a seminar given by Adelar Pizetta, a member of the MST's Nacional Florestan Fernandes. The seminar was part of the school's inauguration, held during January 20 to 22nd, 2005.

It is important to understand training as a political concept. Training elaborates the theory that the struggle is to transform the impossible into possible. Not as a mere desire, but as a way of building social and political forces. We cannot solve poverty without giving power to people. To give power to people is to give knowledge and to expand their participation in the political, social, and cultural life of society.

Training has the means to transform people and realities. The power of change is linked to the level of awareness, to the degree of organization and in the willingness for struggle. These

factors depend on the qualification of the leadership and militants who form and build the organization.

The training of cadres must be linked to a project. If the movement or the organization is not concerned with building a project, it will not form cadres either. The project is an essential instrument for revolutionary training. Those who do not form cadres will hardly ever reach their strategic objectives in the revolution. The organization will not go far, and if it does, it possibly means that it has changed directions, and it is no longer committed to the revolution.

Mass movement determines the rhythm and the need for training. The challenge during a decrease in activity of mass movements is how to train cadres. Movements forget training and ideological work. Apathy takes over movements and militants. In moments

of strong mass movements, the ground for training is fertile. People learn a lot in revolutionary periods because they can unmask reality. People learn from struggle, but theory systematizes what has been learned. Knowledge comes with the study of theory, which systematizes explanations with reflections about social practice. Without political and organizational practice nobody develops politically - no militant grows and becomes a political cadre. Cadres emerge from movements and from political struggle; they are the product of the conflicting process. It is important to observe the permanent and dialectic relationship. Therefore, it is necessary to link the theoretical and the practical.

In terms of training, methods must be creative, collective, happy, open, and participatory - not authoritarian. If in the past it was said that the ends justify

the means, that is not completely mistaken, but we must go beyond it: we will only get to just ends through just means. The revolution aims at democracy, which must contribute to the construction of the kingdom of freedom. We cannot wish to be like Che in speech and in practice resemble authoritarians. Revolution and democracy are inseparable aspects.

Training must articulate personal experience with the experience of the working class – the history of class struggle and universal history. In that sense, learning is permanent and collective. It can never be dogmatic, nor spontaneous/anarchist. It must be prepared and implemented in a dialectic way, articulating the different kinds of

knowledge and levels, as well as the principles and values that collaborate in the construction of a political project with strategic objectives. We need to be vigilant to understand and fight the deviations and deficiencies of our training experiences: dogmatism, doctrinarianism,

authoritarianism, paternalism, separation of content from real life, etc.

The activities of training – theory and practice – must take into consideration the aspects of reason and emotion. It is necessary to learn to talk to the heart for knowledge to get to the conscience. Sometimes the path is not direct; it must go through the heart, through the emotion in order to become aware. It is necessary to value and respect culture, affection, to be fond of each other. Humanistic and socialist values are not cold. They need life in their actions, in our behaviour, in order to be better explained and to become

training references.

There are no revolutionary cadres without cultural knowledge. Culture is the collective heritage of all practices and habits of the people. To know them and to produce them is the task of the cadres. *Mística* is a mechanism to celebrate, cultivate a political project, through symbols, culture, memory, dreams. *Mística* teaches us to cultivate a project; there is no project without *mística* as there is no *mística* without a project, without a cause. The masses must be contaminated by the *mística* in order to be able to carry in their arms the cause of the revolution, and freedom.

The training process must necessarily be thought out and developed with



passion. It is necessary to find ways to involve, motivate and encourage youth participation in the processes of struggle, organization and training. Many see the struggle as a sacrifice to be made in the present in the name of a future freedom. But the struggle cannot be a sacrifice to be made for the future. The struggle must be our freedom.

Possibly the most difficult battle is the one we must fight with ourselves; to fight the deviations that we have inherited from bourgeois ideology: individualism, selfishness, consumerism, etc. These are lodged in our consciousness. To be vigilant, to use criticism and

self-criticism, are indispensable. It is necessary to be cautious, careful with cadres and with the masses as well. We must have the conviction that there is no half ideology: it is either bourgeois or proletarian. We will win the trust and the adhesion of the masses if we are an ethical and moral example. Personal behaviour is one of the best arguments in the training process.

Our method must be to both convince and learn from people, without imposing, without discriminating, without underrating knowledge and cultures. Humility is a fundamental requisite of the leader in the training process and in the organization of people.

One of the main tasks of the cadres

is to analyse and interpret with people the cause of their problems and collectively, through organization and conscious struggle, seek solutions for problems. The people are the protagonists of their own emancipation.

Political training is strategic. No

movement or organization will triumph if it does not adequately form its political cadres. The revolution must be understood as a dynamic, creative and profound process, capable of transforming social structures and the people who live in them. Therefore, revolution is continuous, it happens inside of the actual revolution. People who have not taken care of these aspects have failed. History has shown that regression can also take place. **R**

Dear Friends,

We would like to let you know about yet another victory of solidarity between Brazilians and the peoples of the world: the inauguration of the Florestan Fernandes National School (ENFF), on January 23 2005. Built in Guararema (60 km/36 miles from São Paulo) by 1,115 rural landless workers, the school is the valuable fruit of our struggle. It represents four and a half years of work by volunteers from the settlements and encampments across the country. A work realized by many hands already calloused by the hoe.

After many years of collective discussions in the various levels of the MST, the school comes with the purpose of promoting the thinking, planning, and organizing of the activists and directors of the Movement, and developing their political, technical, and ideological learning. Born out of the goal of capacitating rural youth, women and men for production, commerce, and management in the encampments and settlements, the ENFF will have a pedagogy and methodology adapted to the reality of the workers in the countryside.

On a plot of 30,000 square meters (300,000 square feet), structures were built of soil-cement bricks produced at the site itself. The technique is agro-ecological, eliminating plaster, reducing the amount of iron, steel and cement in the project; the bricks are more resistant and easier to lay. In all there are three classrooms-which together hold up to 200 people-an auditorium, and two amphitheatres. The resources for the construction of the school were collected through the sale of the book Terra ("Land") -with text by Jose Saramago, songs by Chico Buarque, and photographs by Sebastiao Salgado-as well as contributions from European non-governmental organizations, and donations from Brazilian and international friends.

To the Mestre with Affection

The tribute to the teacher and sociologist Florestan Fernandes is a product of the admiration and recognition by the MST of his untiring and consistent life trajectory alongside the workers' struggle. A severe critic of capitalism, he defended liberty, democracy, and sought a more just and fraternal society. Ten years after his death, his legacy and his ideas orient our actions.

Florestan believed that the greatest number of people should have access to knowledge, which parallels our emphasis that the struggle for land must continue until the day when every family of workers achieves its emancipation. In this sense, for the MST, the struggle for agrarian reform and the dream of social justice goes beyond conquering land. The struggle of the landless is for a people's project in Brazil, based in dignity sovereignty, and solidarity among all.

We would like to thank all who participated and participate in this continuous process of the construction of a dream. We invite you to get to know our school, offer courses, and share in this conquest.

A warm embrace to all,

National Secretariat of the MST

To the Comrades of the MST: You are Nurturing the Right Seeds

Dear Comrades,

I had the privilege to be with you earlier this week at the opening of the Florestan Fernandes National School. I had read about the MST and heard reports about your meetings, but (as my companera Marta Harnecker said), it is one thing to know through the mind and quite another to know through the mind and the heart. I had some thoughts about what I saw and heard which I wished I could have told you at the time but which I would like to share now.

Several speakers described problems in the training of cadres in the past and talked about how the teaching was not relevant to the development of new revolutionary subjects. And, my immediate thought was— how could this be? After all, it was Marxism that was being taught. What could be more relevant to the transformation of human beings than Marx's work? A red thread runs throughout Marx's work from his earliest writings— the concept of revolutionary practice, that simultaneous changing of circumstances and self-change. Over and over again, we see Marx talking about how, through their struggles, people change both circumstances and themselves. Human subjects— formed under specific conditions but transforming those conditions and themselves through their own activity— here is a Marx entirely relevant to the struggles of today.

What could be more relevant than learning from the Marx who himself always learned from the struggles of workers? From his earliest glimpse of the liberating process of workers joining together in struggle to the lessons workers in the Paris Commune spontaneously taught him about the necessary form of a workers state— this is a Marx for whom the importance of struggles from below and the creation of spaces in which workers and communities can proceed to transform both circumstances and themselves was obvious. This is clearly a Marx for today's struggles.

But why wasn't this always obvious? Why is it that people (not only at this school) could talk about education for cadres that was not relevant, that did not stress the importance of the transformation of the human subject? The Marx so many of us learned was the Marx of the development of the productive forces. All history, we learned, revolved around the development of productive forces— productive forces that were held back by old productive relations, productive forces that were fostered by new productive relations. What happened to the question of the simultaneous changing of circumstances and self-change? Silence. It's as if history played a trick on Marx.

The history in question was the October revolution in what became the Soviet Union, a country far behind its capi-

talist neighbours. In that setting, the most rapid possible development of the productive forces— without regard for the character of productive relations or the effect on human subjects— was seen as the immediate task. Should the tempo be reduced, asked Stalin in 1931? No, he answered. We are 50 to 100 years behind the capitalist countries. Russia had been defeated before, and it would be defeated again if it did not make up that difference in 10 years. This was one of the best forecasts ever to be made in the Soviet Union—10 years later the army of Nazi Germany invaded.

Should we be surprised, then, that the Marxism adopted and spread at this time was one which focused so much on the development of productive forces? For Official Marxism, the transformation of human subjects appeared as the result of a trickle-down effect— new productive forces, it was assumed, would surely free people. So, can we simply say that this was a horrible distortion of Marx? Yes and no. It's something I've said in the past and which I would like to be able to continue to say. But, perhaps matters are a bit more complex.

Victor Serge, an anarchist supporter of the early years of the Soviet Revolution, was asked once— weren't the seeds of Stalin already there in Lenin? There were *many* seeds in Lenin, he answered. Perhaps we need to acknowledge that there were many seeds in Marx— or at least several. What determines which seeds grow? Perhaps the combination of the historical environment and the conscious nurturing of a particular seed explains why the focus upon the development of productive forces flourished while emphasis upon the transformation of the human subject so important to Marx was choked off.

Certainly, though, the historical environment has changed now. And, I think it is obvious that the Marx who stressed revolutionary practice is the Marx we need today. This is a Marxism that can play a major role in aiding the new movements which are trying to create the better world we all want. But, we need to recognise, too, that these new movements like yours are also bringing out this side of Marx, helping it to flourish. One comrade stressed at the School that a revolutionary movement needs a revolutionary theory. I agree. Our history demonstrates, though, that a revolutionary theory also needs a revolutionary movement; it needs those struggles from below (such as yours) which can nurture the right seeds. So, I hope that in your new school you will always keep in mind that this theory is not something fixed and handed down from above but exists in a critical dialectic of revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice.

In solidarity,

Michael A. Lebowitz (24 January 2005)

Michael A. Lebowitz is author of *Beyond Capital: Marx's Political Economy of the Working Class* (Palgrave 2003), winner of the Deutscher Prize as the best book in the Marxist tradition (in the English-speaking world) for 2004.

A review of the *Motorcycle Diaries* in the last issue of *Relay* evoked much discussion. Below are three contributions on revolutionary icons and Che Guevara

The Motorcycle Diaries & Che

Carlos Torres

The review of *Motorcycle Diaries* in issue # 4 of *Relay* is confused. As a film, I believe, the narrative of the events really follows the content of Che's diaries that the film is based upon, with a few spices thrown in, but avoiding the soap-opera style. The movie did not even deal with the controversial sexual encounters of the two young Argentine adventurers. As the reviewer asserted, the movie was well structured and enjoyable and I truly believe that as a movie it represents a good attempt to 'humanize' individuals who

representationally film icons that are the embodiment of the 'certain failures' of 'youthful revolutionary aspirations'. Che Guevara recruited hundred of peasants all over Latin America before his assassination in Bolivia, and thousands more afterwards in Latin America to this day. He was, and is, just the 'kind of revolutionary the ruling class does not prefer'. The film critic today should not attempt to kill Che Guevara again in reviewing a film about Ernesto Guevara. The political right has been doing this over and again with the release of *Motorcycle Diaries*. We should not expect this from the political left. Revolutionaries need to be assessed on their own terms in the circumstances that made them: Che Guevara as a socialist political actor, not as iconic hero or clichéd devil. **R**



Ernesto (El Che) Guevara's Legacy

nchamah miller

are often satanized and satirized by the main stream corporate entities. Certainly, the motorcycle diaries movie is not about 'Che Guevara': this is a movie about Ernesto Guevara de la Cerna, a young man who would later become a legendary guerrilla fighter and a emblematic image for rebels of every generation after his death. But we can not randomly mix-up movies with reality and drama with revolution. The politics of revolution have tragically claimed many socialist figures such as the Rosenbergs, Patrice Lumumba, Sacco and Vanzetti and Salvador Allende among others. And it has never been easy to portray their complex lives and circumstances in cinema, as analogies that often make sense for mass audiences and the screen typically avoid the paradoxes and struggles that are unavoidably integral to revolution. And it is these complex circumstances that in assessing the cinematic portrait of Ernesto Guevara, that the review becomes remarkably biased vis-a-vis Che Guevara, and his life and revolutionary engagement. It is easy for the film critic to play a provocative role by attacking political leaders who are symbols of the left. Historical actors quickly become

expedition of the Granma yacht in 1956; a Cuban national would have been preferable: but, Ernesto Guevara, the Argentinean volunteered and, Fidel for lack of other personnel, finally acceded to include "El Che". The landing of this expeditionary force in the Coloradas beaches (Cuba) led to the Cuban revolution of 1959 and catapulted each of its members to international prominence. However, this act in itself does not constitute El Che's claim to fame. Rather, his gift to Cuba and humanity appears in the voluminous collection of speeches and writings, mainly in letters written during his expeditions throughout Africa and Latin America. These letters form the basis of his political the Cuban revolution adopted as one of the corner stones of its ideological foundations.

One of the most acclaimed is his letter written in July 1965, one year prior to his death to Carlos Quijano the Director of the Uruguayan Review "Marcha". Here, El Che emphasises that socialism cannot be built on the blunt edges of socially fracturing capitalist production. For El Che a just social society will only emerge when production serves the



needs of humanity and for this to occur the individual as part of this social mass must find the political space to express his/her social and cultural subjectivity. For Cuban's therefore El Che was not merely a man of armed militancy, but a thinker who had accepted thought, which the reality of what then was the golden age of American imperialist hegemony and gave his life to fight against this blunt terrorizing instrument. **R**

Revolutionaries

Greg Albo

It has often been the failure of revolutionary organizations, particularly those trained in certain strands of Marxism, that they expect revolutions to occur only under certain conditions – ‘when history decrees that the fetters of capitalism to have become objectively unsustainable’ or ‘when the politics of permanent revolution make for a necessarily international socialism in a newly constituted world government’. The duty of revolutionaries is to be disciplined, and to plan and organize for when the right conditions emerge. But revolutions – whether in Russia in 1917, Cuba in 1959 or Venezuela in 2005 – never wait upon the forces of production to burst through the fetters of capitalist social relations of production, or for the right alignment of global social forces to make an ideologically correct world revolution apart from national states and

contexts.

In his book *Revolutionaries* (New York: New Press, 2001), Eric Hobsbawm notes that “all revolutionaries must always believe in the necessity of taking the initiative, the refusal to wait upon events to make the revolution for them.” This is what the practical lives of Marx, Lenin, Gramsci, Mao, Fidel tell us. As Hobsbawm elaborates: “That is why the test of greatness in revolutionaries has always been their capacity to discover the new and unexpected characteristics of revolutionary situations and to adapt their tactics to them.... the revolutionary does not create the waves on which he rides, but balances on them.... sooner or later he must stop riding on the wave and must control its direction and movement.” The life of Che Guevara, and the Latin American insurgency that ‘Guevarism’ became associated with during the ‘years of lead’ of the 1960s to 1970s, also tells us that is not enough to want a revolution, and to pursue it unselfishly and passionately.

The course of the 20th century revolutions and revolutionary movements and the consolidation of neoliberalism today has demonstrated all of these things. It is why the daily media ridicules and demonizes socialism and socialists virtually without challenge. The release of the movie *Motorcycle Diaries* on the early life of Che brought a new flurry of such articles. It is why socialists need to chart a different course in discussing and debating the role of historical actors like Che, and the circumstances that made them. Sober assessment of the past is also part of “the refusal to wait upon events” in remaking the terrain of possible futures. **R**



Labour Challenging Empire

Richard Harding

The purpose of the U.S. Empire, in the words of Andrew Bacevich in his book *American Empire*, “is to preserve and where both feasible and conducive to U.S. interests, to expand an American Imperium. Central to this strategy is a commitment to global openness —removing barriers that inhibit the movement of goods, capital, ideas, and people. Its ultimate objective is the creation of an open and integrated international order based on the principles of democratic capitalism, with the United States as the ultimate guarantor of order and enforcer of norms.” What can working people do, with a sense of both popular sovereignty (the democratic rights of peoples to self-determination and self-government) and international solidarity, to turn back the tides of Empire?

I come from Windsor, Ontario, Canada, a ‘front line’ facing empire. From my door step, every day on my way to my employment at Ford Motor Company, I can see the three towers of the GM building across the Detroit River which marks the border between Canada and the U.S. My city, I am told, lives and breaths by the auto-industry, which locally employs approximately 15,000 CAW members, and provides work, directly or indirectly, for thousands of unorganized and organized non- CAW workers. As a working Canadian, I understand that to be dependent on American capital (or any private capital for that matter) and markets for our livelihood is to be severely restricted in a struggle for popular sovereignty in Canada to remain in the empire.

The ‘sovereignty must be sacrificed to economic imperatives’ argument is common, and been the justification of globalization and free trade the world over, including in Canada. The agents of empire in Canada all promote it – the big business media such as Canwest and Southam, the big Canadian capitalists in the Council of Chief Executives, the continentalist think tanks like the Fraser and CD Howe Institutes through their ‘Border Papers’, the ‘deep-integration’ advocates in Canadian universities such as the University of Calgary’s Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, and what Jim Laxer refers to as “a fifth column” Conservative Party occupying the official opposition seats in Ottawa.

Some attempts to define the concept of popular sovereignty for today have been made. They have ranged from “involvement of all people in the affairs of their nation” to the *Canadian Dimension* Editorial Collective’s suggestion to “confront” the Canadian state and demand “new institutions for popular democratic control of the economy, resource development and social expenditures.” This latter stance is, in my view, an appropriate starting point for working Canadians in general, and the Canadian labour movement in

particular. It is to be against the abstract internationalism of some sections of the Left that dismiss the struggles for democracy in Canada out of hand as simply left-nationalism. This falsely polarizes the struggle for democracy here against struggles for self-determination or workers’ control elsewhere – a position that would have Marx rolling over in his Highgate grave.

Confronting the Canadian state on issues of national sovereignty is nothing new to the labour movement. The fight against the free trade agreements from the 1980s on saw labour pit itself against the continentalist agenda of business. More recently, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the Council of Canadians have combined forces to attack the constitutionality of the NAFTA in Canadian courts. Last October saw a conference in Toronto organized by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, York University and the CAW brought academics together to discuss challenging ‘deep integration’ with the U.S.

A new strategy is needed to confront the Canadian state, and room must be created within the house of labour for this work to begin. In Windsor a group of workers, including myself, have been engaged in a campaign of popular education. *The Scoop* newspaper, founded in 2001, is a monthly publication which stresses Canadian working class politics and the challenges to Canadian democracy from North American integration as principle themes. It has found a large following among workers inside and outside the auto plants; one of its founders has won a spot on city council in the recent municipal elections. The local university radio station is host to a weekly programme from the same perspective.

So far, these initiatives have received warm welcome by the leadership of labour in the community. But the real test will be in the coming year when an attempt is made to further discussion on socialism and Canadian democratic sovereignty within the political education committees. These have been traditionally the stomping ground of the New Democratic Party. Past experiences of Canadian socialists within the NDP and the labour movement are not encouraging. An example was the Waffle movement for an independent socialist Canada of the 1960s and 1970s. In 1972 at the University of Windsor, a meeting the Waffle and sympathetic auto workers discussed the now defunct Auto-Pact and the option of a nationalised Canadian auto industry. This contributed to the decision by nervous labour leaders and the party establishment to kick the Waffle out of the NDP. At that time the CAW did not exist as an independent national union. Today, the CAW is an expres-

sion of the self determination of Canada's working class and labour internationalism; the union will be pivotal in any struggle against the U.S. empire for a more democratic Canada.

The broader Canadian labour movement is also essential to any project for popular sovereignty in Canada. Every one of its union halls must become a centre for resistance to the Empire and the accentuated colonial mentality gripping the Canadian state since the War on Terror. The vigour displayed at the bargaining table will be of little effect in fighting off the concessions demanded by the U.S. empire and continentalist capitalists if Canadian workers are not mobilized with a sense of, and confidence in, their crucial role in protecting and enhancing Canada's capacity to set its own course in meeting popular democratic and egalitarian demands. A coordinated effort aimed at popular education forums, including film screenings on world events to develop a deep sense of international solidarity, with students, unionists and community members should become part of everyday life in union halls. Canadian workers have little direction to information from a Left perspective, and their voting habits and political attitudes often reflect this. The Canadian labour movement must develop a new culture of popular education, democracy and resistance) which will, in the words of Antonio Gramsci on the Popular University in Italy in 1916, "show concretely that it is possible to do better and gather a public round a cultural heat source...."

Sam Gindin, CAW former advisor to Bob White and Buzz Hargrove, and a member of the Socialist Project, has argued that "the issue doesn't lie so much in pointing out that something is wrong, but in developing a confidence to do something about it, developing an understanding of what that entails, and developing the organizational commitment to go ahead and do it." This suggestion points to creating new institutions as pillars in a project of deepening democracy and popular sovereignty, and create space to inject a new internationalism.

The Bolivarian Republic in Venezuela has been a good example in this respect. While living in poverty despite the vast natural wealth of their country (mainly in the form of oil), a majority of Venezuelans elected a left-nationalist government in 1998. The new constitution ratified in a popular referendum in 1999 declares that "sovereignty resides untransferable in the people...", and that "the organs of the State emanate from and are subject to the sovereignty of the people." The Bolivarian constitution goes on to declare that "every person has the right to adequate, safe and comfortable, hygienic housing..." This is a promise the Bolivarian state is working hard to make good on by providing funds and land grants to those who live in the barrios. Hours of work are "not to exceed eight hours per day or 44 hours per week." Night work "shall not exceed seven hours per day or 35 hours per week." A commitment to the further reduction of work hours is also included in the constitution "to make better use of free time for the benefit of the physical, spiritual and cultural development of workers." Workers are also guaranteed direct rights: "without authorization in

advance...to freely establish... union organizations as they may deem appropriate...." The rights of women and aboriginal peoples are also set out in no uncertain terms.

This stands in stark contrast to the modern day Family Compact which inhabits all levels of Canadian government. Canadian workers have experienced attacks on labour rights, such as the introduction of a sixty hour work week in Ontario, and legislation making it difficult to organize trade unions in their workplaces. Canadian labour can lead by openly recognizing movements such as that in Venezuela, building concrete links with them, exchanging strategies, and challenging the Canadian state when it stands by and does nothing, or assists the attackers.

I am under no illusions about the state of the labour movement or Canadian Left. To quote Jim Laxer again "the political Right is streets ahead of the left in calculating that the great issue of our time is Canadian sovereignty". The Right has linked neoliberalism with an attack on democracy and popular sovereignty. Many on the left, inside and outside of labour and the NDP, still polarize this debate as one between 'nationalism versus internationalism'. This is a false, other-worldly dichotomy that takes workers out of the communities they live. It is a position that has had no historical resonance with workers anywhere in the world, and remains completely on the margins of political life. It disarms workers at their workplaces and in their communities in struggles over the terrain of the state and democracy. Marx made the point that workers 'must first come to terms with their own national bourgeoisie'. In this struggle, they must also be resoundingly internationalist in supporting workers elsewhere. There is not an opposition but a unity in fighting for democracy in Canada in support of the struggles of the Venezuelan peoples. Indeed, nothing would help the peoples of the Americas more than Canadian workers extending their capacity to control the Canadian state and begin a deep process of democratization.

A warning to the Canadian labour movement can be found in the words of a Peloponnesian ambassador trying to convince others of the threat of Athenian imperialists in 432 B.C. "Think of this too: while you are hanging back, they never hesitate; while you stay at home, they are always abroad; for they think that the farther they go the more they will get, while you think any movement may endanger what you have already. If they win a victory they follow it up at once, and if they suffer a defeat, they scarcely fall back at all." A transformed Canadian state, rooted in the principle of popular sovereignty, and unflinchingly supportive of democratic struggles abroad, is a necessary and key political objective of the labour movement in Canada, if we are to be effective in world-wide struggle against the U.S. empire. **R**

Richard Harding works as an electrician at the Ford casting plant, and is an active member of Windsor CAW Local 200.

Social Justice Unionism for the 21st Century

Bill Fletcher, Jr.

The below is from a presentation at the COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) Summer School on October 11, 2004

Good morning, comrades. I am honored to speak with you this morning and address the theme “**Worker education and organizing in the period of globalization.**” It should come as no surprise when I suggest that this is a mammoth topic and that I will only be able to speak to a piece of this. So, I ask your forgiveness in advance.

Let me start by discussing something that may seem like an incredible tangent: the cavalry or horse charge. In warfare, the cavalry charge had been a critical component for hundreds of years of human history. The cavalry was, in many respects, the elite of most militaries. Yet the last cavalry charge in formal warfare took place during World War I. Why is that? Simply put, the nature of warfare changed dramatically at that time with the introduction of the machine gun on a massive scale and the use of mechanized, automotive warfare. A horse can do very little when compared with a tank. And certainly while dozens or hundreds of horses approaching a fixed position is probably quite the sight, a machine gun becomes the great equalizer.

There were many in the military of different countries that could not accept the end of the cavalry charge and, as such, the end of the cavalry. Yet the change in the nature of warfare necessitated the development of new approaches, at the levels of strategy, tactics, and equipment. While horses have continued to play a ceremonial role in

most militaries, they are simply not part of the equation in the art of modern warfare.

We are looking at a fundamental change in the conditions of the modern class struggle. The international trade union movement, with certain important exceptions, is largely unprepared to address these changes. Certainly there are advanced forces, including but not limited to your own movement, but I am speaking about the international movement as a whole. We have international organizations such as



the ICFTU and the international trade union secretariats/global union federations, not to mention certain national labor centers, which have had great difficulty accepting the realities of the post-Cold War world, and indeed, the realities that have accompanied the development of globalization. Collectively they—we—are trapped in an old paradigm of trade unionism. To take the analogy that I earlier used further, consider the beginning of World War II in Europe. The French lost to the Germans not mainly because they were outnumbered or because of the

superiority of German weaponry, but rather because the French were, in a sense, fighting World War I, whereas the Germans realized that they had fought **and lost** World War I in 1918. They were now approaching warfare from a totally different vantage point.

So, what then is the reality which we face? Much has been said about globalization but I don't think that we have fully appreciated its actual significance. Globalization is not the same thing as a global economy. Capitalism itself has always been global; it started off global, a fact which we, people of Africa and of African descent, know all too well.

Is there nothing new? There are new developments, including new technologies that make possible the internationalization of production and the hyper-mobility of capital. There is the interpenetration of capital, and its expansion into regions where its existence had been limited. There is the breaking down of so-called trade barriers. There is the weakening of many nation-states.

Is this globalization? Only in one sense can we say that it is. What we just outlined are symptoms of the larger phenomenon, but globalization is actually another name for the reconstruction and reorganization of global capitalism. It is made possible by some of the things that I just presented, but it is driven by the decisions of human beings rather than some deterministic force. It happens to be currently led by forces that have adopted neo-liberalism, but globalization can be advanced by non-neo-liberal forces, for example, former World Bank economist Joseph Stiglitz, a phenomenon which we will see more

of as neo-liberalism is further discredited.

Globalization points toward the construction of a transnational capitalist system and state, though such a state does not currently exist. What does exist is the US which is taking the lead in the process of globalization, that is, it is taking the lead in the reorganization of global capitalism under its own hegemony. Within the US there are struggles in the ruling circles themselves about the form or shape of such a reorganization, but the ruling circles agree that global capitalism must be under some form of US leadership, whether that is unilateral leadership or leadership in conjunction with other imperialist partners.

Is globalization weakening nation-states? In one sense yes; in another sense no. Free trade and other agreements have been signed by governments that weaken national sovereignty and to that extent it is almost like a person's self-imprisonment or self-commitment. Governments are putting restrictions on what future leaders of those same states can do in order that the path of, in this case, neo-liberal globalization is not broken.

In this context, the US particularly, but the Group of 8 generally, end up ruling the rest of the world through the operation (and their domination) of the non-Group of 8 states. Thus, it should not be surprising that after 11 September that not only did the USA institute the so-called USAPatriot Act, but country after country adopted very similar acts. The USAPatriot Act is a piece of highly repressive legislation which was pushed through the US Congress in the immediate aftermath of the 11 September terrorist attacks. The adoption of similar legislation by various nations was not just mimicry, but rather evidence of some states putting themselves at the service of others in order to strengthen the state apparatus, **not in order to fight terrorism** but instead to fight resistance to neo-liberal globalization. This is only one example of why nation-states remain important as a site of class strug-

gle and cannot be easily dismissed in the name of a more amorphous struggle against an unspecified, global empire.

Globalization, then, becomes something analogous to capitalism's expansion at the nation-state level, overcoming local boundaries, e.g., municipal, provincial. I am not suggesting the development of a peaceful, super-imperialism, but I am suggesting that we are witnessing the emergence of a transnational capitalist class (a class which sees itself as sharing certain common interests) and attempts at the building of a transnational capitalist state. Institutions such as the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank are part of this architecture. This would not, however, be a nebulous "Empire", as suggested by some commentators (e.g., Hart & Negri), but could be very much a US-dominated network, perhaps in conjunction with the rest of the Group of 8. If one reviews the September 2002 National Security Strategy Doctrine of the Bush administration, one sees right there the outlines for a US-dominated world. In my opinion, though, for a host of reasons, I do not believe that the US cannot dominate the world alone.

Before turning back to the trade union movement, permit me to offer a more general comment about capitalism and issues of strategy. Capitalism has proven far more resilient than many of us on the Left ever anticipated. Contrary to those who succumbed to economic determinism or economism, I believe that we can conclude a few things about *actually existing capitalism*. One, capitalism is prone to crises but will not collapse on its own (unless such a collapse is the result of war or environmental catastrophes, both of which are possible). In other words, waiting for capitalism to unravel will have one waiting for a long time.

Two, the period of the so-called welfare state and the rise of social democracy corresponded to a unique global situation. Western Europe, the USA, Canada and Japan found themselves in a period of contention with the USSR and China. Particularly in

Western Europe and Japan, they also found themselves facing significant left/progressive social movements that were demanding change. In that context, concessions had to be made in order to ensure the stability of the Western system. [note: As a side note I should add that these concessions were not simply the notion of crumbs, but the ideological placement of the population in a hierarchy of global domination. In other words, the working classes and middle strata of the global North were largely won over to the notion that they had a role in the ruling of the rest of the world. This helps us to understand, drawing from the old man in Russia, the real notion of the labor aristocracy as being more than an economic category. As Freud noted, the Roman plebian irrespective of how s/he is being treated by the Roman establishment, thinks of him or herself as being leaders of the Roman empire.] This contrasted with the approach taken toward demands in the global South for any forms of sovereignty, rights and respect, where repression and atrocities were the main feature of imperialist rule.

The circumstances that put certain constraints on Western capitalism in the period from 1945–1991, are gone. We are now seeing the bared teeth of capitalism in its incarnation as neo-liberal globalization. This presents problems at the strategic level for social democratic-type approaches. I mean that in several ways: (a)the hope that social democratic forms of organization and vision will be more acceptable to international capitalism is like believing in fool's gold. (b)the balance of power that permitted the post-World War II experiment in social democracy does not exist. (c)social democracy itself has shifted—in some cases and in some countries it has actually GALLOPED—to the right and accepted many neo-liberal propositions in its effort to retain so-called relevance.

To the extent to which the international trade union movement has accepted social democratic propositions, it finds itself in a bind. Let me reference an example from my own →

experience. In 1996 I attended a committee meeting of the Public Service International. The discussion was about privatization. We engaged in a heated debate about how to respond, and specifically, to what extent we should openly attack capital for its approach toward privatization. A delegate from a European union suggested that it was not useful to “bash” capital since we will inevitably have to make peace with it. I found this comment remarkable and, frankly, so out of touch with today’s reality as to be shocking.

The actuality of our situation is that international capital, in varying degrees, is carrying out a war of annihilation against organized labor. Thinking that we can make peace with them, i.e., reconstitute the welfare state as we once knew it, is ludicrous. While I acknowledge that in many, if not most places on this planet the progressive social movements are not in a position to supersede capitalism, this does not mean that one can return to the past. It does mean that a new balance must be reached to the advantage of the working class. In other words, our strategies, as well as forms of organization, must correspond to the new situation, and we must build the necessary

alliances in order to construct a *popular democratic bloc* capable of achieving power. To the extent to which the international trade union movement ignores this question of the popular democratic bloc, it consigns itself to irrelevancy, and possibly opens up the door to oblivion.

One final comment on this subject. Precisely because globalization has met with resistance, and further resistance is anticipated, global capitalism, and particularly those guided by neo-liberalism, sees the need for pre-emptive strikes to be taken against the popular forces. This includes the limitation on civil liberties and basic democratic rights, displays of military might, as well as the articulation of democracy as being nothing more than multi-party elections. Even in the realm of multi-party elections their view is cynical. In the case of South Africa, for example, the fact that there was a decline in the voters in your last election was described in the USA as representing the emergence of a so-called “mature democracy,” rather than a matter for concern.

The international trade union movement, as mentioned earlier, has been largely unable to respond to these de-

velopments. The dilemma for the ICFTU, for instance, was illustrated by the video which they used at the 2000 World Congress to summarize their history. It begins in the Cold War with explicit anti-communism and goes through today with presentations of Left-led popular movements. They, frankly, did not quite know what image(s) to present and what message(s) to convey. Fundamentally, they are facing a strategic dilemma. New movements have emerged in the global South, and the ICFTU does not really know how to address them or their politics. A similar situation faces international trade union secretariats/global union federations which, on the one hand, have the advantage of being focused on industries or sectors, but are not oriented toward the new features of the class struggle, including the issue of uniting with and mobilizing other social forces, taking on international contract/bargaining campaigns, or theorizing new tactics to meet a complicated situation of increased repression in many states.

Thus, in the ICFTU, the international trade union secretariats/global union federations, and probably most national labor centers, there are struggles underway to craft a new direction. There are some, including in the USA, who take the position that the existing structures are basically useless and that new ones are necessary. That may, ultimately, be true, but one must always remember that it is easier to dissolve or split than it is to build or unite. Creating new formations ultimately needs to depend on a new and compelling vision for the direction of the trade union movement, not simply disenchantment with the current situation.

In that sense, a new paradigm for trade unionism must be created. There are many names for it, and your own movement in your September Commission suggested several. I tend to think of it as *social justice unionism*, meaning more than just putting a movement flavor back in the trade union movement, but actually reconstructing a trade union movement that advances class struggle *and* united front politics,



united fronts with other social movements specifically. But the content of social justice unionism must also be one that is internally transformative and seeks to address inner-working class divisions, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion or political affiliation. In fact, social justice unionism must itself be a project undertaken without restriction to any one political party and should be embraced by all Left and progressive forces. **There is no one party or group that has a monopoly on the truth.** We have learned that from the collapse of the Soviet bloc but it is just as true in the work that is conducted in the trade union movement.

I could go into more detail on this, but let me turn to the question of worker education. What does one mean by *worker education*? There are three levels on which this concept needs to be understood: (1) workplace skills, i.e., the skills necessary for any worker to do a specific job, (2) union skills, i.e., the skills necessary for a worker activist to operate as a competent trade unionist, (3) class consciousness-raising, i.e., providing a world view and a framework or frame of analysis which workers can use to come to their own conclusions about reality. Each of these arenas is infused with an ideological orientation, a point to which I will return.

In the interest of time let me suggest that in the USA, worker education has been restricted largely to the first two categories. Very little effort, particularly since the Cold War purges of the trade union movement in the 1940s, has gone into class consciousness-raising. This does not mean, however, that worker education is ideologically-neutral or value-neutral. In fact, the interesting thing about the framework of trade unionism developed by Samuel Gompers towards the end of the 19th century, and subsequently modified though kept largely in tact by US organized labor, is that under the banner of pragmatism and so-called *bread and butter trade unionism*, it has been very ideological. It has supported capitalism as, in essence, the only possible

system, albeit with flaws. It has supported US foreign policy. It has ignored the question of independent working class political action. Therefore, it is highly ideological.

I would suggest that we are at a key historical moment where worker education should assume greater importance rather than lesser importance. Let me clarify, though, that by education I am not suggesting simply the provision of information. Holding conferences and giving speeches can be and is important, but it is not the same thing as education. Education is fundamentally about dialogue. It is about an exchange of ideas as well as the introduction AND assessment of new information. As such, it is not simply sharing existing knowledge, but rather it is the critical examination of all knowledge. Simply put, education is not talking AT people, but talking WITH people. The assumption is that workers will have their own ideas, some of them very contradictory, but that we must respect their experiences and knowledge, even if & when we disagree with them.

In the USA, I am embarrassed to say, few unions take education very seriously, including many of those that are advocating the transformation of the union movement. Education, in their opinion, is a luxury. Organizing or recruiting is counterpoised to education. Organizing becomes a means or activity for enlarging the union movement; education becomes a side show.

In the current situation worker education must emphasize class consciousness-raising, and specifically, the engaging in a dialogue with our members about the future of our movement. In



the USA, again, there is a tendency for some union leaders to believe that they have THE answer to the union movement's dilemmas. They see in the membership a pool of people who need to be mobilized, rather than considering the very difficult question of how do we ensure that the union movement is actually run by the members and how do we engage the members themselves in the process of planning out the future of the movement.

Your movement has a much better track record on these issues than my own, but I would suggest that in most countries a very different approach to education is necessary. I would offer the following specific ideas:

Worker education must be integrated into the strategic priorities of the union movement. In other words, in thinking through the future of the movement, education must be →

seen as a key component.

Not everyone is or can be an educator. Simply knowing information does not make one a good educator, and having good politics while important, also does not make one a good educator. When I look for a good educator, I begin with identifying someone who is a good listener.

There needs to be an education department and dedicated individuals who take responsibility for leading the education work.

A train the trainer approach is critical if we are to build the capacity of the movement to engage in a variety of forms of education. We must create teams of 'barefoot educators!'

There is no one form of education. Study groups, small or large workshops, speeches (on occasion), illustrated books with accompanying discussions, can all be critical components of worker education.

An organization must be designed as a learning mechanism. This can mean that there are educational opportunities for more than a hand full of individuals, but that there are also opportunities for new leaders to emerge. I, for example, believe in term limits for precisely this reason. It is much too easy for one individual to become too comfortable in a position. After a while their ideas, no matter how great, become stale and they stunt the opportunities for growth, particularly for younger leaders.

Worker education must be integrated into all aspects of the life-blood of the union and be involved at the conceptual stage in the development of all programs, whether one is thinking about organizing/recruiting or a bargaining campaign. It is certainly critical when the union is engaging in political action.

A final general note about worker education: *it involves debate*. In the US trade union movement we have an unfortunate situation where debate is not encouraged. Debate is often seen

as representing disloyalty and unproductive dissent. I would suggest to you that this is a large part of the reason that the US movement is in such crisis. To borrow from the great revolutionary of Martinique, Frantz Fanon, deliver me from those who fail to question.

Debate in the international movement is badly needed, but must be practiced at all levels. I hesitate to comment on the internal situation in South Africa, but over the past couple of years I have seen at different mo-



ments both within your movement as well as toward your movement, an attitude raised by some that suggests that criticisms are unacceptable. Those criticizing the ANC, for instance, who were condemned as ultra-“leftists”, were essentially being told that they were unwelcome in the national democratic movement and that criticism was unacceptable. There are those who I understand have been criticized *within COSATU* for being too close to non-Alliance social movements. These sorts of criticisms become problematic because they stifle a badly needed discussion about strategy, tactics, and vision,

indeed about the nature of the sort of front or alliance necessary in order to fully transform South African society. Having gone through a very sectarian period in the history of the US Left in the 1970s and early 1980s, I believe that we on the Left and in the union movement must provide significant space for debate prior to labeling views.

This level of debate is critical if our movements are to be vital. Without broad debate and safe space for disagreement, workers who may not be affiliated with any political organization can and will find themselves alienated and therefore feel themselves to be irrelevant to the life of their union. At all costs a union cannot be or perceived to be a private club. Such a status is the kiss of death for any movement, as the US trade union movement is now experiencing.

In sum, the crisis facing the international trade union movement necessitates some new thinking. This is not thinking reserved for a small priesthood of leaders, but rather is a task facing the entire movement. In order to address this crisis, there must be a common assessment of the actual situation. The role of the trade union educator, then, becomes more than spokesperson for the leadership of the union, but rather the organizer, teacher and facilitator for the move-

ment. Their job is to help the members to develop a framework in order to understand the world. Their job is to promote research and debate, and the building of unity on the basis of principled struggle, rather than the false unity which often accompanies administrative action.

By engaging the members in a discussion regarding the future we tap into their wisdom, as well as their concerns and desires, but we help them think through not only how to understand the world, but indeed, engage them in trying to change it. **R**

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Letters


The articles in the March/April issue of Relay on the Ontario Days of Action of 1995-1998 were useful reflections on these important mobilizations.

One important shortcoming that wasn't noted was the failure to forge links between militants in different unions and community groups across the province who saw the need to escalate mass action towards a general strike. The argument that the Days of Action were necessary but not enough to defeat the Tories had a resonance with some activists. Many weren't socialists, but they were people who wanted more militancy, solidarity and democracy in the movement. There were opportunities to build networks of such activists within and across unions and communities.

This kind of organizing was -- and still is -- desperately needed in order to push for more effective strategies of resistance and be able to take initiatives independently of official leaderships. It would also bring together workers open to radical politics. It should be a priority for socialists.

However, none of what Herman Rosenfeld calls the "so-called bureaucratic union leaders" ("so-called"?) were interested in building such networks. Sadly, organized socialists in Ontario didn't try to do so because their sectarian priority was signing up new members for their groups, or recognized the opportunity but lacked the influence to make a difference.

In solidarity,
David Camfield
Winnipeg



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