

The Libertarian **Communist**

A Discussion Bulletin:

In Opposition to the Rule of Capital in all its forms and
for Anti State, Non Market Communism

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Worker Co-operatives:



Workers protesting at the crisis hit Mondragon, Fagor Co-operative

An alternative to the capital system or destined to fail?

The purpose of The Libertarian Communist is to promote discussion amongst the Anti State, Non Market sector irrespective of whether individuals or groups consider themselves as Anarchist, Communist or Socialist as all such titles are in need of further qualification. If you have disagreements with an article in this or any other issue, wish to offer comment or want to contribute something else to the discussion then please get in touch. If any article focuses on a particular group then that group has, as a matter of course, the right to reply. So please get in touch with your article, letters and comments. You can do this by contacting libcom.bulletin@yahoo.co.uk or writing to Ray Carr, Flat 1, 99 Princess Road, Branksome, Poole, Dorset, England, BH12 1BQ

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Page: 6 **Mining: the human and ecological cost.** This article which mostly concentrates on coal mining; is divided into three parts: **Part 1. The human cost of coal mining in the U.S** by **Joe Hopkins**; deals with the continued use of coal in supplying energy, the debate about coal reserves in the U.S and the human cost in mining and transporting coal. **Part 2 The human cost of mining around the world** by **Ray Carr**; focuses on the fact that whilst there may have been a reduction in the number of fatalities due to mining accidents around the world since the early part of the 20th century, the number of deaths in that industry remains high, especially in certain parts of the world. Furthermore, it suggests that the conflict between economic and human cost will pre-dominate as long as the capitalist system remains. **Part 3 Coal and global heating** by **Ray Carr** examines the capitalist system seemingly inescapable reliance on coal for supplying much of today's energy despite the proven link between coal and global heating.

Page: 11 **Workers co-operatives: an alternative to the capitalist system or destined to fail? A discussion: Various** This entails a discussion on the uses and limitations of co-operatives and consists of four articles. **Article 1: Workers protest closure of Spanish co-operative Fagor** by **Alejandro Lopez** and **Carlos Hernandez**. This was posted on the **WiC forum** in November last; it examines the set back for the Mondragon co-operative movements and views this as evidence that such initiatives within capitalism are doomed. It cites some of Marx's writings on co-operatives to back up their argument. **Article 2: Co-operatives: All in this together?** This article first appeared in **The Economist** and was posted on the **libcom.org website** by Joseph Kay in October 2009. A link to it was posted in the discussion on the **WiC forum**. It looks at general problems faced by co-operatives under capitalism. Much of the argument here is that the success of a co-operative is viewed in economic terms, such as survival and protecting employment and that it is likely that such success means curtailing traditional co-operative principles. **Article 3: Water on Stone** by **Lyla Byrne**. Lyla's article is, in many ways, critical of the position taken in the first article in this discussion. It criticises some of Marx's pronouncements not only on co-operatives but also on related topics. Lyla views co-operatives as a experiment in common ownership and argues that such practice is a vital element in any movement for socialism. The **Fourth and final article** in this discussion is; **Co-operatives: positives and negatives** by **Ricardo Monde**. The argument here is that not all worker co-operatives are the same and that success can not just be judged on economic survival within capitalism. It questions to what extent co-operatives are common ownership in practice but argues that there is a perhaps, more positive role for them when a more effective socialist movement exists.

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Anti-Semitism and National Socialism
by Moishe Postone - The mystical
kernel within the rational shell für
Susann Witt-Stahl

by Stephen Philip Clayton

Issue 24 of *The Libertarian Communist* contained a review of the 1986 pamphlet *Anti-Semitism and National Socialism* by Moishe Postone. The review concluded with the statement; "If you have not already read this pamphlet we recommend that you obtain a copy, even if you do not entirely agree with all Postone has to say it will make you think. That cannot possibly be a bad thing." That's as may be but this pamphlet and Postone's further work in reinterpreting Marx's critique of political economy is "a load of intellectual Marxological waffle" (*Aufheben*) and leads "to a complete rejection of the significance of class struggle for socialism." (Chris Arthur). Postone's theory also excuses capitalism for Nazism so needs to be examined and rejected.

Postone's 1986 work is an edited version of his *Anti-Semitism and National Socialism: Notes on the German Reaction to 'Holocaust'* from 1979 which was prompted by the screening of the mini-series *Holocaust* on West German television on 22 January 1979. In brief, Postone's argument is something like the following; modern anti-Semitism is a trend of vulgar anti-capitalism that seeks the personification of the elements of capitalism in the Jew, Nazism as a vulgar form of anti-capitalism, the theory of commodity fetishism extended to epistemology, the Jew as the embodiment of abstract value, Auschwitz as a factory to exterminate value because value is abstract and Nazi anti-capitalism sought the immediate negation of the abstract and valorized the concrete over the abstract.

In the opening chapters of *Capital Volume 1*, Marx abstracts from the use-value of the produced commodity for methodological reasons in order to analyse value. However Postone draws the conclusion that value itself is 'abstract'. Marx's methodology is described by Marx in the General Introduction to the *Grundrisse* and the Postface to the Second German Edition of *Capital*. David McLellan summarises as follows; "Marx breaks it down into its constituent elements and arrives at ever more simple and abstract concepts, each of which, however, only has full meaning by

reference to all the others. Only after this analysis can the process of conceptual synthesis begin, a process in which the whole is built up again, starting from the most abstract and simple concepts – in this case, value, labour, and so on. Thus the scientific researcher into economics starts with the chaotic apprehension of bourgeois society, analyses it conceptually by empirical study into its most abstract constituent elements, and then proceeds to synthesise these elements through a dialectical exposition to yield a total conceptual comprehension of the object under study."

Postone elaborated on his theory of abstract value in his reinterpretation of Marx's *Capital* in *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*. He attacks the abstract but misunderstands the antinomy of capital and this leads to the valorisation of the concrete parts of capital like industry. Postone sees a contradiction between any account of abstract labor as physiological exertion and the historical specificity of Marx's value theory. What Postone does in abstracting is that the commodity can be seen as merely the product of human labor, different concrete aspects of labour are reduced to human labour in the abstract.

Marx identified that a commodity's use-value has exchange value when it consists of abstract human labour (socially necessary labour time or "crystallised social labour") developing from David Ricardo's *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*: "exchange value depends on the total quantity of labour necessary to manufacture them, and bring them to market." Labour comes to have a dual character, and must be considered as both concrete *and* abstract, since its abstract aspect comes to play a distinct social role. Human labour is a producer of use values, it is "a mere congelation of homogeneous human labour", concrete labour is "a special sort of productive activity" whilst abstract labour is woven into concrete labour. Marx wrote "On the one hand, all labour is an expenditure of human labour-power, in the physiological sense, and it is in this quality of being equal, or abstract, human labour that it forms the value of commodities. On the other hand, all labour is an expenditure of human labour-power in a particular form and with a definite aim, and it is in this quality of being concrete useful labour that it produces use-values" (*Capital*). In the general introduction to the *Grundrisse*, Marx clearly states "the

method of rising from the abstract to the concrete is only the way in which thought appropriates the concrete” and in A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Marx describes abstraction from the concrete character of labor as an “abstraction which is made every day in the social process of production.”

Postone's misunderstandings mean he sees capital as a closed totalising identity, his fetishisation of capital is “the alpha and omega of history and consciousness, and conflates consciousness as identical with capital” (*Aufheben*). Postone highlights the abstract over the concrete, everything becomes what they are in the abstract form, class struggle is merely an ancillary element to capital, there is no foundation for the emergence of proletarian class consciousness, basically he has abstracted class struggle away. Chris Arthur saw that Postone can't see how the working class is always “*in and against capital*” but that “*Postone argues that capital cannot be explained fully as a class relation whose inner development is predicated on class struggle alone, capital cannot be explained fully in terms of class struggle alone to a complete rejection of the significance of class struggle for socialism.*” Essentially for Postone, classes and waged labour are relegated to abstract sociological concepts and capital is identified as abstract domination. Postone's theory discourages the working class to identify as a class and rejects the concept of the working class as the revolutionary subject in history.

In *Anti-Semitism and National Socialism*, Postone rejects a functionalist explanation of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism as a form of prejudice, xenophobia, and racism. He sees the need for “qualitative specificity” of the Holocaust rather than generalised explanations. But his theory of exterminating value is a misreading of Marx's *Capital*, and essentially a mystical metaphor for the Holocaust, and Nazism as an anti-capitalist phenomenon is wrong headed and excuses capitalism for Nazism and the Holocaust.

In an essay called *Auschwitz, or the Great Alibi* attributed to Amadeo Bordiga there is a materialist interpretation of Nazism, Anti-Semitism, the Second World War and the Holocaust.

Bordiga writes “*capitalism itself the cause of the crises and cataclysms that periodically ravage the world, poverty, oppression, war*

and destruction, far from being anomalies due to deliberate and maleficent wills are part of the 'normal' functioning of capitalism. Destruction is the principal goal of war. The imperialist rivalries that are the immediate cause of wars are themselves nothing but the consequence of ever increasing over-production. Capitalist production is in fact forced to grow because of the fall in the profit level, and crises are born of the need to ceaselessly expand production along with the impossibility of selling goods. War is the capitalist solution to the crisis. The massive destruction of installations, of the means of production.”

Postone argues for a historical qualitative specificity of the Holocaust which contrasts with Bordiga who writes “*the extermination of the Jews occurred not at a random moment, but in the middle of a crisis and an imperialist war. It is thus from within this gigantic enterprise of destruction.*” This can be seen in the midst of the First World War with the Ottoman Empire's genocide of 1.5 million Armenian people but also the 'Central Asian Holocaust of the Turkic Peoples' when between 25 June 1916 and October 1917, some 1.5 million Turkic people were killed by the Tsarist Russian regime. Postone would not agree with any qualitative comparisons of the Jewish Holocaust with any other acts of genocide in history.

What are the origins of anti-Semitism? Bordiga identifies its origins in feudalism when “*commerce using money, was foreign to the fundamental schema of feudal society and was rejected onto people outside of that society, generally Jews. But commerce and usury were the primary forms of capital. Even once productive capitalism and large-scale industry began their growth petite bourgeois 'popular' tradition often continued to identify the Jew with Capital.*” Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* add “*The Jews were not the sole owners of the circulation sector. Unlike their Aryan colleagues, they were still largely denied access to the origins of surplus value. It was a long time before, with difficulty, they were allowed to own the means of production.*”

Bordiga sees “*anti-Semitism indigenous to Central Europe, a horrible mix of feudal and Petit bourgeois anti-Semitism*” while Engels wrote that anti-Semitism “*is nothing but a reaction of feudal social strata doomed to*

disappear, against modern society, which is essentially composed of capitalists and wage earners. It thus only serves reactionary objectives under a false veil of socialism." The petite bourgeoisie are described by Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* in the following terms; *"The lower strata of the middle class, the small trades people, shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants, all these sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which Modern Industry is carried on, and is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists, partly because their specialised skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production. The lower middle class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are therefore not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history."*

Adorno and Horkheimer identified that *"the Jews were always a thorn in the side of the craftsmen and peasants who were declassed by capitalism"* and Bordiga sees that *"the Jews find themselves essentially in the middle and petite bourgeoisie."* He concludes *"the petite bourgeoisie invented anti-Semitism."*

Postone describes Proudhon as "one of the forefathers of modern anti-Semitism." George Woodcock calls Proudhon 'The Man of Paradox' and Proudhon himself believed his contradictions were signs of vitality but his ideas are all tangled up, utopian, impractical, unoriginal, anti-socialist, petty bourgeois, capitalist and he was also a notorious anti-semitic and misogynist. Proudhon opposed common ownership and writes of self-governing producers with 'private ownership' in association with other self governing producers, and exchanging the products of their labour in a free market of equals. Proudhon saw his ideal in small scale property ownership of self-employed peasants and artisans. He believed a People's Mutual Credit Bank would foster exchange of products amongst workers based on 'labour cheques'. Marx saw that Proudhon had a *"misunderstanding of the basic elements of bourgeois political economy: namely of the relation between commodities and money"* and Proudhon's book *The Philosophy of Poverty* was described by Marx as *"feeble Hegelianism" full of "mystical causes"* and

"his history proceeds in the misty realm of imagination, and is above space and time. In short it is not history but trite Hegelian trash." A Proudhon diary entry of 1847 says *"Jews. Write an article against this race that poisons everything by sticking its nose into everything without ever mixing with any other people. Demand its expulsion from France with the exception of those individuals married to French women. Abolish synagogues and not admit them to any employment. Finally, pursue the abolition of this religion. It is not without cause that the Christians called them deicide. The Jew is the enemy of humankind. They must be sent back to Asia or be exterminated. By steel or by fire or by expulsion the Jew must disappear. H.Heine, A.Weil, and others are simply secret spies. Rothschild, Cremieux, Marx, Fould, evil, choleric, envious, bitter men who hate us."*

Bordiga describes the petite bourgeoisie and the Jewish Holocaust in the following terms; *"the petite bourgeois is a class condemned. Racism is not an aberration of the spirit: it is and will be the petite bourgeois reaction to the pressures of big capital. Harassed by capital, the Germany petite bourgeoisie thus threw the Jews to the wolves in order to lighten its sled and save itself. We can say that for its part big capital was happy with the gift: it could liquidate a portion of the petite bourgeoisies with the agreement of the petite bourgeoisie. Even better, it was the petite bourgeoisie itself that saw to this liquidation. In normal times, and when it is a matter of a small number, capitalism can allow those it ejects from the productive process to die on their own. But it was impossible for it to do this in the middle of the war and for millions of men. Such disorder would have paralysed everything. Capitalism had to organize their death, it massacred them while extracting the maximum surplus value possible."*

Marx and Engels are prescient when they write of petite bourgeois German philistinism as *"the robe of speculative cobwebs, embroidered with flowers of rhetoric, steeped in the dew of sickly sentiment"* (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*) which reads like a description of Hitler and Nazism. The original 1920 programme of the Nazi Party included "breaking the shackles of interest", seeing financial capitalism or "Jewish Finance" at the root of societal problems not capitalism itself, and there was a hostility to large scale

capitalism in favour of petite bourgeois small business.

Adorno and Horkheimer write that "*Bourgeois anti-Semitism has a specific economic reason: the concealment of domination in production, the productive work of the capitalist is an ideology cloaking the real nature of the labor contract and the grasping character of the economic system, Jews are the scapegoats, the economic injustice of the whole class is attributed to them.*"

Anti-Semitism is a false consciousness engendered by capitalism. Marx wrote "*the mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands, by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell*" (Postface to the Second German Edition of *Capital*)

Postone in *Anti-Semitism and National Socialism* and *Time, Labor and Domination* "seeks to invert Marx in order to re-mystify capital all over again." (*Aufheben*). He is pro-capital, anti-working class, excuses capitalism for Hitler, Nazism and the Holocaust. Postone is attempting "to roll back the wheel of history."

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Mining: the human and Ecological cost

Part 1: The Human Cost of Coal Mining in the U.S: Joe Hopkins

In 2005, Coal use generated 7,344 TWh (1 Terawatt-hour= 1 trillion watt-hours, a measure of power) of electricity, which was then 40% of all electricity worldwide. By 2030, electricity demand worldwide is projected to double with the quantity of electricity generated from coal growing 3.1% per annum to 15,796 TWh.

In 2005 coal-derived electricity was responsible for 7.856 Gt (1 Gigaton = 1 billion metric tons: 1 metric ton = 2,204 pounds) of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, which was 72% of the CO₂ emissions from power generation. By 2030, worldwide CO₂ emissions are projected to grow 1.8% per year to 41.905 Gt, with emissions from the coal powered electricity sector projected to grow 2.3% per year to 13.844Gt.

In 2005, non-power generation uses of coal, including industry (e.g., steel, glass) transport, residential services, and agriculture, were responsible for another 3.124Gt of CO₂, bringing coal's total burden of CO₂ emissions to 41% of worldwide CO₂ emissions.

Due to the limited space in this journal the present article will address the use of fossil fuels for generating electric power as this sector is predominant in its economic,

environmental, and social effects over any other single sector.

Coal Reserves that aren't really Coal "Reserves"

The U.S Energy Information Administration (EIA) often says that the U.S has "200 years of coal"; this is based on 268 billion tons of estimated recoverable reserves (ERR). The EIA itself reports that the ERR cannot technically be called "reserves" because they haven't been analysed for profitability of extraction. **(1)** The geologic, economic, legal and transportation constraints could limit future coal mine expansion. With the power the *Big Coal Lobby* has over Washington D.C., the "legal constraints" are not really "constraints". This would mean that "200 years of coal" aren't really "200 years of coal" **if** the profitability can't be found because of the material constraints imposed by geologic and transportation problems. This may in fact reduce the ERR to 20-30 years. **(2)** This would provide *Big Coal* a planning horizon of two to three decades for moving beyond coal – as if the earth's climate could accommodate "Business as Usual" for that long without passing the tipping point beyond which there is little or no possibility to stabilize, let alone reverse, the global heating that has already begun.

Since 1900ce over 100,000 U.S coal miners have been killed while working. Major accidents still occur; in January 2006 17 miners were killed in Appalachian coal mines – 12 at the Sago mine in West Virginia. On April 5th 2010, 29 miners (including Gary Quarles) were killed in an underground explosion in Massey Energy's Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia. **(3)** Since 1900ce, coal workers' Pneumoconiosis (Black Lung) has killed over 200,000 coal miners in the United States. **(4)** These deaths when preceded by deadly short-term illness are reflected in wages and workers' compensation benefits; these expenses are external to the coal industry. If a miner contracts a non-fatal or slow killer disease, long-term support often ends up coming from the state and/or Federal funds; these funds come from working class wages in the form of taxes which reduce the hourly wages of the primary producer and are external to the coal industry. Because these support expenses are borne by the "99%" – the working class – the coal company's profits go untouched and are not put toward mitigating the damage caused

by the coal industry's unhealthy and hazardous working conditions. This is no abstract complaint. In the early 1990s over 10,000 former U.S miners died from coal workers' Pneumoconiosis and the prevalence has more than doubled since 1995. **(5)** This doubling correlates almost perfectly (factoring in "time lag") with an increase of 600 working hours per year, per worker, in the coal mining industry.

During the mining process methane is released; methane is a heat-trapping gas 25 times more potent than CO₂ and is explosive (the officially designated cause of the explosion at Massey's Upper Big Branch mine) and poisonous to breath in concentration. According to the EIA 71,100,000 tons CO_{2e} of methane from coal were emitted in 2007 but only 92.7% of that coal went toward generating electricity; when methane decays it yields CO₂ – a weaker but proven heat trapping gas. Not counting the illnesses and deaths of mine workers the social cost of the methane release alone added eleven cents to the cost per kilowatt hour of electricity in the U.S; \$2.2 billion in total costs to society.

Transporting Coal

There are direct hazards from transporting coal. People in mining towns report intense dust levels that in many cases coat the walls and furniture in homes as well as the skin of the people living there. The dust raised by the road transport of coal, truck after truck after truck, burdens the respiratory and cardiovascular systems of those exposed with the likelihood of chronic disease. 70% of all rail traffic is devoted to coal transport; with the dire need of low pollution mass transportation all over the country this imposes a "lost opportunity cost". Coal, even in the passive state of being given a ride, has hidden costs and consequences to human society. A total of 246 people were killed in rail accidents during coal transportation in 2007. Only five of these were railroad workers; the other 241 of these were members of the public! Of course the corporate titans, the masters (and owners) of the universe, have a formula in the value of statistical life (VSL) to "estimate the total costs of fatal accidents in coal transportation". The VSL revealed, "the deaths to the public add an additional cost of \$1.8billion, or nine cents per kilowatt hour" of electricity. The "costs" the master class pays

for killing your sister, mom, wife, dad, brother – are passed on to you, the survivor, through an increase of price; it's never going to come out of accumulated capital profits.

Nothing more than a précis can be offered here on the separate but related aspects of hydrocarbon based fuels main categories of solid coal, liquid oil (and its derivatives), natural gas, gaseous methane. However the findings of Michael Hendryx, PHD (6) and Melissa Ahern (7) in their research article, "*Mortality in Appalachian Coal Mining Regions: The Value of Statistical Life Lost*": concluded that research priorities to reduce Appalachian health disparities should focus on reducing disparities in the coal fields. **The human cost of the Appalachian coal mining economy outweighs its economic benefits.**

How is it that King Coal can continue to operate with the economic picture so out of kilter?

Subsidies

In Kentucky alone coal brings in an estimated 528 millions of dollars in state revenue. The rub is that King coal as an industry cost the state 643 millions of dollars in expenditures; i.e. it costs the state of Kentucky 115 millions of dollars a year (8) to keep King Coal in business and in the throne. It's imperative to note that under the regime of capitalist democracy the government gets the financial support of the people, by the people, for the corporations. The \$115 million is only the net cost of coal mining and use to the people of Kentucky. That figure does not include the increased health care costs paid by those sickened by coal pollution; lost productivity (= lost wages of those who are already under paid); water treatment for siltation and water infrastructure; potential limitations on children's cognitive and biological development due to poor air quality and heavy metal exposure; the economic hit to the real estate market when people sell their homes, and social expenditures through state programmes paid for by all the people in Kentucky.

The Energy Information Agency estimates that the U.S Federal Government provides \$3.17 billion in subsidies for electricity and mining operations; for 2007 this amounted to 16 cents per kWh. (9) The Environmental Law Institute put its estimate of federal subsidies

at \$5.37 billion for 2007 which amounted to 27 cents per kWh. (10)

The Question

How do we stop the poor (us) from getting poorer while the rich (them) keep getting richer through our work? Isn't it time for the vast majority of the earth's population (estimated at 99%) to wrest control of our own lives and the planet where we live from the hands of our capitalist exploiters. They rule only through our in action and acquiescence.

We Need Answers

One idea is to form a political party of workers made up of us to represent us till everyone has joined and become us. There are many other ideas out there. You've got one too or you probably wouldn't be reading these words. What are your ideas? Tell us so we can reason together what is necessary for a practical social revolution.

Menacious Mouse: Tell the Mouse at joehopkins@verizon.net

Part 2: The Human cost of mining around the world: Ray Carr

Developing the picture to mining in general on a world-wide perspective it is the case that the number of deaths due to accidents in mines has been reduced considerably since the early 20th century but there has been a number of tragic instances in recent years and whilst accurate figures are hard to come by it has been suggested that 12,000 people per year die in mining "accidents". According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) whilst mining only accounts for 1% of the global workforce it totals 8% of all fatal "accidents". (11) According to Alan Baxter of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining, the fatalities in mining world-wide are dropping with the exception of Russia and China. China has the world's largest mining industry and produces up to three billion tonnes of coal every year which is 40% of global output but is responsible for 80% of mining deaths world-wide each year. The reason why Russia and China account for the majority of fatal accidents in mining is, according to, Alan Baxter, due to money: he suggests:

"They are maximising revenue, and the mentality is that life is cheaper than it is here and no-one is going to kick up a fuss if they lose a few lives." (12)

It may be the case that Russia and China lag behind in terms of reducing the number of fatal "accidents" in mining; they are where countries like Britain and America were in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The truth of the matter is that all, or at least most of these "accidents" world-wide can be put down to money. Health and safety costs money, and eats into profit which is the major reason for production within the capital system. Joe Drexler of the International Federation of Miners' Unions (ICEM) argues that much of the problem is a lack of unions in many places as these gives employees real power rather than just an illusion of power. (13) Drexler has a point as organised workers can put economic pressure on employers to force them into improving health and safety. Drexler also points to weak labour laws and enforcement in many countries, this is also related to the level of worker organisation and how much pressure they can put on governments as well as employers. In Chile, Drexler, points out, they have 900 mines but only 18 safety inspectors to oversee the conditions in those mines and in that country 34 people, on average, have died each year in mining "accidents" since 200. Another point made by Drexler is that the high price of commodities has had an extra impact as it has led employers to put pressure on for an increase in production. (14)

Part 3: Coal and Global Heating: Ray Carr

Writing in 2010 Chris Williams noted that our planet is slowly being poisoned by the economic system that dominates it. Transforming energy sources was the most fundamental change we needed to make and such a change was urgent. According to most scientists CO₂ needs to be reduced by 80-90 per cent globally by 2050 to avoid irreversible climate change. (15) More recent studies have confirmed this analysis. (16) Williams went on to argue:

"The fact that the entire economy runs on essentially three substances - Oil - Coal and Natural Gas - and these are the three most responsible for global warming presents capitalism with a essentially insurmountable problem." (17)

Whilst all fossil fuels emit carbon dioxide when burnt, not all are equally polluting, as

Natural Gas has a lower carbon content it emits less CO₂ per unit of energy generated whilst Coal emits the most. Since coal is such a major contributor to global heating you would think that a logical step would be to drastically cut down on its use or abandon it altogether. However the capital system is fundamentally about the expansion of value it cannot take steps that would inhibit that process especially given the fact that the world is divided up into competing economic units, states and power blocks, in effect it is almost like it is beyond human control or at least majority human control. So instead of solving the problem by turning to more ecological ways of providing energy and cutting down on the amount it uses it seeks to use half baked measures that continue to use the sources responsible for the problem, attempting only to minimise their effect in the shorter term. Such measures are really failing to get to grips with the problem and storing up even greater problems for the future.

In line with the above is the idea of coal liquefaction and gasification, something by all accounts favoured by the current administration in the U.S. This is presented and promoted as "clean coal" technology. In theory this means using coal but leaving behind the extra greenhouse gasses. This is achieved by "carbon sequestration" Whilst recognising the problems mentioned earlier with regard to how many years of coal reserves there are in the U.S, it is recognised that they are more plentiful than oil or natural gas. As mentioned already coal is a higher pollutant than either of the other two energy sources favoured by the system so the plan is to bury the CO₂ emitted by coal power plants in underground reservoirs below the plant - pump it into deserted coal mines, depleted oil and gas reservoirs and the like. By all accounts there have been some small experiments with this sort of technology in Norway and some other countries. (18)

If such a strategy seems feasible, there are a number of problems. Firstly according to a study carried out by The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) - The Future of Coal - the first commercial plant needed to put the plan into operation would not be ready till at least 2030. Rather late according to all the recent warnings regarding the time scale available to deal with the problem. Then there is the point about where all the CO₂ would be stored should this be adopted on a global basis. The method of sequestration

puts off change to a point in the future and there is also the potential for horrific incidents such as happened with Lake Nyos where in 1986 this lake in Nigeria became so thickly saturated at depth with colourless, odourless co2 that when the pressurised gas eventually escaped it asphyxiated over 1,700 people while they were asleep and killed off all animal life within a 15 mile radius. (19)

Another problem is that the very process of coal liquefaction requires that more rather than less coal would be used as a large amount of each ton of coal burned would be needed to aid the process of coal liquefaction, co2 extraction and burial. (20)

We are being fed with the lie that something is being done to tackle global heating when in reality what is being pursued is a strategy that ensures the continuation of the system based on the expansion of value and this spells catastrophe. In the current climate a problem is that along with the U.S, China, India and Australia also have large coal deposits and this entails a large and powerful coal lobby. This factor is hardly good news in reducing the reliance on coal given the priorities of the capital system, which do not go hand in hand with the needs of the planet. The following quote confirms this point of view. Amy Jaffe – an energy expert at James A Baker Institute for Public Policy at Rice University stated:

"we are going dirtier... If you need to come up with a fuel source other than drilling for oil under the ground in the Middle East, what is the most obvious thing with today's economy, today's infrastructure and today's technology? Oil shale, liquefied coal and tar sands. It's all dirty but it's fast." (21)

From the above it is clear that if catastrophe is to be avoided a majority of the human race world wide has to organise itself to get rid of the capital system which is not only outdated but threatens the very existence of humanity.

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- 21) **Quoted in Ibid;p.89**

Worker Co-operatives: an alternative to the capital system or destined to fail?

The following discussion on the usefulness and limitations of co-operatives as a forerunner of a society based on common ownership and production directly for use/need comprises of four articles. As this is not intended to be the final word on the subject feel free to respond to the points raised here for future issues.

Article 1

Workers protest closure of Spanish cooperative Fagor, Alejandro López and Carlos Hernández. <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2013/11/26/span-n26.html>

This was posted on the World in Common forum towards the end on last November.

Last week, 1,300 workers and their families marched from the factory of Spanish electrical appliances manufacturer Fagor Electro domésticos in Basauri in the Basque region of Spain to the town centre, protesting against its closure. At Edesa the workers have occupied the factory. Fagor produces brands including Brandt and De Dietrich. It has filed for bankruptcy, threatening the jobs of 5,600 workers. The end of Fagor, a subsidiary of the Mondragón corporation, regarded as the jewel in the cooperative movement crown, shows that such organisations are not an alternative to capitalism, as their promoters proclaim. Fagor's CEO Sergio Treviño warns that its fall "will have an uncontrollable domino effect on the rest of the group with major social implications. Mondragón is the world's largest federation of worker cooperatives, composed of 289 companies, 110 cooperatives and 147 subsidiaries. Based in the Basque Country, it is the leading business group in the region--contributing 7 percent of the GDP--has the seventh-highest turnover of Spanish companies and employs 60,000 workers in Spain, 35,000 in the Basque region itself. With the development of globalisation it has established itself overseas and compromised many of its cooperative principles.

Fagor, Mondragón's flagship enterprise, employs 5,642 workers in 13 manufacturing plants in five countries (France, Poland,

Morocco, Italy and China), but only 2,000 of its members belong to the cooperative. The company was hard hit in recent years by the eruption of the global economic crisis in 2008, with revenues falling by €600 million (US\$810 million), or 37 percent, in the last five years. This decline was a combination of a sharp drop in demand for domestic appliances due to the impoverishment of workers and the appearance of new low-cost competitors based on cheap labour in China, Turkey and South Korea. The company was unable to get the full €170 million it required to stave off bankruptcy from other Mondragón cooperatives or the corporation's own banking arm, Caja Laboral. Approaches to US hedge funds and private equity companies appear to have fallen through, as did appeals to the Spanish government and the Basque regional government. As a result, Mondragón's general council decided unanimously that Fagor had to be shut down, adding that even if more support were forthcoming it would not guarantee the company's future viability and that it did not represent the needs of the market. "Solidarity has reached its limit," the corporation acknowledged.

Fagor's demise is proof of the warning made nearly 150 years ago by Karl Marx. In his 1864 Inaugural Address to the Working Men's International Association, Marx insisted,

"The experience of the period from 1848 to 1864 has proved beyond doubt that, however excellent in principle and however useful in practice, cooperative labour, if kept within the narrow circle of the casual efforts of private workmen, will never be able to arrest the growth in geometrical progression of monopoly, to free the masses, nor even to perceptibly lighten the burden of their miseries... To save the industrious masses, cooperative labour ought to be developed to national dimensions, and, consequently, to be fostered by national means... To conquer political power has, therefore, become the great duty of the working classes."

[Subsequently, Marx came to see the state as being an organic part of capitalism, and concluded it was folly to aspire to take over it, as he pointed out in *The Civil War in France, re the 1871 Paris Commune*. WSWs leaves this out]

Fagor was created precisely to prevent the conquest of political power by the working class. It was founded in 1956 during the Franco dictatorship by a young Catholic priest, José María Arizmendiarieta, a delegate of the fascist Falange Youth Front.

He was acutely aware of the social polarisation in Spain and saw in the cooperative movement an opportunity to put into practice the principles of Franco's corporate state and deflect revolutionary sentiment in the working class. Arizmendiarieta declared, "We live within a community and a nation of men and not of proletarians" and that "Building the cooperative does not go against capitalism, but when the capitalist system is not useful, the cooperative must overcome and for this purpose must assimilate its methods and dynamism.".....

The collapse of Fagor has also exposed the pseudo-left's rejection of Marx's warnings. Carl Davidson, a member of the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism, a group which split from the Communist Party USA more than 20 years ago, is a typical example. Following a visit in 2010 he enthused in his "Mondragón Diaries", in an entry entitled "Why Humanity Comes First at Work: Learning About Bridges to 21st Century Socialism," how "All the employees in the Basque areas are worker-owners; those elsewhere are in varying stages of becoming so."..... Even then he was forced to admit, "Before the crisis hit two years ago, 15 percent of Fagor's workers were temporary 'trial period' new hires, meaning they couldn't become worker-owners for six months to a year. All these were laid off due to the fall in demand, but all the regular worker-owners remained on the job or were shifted to other related coops." Mondragón president Txema Gisasola had the measure of Davidson and the pseudo-left when he stated,

"We receive visitors from many companies and many countries, and some come here with a magical idea of what Mondragón is." "This is not magic. We are in this market, competing in the capitalist world, and the only difference is how we do things and why we do things. We have to be competitive, we have to be efficient, we have to have quality in our products and give satisfaction to our clients, and we have to be profitable. In that sense we are no different from anyone else."

"The future's here, we are it, we're on our own"
- Bob Weir and John Barlow, 1982

"The storyteller makes no choice, soon you will not hear his voice, his job is to shed light, not to master." - Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter, 1977

Article 2

This following article originally appeared in **The Economist** and was posted on the **libcom.org website** by **Joseph Kay** in October 2009

Co-operatives: all in this together?

These are difficult times for the Fagor appliance factory in Mondragón, in northern Spain. Sales have seized up, as at many other white-goods companies. Workers had four weeks' pay docked at Christmas. Some have been laid off. Now salaries are about to be cut by 8%. Time for Spain's mighty unions to call a strike? Not at Fagor—for here the decisions are taken by the workers themselves.

Fagor is a workers' co-operative, one of dozens that dot the valleys of Spain's hilly northern Basque country. Most belong to the world's biggest group of co-operatives, the Mondragón Corporation. It is Spain's seventh-largest industrial group, with interests ranging from supermarkets and finance to white goods and car parts. It accounts for 4% of GDP in the Basque country, a region of 2m people. All this has made Mondragón a model for co-operatives from California to Queensland. How will co-ops, with their ideals of equity and democracy, cope in the recession?

Workers' co-ops are often seen as hotbeds of radical, anti-capitalist thought. Images of hippies, earnest vegetarians or executives in blue overalls could not, however, be further from reality. "We are private companies that work in the same market as everybody else," says Mikel Zabala, Mondragón's human-resources chief. "We are exposed to the same conditions as our competitors."

Problems may be shared with competitors, but solutions are not. A workers' co-op has its hands tied. It cannot make members redundant or, in Mondragón's case, sell companies or divisions. Losses in one unit are covered by the others. "It can be painful at times, when you are earning, to give to the rest," Mr Zabala admits. Lossmaking co-ops can be closed, but members must be re-employed within a 50km (30-mile) radius. That may sound like a nightmare for managers battling recession. But co-ops also have their advantages. Lay-offs, short hours

and wage cuts can be achieved without strikes, and agreements are reached faster than in companies that must negotiate with unions and government bodies under Spanish labour law.

The 13,000 members of Eroski, another co-operative in the Mondragón group and Spain's second-largest retailer, have not just frozen their salaries this year. They have also given up their annual dividend on their individual stakes in the company. A constant flow of information to worker-owners, says Mr Zabala, makes them ready to take painful decisions.

It sounds conflict-free, but that is misleading. One of Mondragón's many paradoxes is that worker-owners are also the bosses of other workers. People have been hired in far-flung places, from America to China, as the group has expanded. It now has more subsidiary companies than co-operatives. Mondragón has two employees for every co-op member. The result is a two-tier system. And when recession bites, non-member employees suffer most. They are already losing jobs as temporary contracts are not renewed. Like capitalist bosses, the Mondragón co-operativists must, indeed, occasionally handle strikes and trade-union trouble. Some worry that Mondragón-style success kills the idealism on which most co-ops are based. Those within the Mondragón group are aware of the danger. Eroski wants to offer co-op membership to its 38,500 salaried employees.

The most successful co-ops, however, are those least shackled by ideology. Mondragón used to cap managers' pay at three times that of the lowest-paid co-operativist, for example. But it realised it was losing its best managers, and that some non-member managers were earning more than member managers. The cap was raised to eight times. But this is still 30% below market rates, and some managers are still tempted away. "Frankly, it would be a bad sign if nobody was," says Adrián Celaya, Mondragón's general secretary.

Lately Mondragón has had trouble keeping successful co-operatives locked in. Irizar, a maker of luxury coaches, split off last year, reportedly because it no longer wanted to support loss making co-ops elsewhere in the group.

Henry Hansmann, a professor at Yale Law School, says co-ops often fall apart when worker-owners become too diverse. He points to United Airlines—not a co-operative, but once mainly owned by workers from competing trade unions—as an example of how clashing interests can kill worker ownership. By bringing in tens of thousands of new members at Eroski, many far from the Basque country, Mondragón risks falling into that trap. The group's bosses believe, however, that the way forward is to promote the idea that co-operativism brings advantages. The global downturn may strengthen the group internally. As unemployment sweeps the globe, after all, there is no greater social glue than the fight to keep jobs.

Article 3:

Water on Stone by Lyla Byrne

This is in response to article 1 of this discussion.

Well, there's a lot going on in there. Mainly a lot of pseudo-scientific proclamation, including from Marx. I don't think that 'the experience of the period from 1848 to 1864' - 16 years - proves 'beyond a doubt' what Marx says it does. **(See article 1)** The cooperative movement would have fared better at any time within the present system if it had more support, which is unlikely to be generated by the denial of it bringing any benefit whatsoever. Plus it has survived, and in many ways kept the concept of common ownership and democracy alive, *because* it has brought benefits to workers. So in certain respects the quote is very misleading; and this is extended due to its broad sweep across the capitalist era. It does not allow for the complexities of the issue then, such as variations in local circumstances around the world; or for the complexities of changing conditions over time. There are now very significantly different conditions indeed to the mid-eighteen hundreds, including ecologically, the potential uses of technology, and the range of psychological conditions. A proof, by definition, takes us beyond doubt already. The tautological emphasis in the quote, is perhaps used to force home as statements of fact, what are actually just opinions. Similarly, the rest of the article is

not balanced by a look at the many minority owned and controlled businesses that have also gone/are going bust in the recession; nor the many cooperatives that are surviving and indeed helping to protect communities and the ecology despite the recession. Nor does it acknowledge the present trend for cooperatives/collectives to be set up; and with increasing consciousness of the absolute necessity, if we want any sort of healthy future, of moving to serve an ecologically and socially judged common good*.

It is of course possible to make predictions that turn out to be accurate, but predictions may also be inaccurate to some extent. We may have some evidence, but this can be very misleading *in itself* if some other evidence is left out, and it is taken to imply too much. - So we can learn from history, but we have to be scientific about it; taking care not to be overly assuming, or to just cherry pick what suits our predilections. Although a quote may clinch a well supported argument, quotes in particular are often used to just give an appearance of this - as a slight of hand to cover the absence of sufficient evidence or the logical use of it. Quotes can also misdirect by being taken out of context, and there may be questions over interpretation. Or someone may lie about what has been said, or unintentionally get it partially or completely wrong - as in the comment about Marx that follows the quote**.

Moses Marx

In the course of his study of capitalism, Marx made some accurate observations and predictions which remain prescient today***. However, although extolling the virtue of the scientific method at times, he also had rather a penchant for laying down the law whilst the jury was still out. Unfortunately, this kind of thing has been taken up by some 'Marxist' groups and set in stones of dogma. This is not all Marx's fault of course. We all have responsibility to proceed rationally; to perform the checks; to give due consideration to the wider situation as well as paying sufficient attention to the details of a matter in hand.

Marx expressed somewhat different opinions elsewhere****; and indeed his 'materialist conception of history' theory seems to indicate the complete opposite. The message

in 'The German Ideology' [from 1846, but not published until the 1920's] I think, but certainly in 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy' [1859], is that only revolutionary changes in the 'material conditions' or 'material productive forces' or 'the economic foundation' [by which he seems to mean, briefly, *arrangements for/methods of production of goods*], can create revolutionary consciousness. Notably, such consciousness is necessary for consciously voting for such revolutionary changes in production.....so presumably this would be voting *for them to continue and perhaps extend*.

From the preface of 'A Contribution...':

'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or - this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms - with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure.' [By 'superstructure' he means political, legal and some other cultural forms.]

Perhaps Marx thought that the 'material conditions' of the time were sufficient to create mass revolutionary consciousness, and his statement of 1864 may be due at least in part to disappointment and frustration that a full scale social revolution had not yet taken off. Of course, if such consciousness occurs, all the stages of capitalism so far will have been part of the process, but capitalism may come to be seen as delivering more problems to overcome (including conditioning/programming to have a tiny mind), than opportunities for mind expansion.

We all have to be wary of oversimplification/over generalisation. In order to achieve a purpose, it is true that there is occasionally an imperative to change whole courses of action. However, on other occasions, it is imperative for a purpose that we *do not* give up a whole course of action, but learn how to act differently in some particulars, so as to accomplish the whole action, and perhaps a wider purpose, successfully. Notably, taking one course of

action does not preclude taking other courses of action also; and they may be essential to each other's progress.

It may be (and I believe is) the case that it would have been far better to endorse cooperatives and other common ownership/democracy based intentional communities. More of us might then have been working more effectively together to extend common ownership and democracy, and it might have taken off as a mass movement before now.

Concerning Marx's materialism, we generally need a more holistic approach. Changing modes of production are influential in psychological changes; but their influence in ecological changes has to be equally emphasised. Plus ecological and psychological factors are also influential in *changing modes of production*. It is an ongoing interactive process. Thus, revolutionary consciousness occurs when there is a sufficiently propitious combination of factors - ecological, economic and psychological; and whilst it exists it is influential as part of this whole. Notably, pre-capitalist evolutionary and social/cultural/linguistic factors continue to be influential in the whole - some being very conducive to healthy revolutionary change, and others not. Using our abilities as conscious beings we have and do overcome/sufficiently manage harmful influences of various types, and potentially this can be applied in a mass movement for social change.

Capitalism does not work for wellbeing

I'm not sure what the writer of the article wants. The person seems to have a pop at as many people as possible who are raising consciousness about social and ecological problems being due to capitalism, and who are consciously involved in developing alternative systems for living. Also, concerning the reference to coops being co-opted by capitalist forces, it is necessary to note that capitalism has co-opted many things to support itself over the years, and sometimes just locally as conditions allow. However, this does not necessarily mean that the thing is completely taken over. There may still be subversive elements. These, and freer projects in other localities can still be applied to overturning capitalism. Plus, where a thing has been co-opted, it can be

consciously reclaimed in the future, perhaps with improvements for a revolutionary purpose.

Within the capitalist system multiple and mounting problems have continued and/or developed. Modern advances in technological ability are sometimes credited to capitalism, however it is predictable that technology would advance, and at an increasing rate anyway. This is because we are naturally curious and inventive, and as technology advances, more becomes possible. What has actually happened is that the orientation for financial profit has held back *healthy advancement*; and there is now a desperate clinging to inefficient, polluting and horrific methods and arrangements because they are still serving the accumulation of capital. This is of course integral to the maintenance of large amounts of financial possession (control) by a small number of individuals - who have to be able to pay their accountants, lawyers, jailors, politicians, news editors and armies etc. - Those who generally have not been producing anything really useful, but only supporting and/or enforcing the system of minority rule.

Capitalism facilitates domination by minorities by making bribery seem necessary and respectable, including payment for violent oppression and for keeping up a deceptive facade. The concentration of wealth/power into fewer hands was one of Marx's correct predictions about the evolution of capitalism; and present methods and arrangements have largely taken the form that they have in the service of this process, rather than the wellbeing of humanity. The environmental problems being caused are now so severe that the whole future of life on the planet is threatened. In such a situation it is worth trying something else, even if we are not sure that it will work.

The indications are however, that common ownership and democracy is *the only system that can work*, because it facilitates the development of the human potentials that we need *for a system to work*; as in *producing enjoyable, sustainable life*. It facilitates the study of reality and the development in general of skills, arrangements and methods that directly serve wellbeing. But how do we get somewhere democratically that it seems the over whelming majority would only want if we were already there? Especially since we are now faced with an accumulation of social

and ecological alienation, it seems to me that sufficient support for such a beneficial system will not arise without experiences that develop more awareness and appreciation of those benefits.

The great duty

One of the odd things about the Marx quote is the use of the word 'casual'; this hardly seems to refer very well to official cooperatives. If using 'casual' in the some of the modern senses - 'informal, chance, irregular, relaxed,' even then, it is clear that helping each other in such ways often does at least lighten the burden of our miseries, and can enable us to take further, more informed and self determined action.

Whether motives are more selfish or more holistic, extension of common ownership and democracy to national - and international dimensions, is wanted *because we want the wellbeing of communities/the world community that it enables*. This is recognised as necessarily involving the wellbeing of individuals. But such a social system does not just materialise out of nothing, and create this wellbeing from scratch. If it gets chosen it will be because it enables the continuation and development of the wellbeing (including the healthy values) that people have; and this is *rather than* allowing the capitalist system to continue to destroy and prevent the development of wellbeing.

So it seems to me that *if we want this wellbeing*, it is not enough to just campaign for a different system. We have to do all we can to produce it now, in and by the way that we live. We have to be sufficiently swiftly withdrawing our energy from harmful practices, and putting our energy into protecting and replenishing our communities and our ecology. Similarly, I have had certain doubts about Mondragon, because I think that such cooperatives need to more consciously and adventurously orientate to this agenda.

For a healthy future, we need to take part in sustainably providing for ourselves within and between communities. This means applying ourselves - our knowledge, skills and technology etc. directly to serve our needs, for a change. I mean this in the largest sense, of day to day needs, but also, for example, planting trees for providing a healthy future. Obviously the big problem

with capitalism is that it often makes this kind of thing difficult or impossible. However, there is a great deal that a great many of us can quite easily do with the resources that we have now, and a great deal more that we can do with a dose of determination. As we do it, more becomes easy and more becomes possible, and so it grows.

If we want wellbeing, why wait to start creating it until some possibly never-to-arrive moment of universal franchise and universal socialist consciousness? Voting in world socialism presently sounds to most people like too much of a fantasy for them to get involved in supporting it. But perhaps, workers will increasingly get involved in supporting common ownership and democracy *by living in that way*; because it works for them; because it is a more reliable way of supplying their needs - and the more so as more workers join; and because they want to get on right now with setting up sustainable systems for their children and for a future for humanity, before it is too late. We do not only inform others by the written or spoken word, but by other actions and by the way that we live as a whole. Providing educational material, political campaigning and setting up cooperative type arrangements dedicated to supplying our needs, are all forms of revolutionary organisation. They can all be complimentary, and as such it is more than likely that they are all necessary for a successful revolutionary process. Arrangements of common ownership and democracy spread that idea just by existing; but they can also be supportive centres for learning and political activism. Also, a world system of common ownership and democracy requires a sufficiently healthy world if it is to exist. The community/ecology agenda is what makes that possible.

Circles may be small, but not narrow.

The article says: 'The end of Fagor, a subsidiary of the Mondragón corporation, regarded as the jewel in the cooperative movement crown, shows that such organisations are not an alternative to capitalism, as their promoters proclaim.' - This is pseudo science, or rather non-science. The main problem for cooperatives in capitalism is of course that *they have to function in capitalism*. However excellent in principle and however useful in practice, this is not appreciated by capitalist forces; and if

they fail, in the main, it is *because of capitalism*, and *not because they cannot be an alternative*. Failure due to capitalism of an organisation that serves the community, is a further demonstration – should we need it – of the failure of capitalism to enable us to efficiently provide for ourselves. All that capitalist forces are capable of doing after destroying something healthy, is turning around to those whose lives have been devastated, and calling them scroungers or treating them like criminals. What exactly, is criminal here?

Cooperatives have always provided workers, including those looking on, with some experience of common ownership and democracy. This can help us to move beyond being controlled psychologically to support capitalism. Some say that when there are failures that this puts people off; however we can equally well say that experiencing how capitalism causes these failures can put people off *that*. In fact it may be that the more cooperative projects that there are, the more obvious it will become that we need to get rid of capitalism.

Transforming the present society is a ginormous task. Obviously there will be mistakes and setbacks. I don't even regard this Mondragon incident as a setback, but as an opportunity for workers to organise to work and live with *more* economic equality and quality of life. The thing to do is not to give up on cooperatives and indeed cooperative living in general, but for workers to self organise to take it on - to take it further. Increasing the direct self providing of needs reduces the requirement to compete in the market (with all the problems that entails). It is likely to be a necessary first step towards money becoming obsolete.

It may be that for many projects, smaller scale is more functional; particularly for maintaining coherence by serving our human needs for healthy social and ecological relationships. But small circles can multiply, and interact. Coops and other communities practicing common ownership and democracy can increasingly develop connections specifically for sustainable mutual supply of all necessary goods and services. Potentially this can continue until there is nothing left that is not within the circles. This is actually how a world community of mutually supportive communities has to come into being. If at some point before the process is

complete, there is a formal voting in of common ownership and democracy as a world system, such organisations will provide a most welcome and probably necessary example, and steadying continuity in times of great change.

One of the main uses of predictions, of course, if they are accurate enough, is foretelling unfortunate consequences; for then we may be able to take action to avert them. As the failings and brutality of capitalism become ever more evident, particularly in societies where this has previously been obscured, it is likely that people will increasingly take heed of warnings about the social and environmental crisis that it is producing. There is of course already an increasing movement for humane and sustainable ways of living. Plus technology is supplying increasing opportunities for organising and providing goods and services for ourselves, along with general mutual support. After a certain point things could change very fast.

A sufficiently well informed commitment to the common good is at once the death knell of capitalism and the greeting chime of a new era. If 'capitalism' starts to be orientated for the real common good, and if this trend is widely supported enough to continue to grow, capitalism is over, basically; because that is basically *not capitalism*. Hopefully the growth will swiftly gather such momentum - as many good abilities that have long been denied, suppressed and undeveloped burst out - that resistance will obviously be futile.

Capitalism has never provided for everyone's needs, far from it. The rapidly increasing tendencies now around the world are: Cutting of pay/paid jobs, cutting of services and cutting of democratic and human rights. At the same time damage to the ecology continues to accumulate, wars continue, the prison complex is expanding, the number and size of detention centres for migrants and camps for the disposed and starving is increasing. We have to ask: 'Where is this going?'

I would say that we need to get on with cooperative, direct self providing whilst we still have a chance.

Notes

* *Climate Summit Trap: Capitalism's March toward Global Collapse*
<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/warsaw-climate-conference-shows-capitalism-root-of-climate-failure-a-937453.html#ref=nl-international>

**1)

'It strikes me as self evident that Marx regarded the state as an organic part of capitalism - that you can't have capitalism without a state.'

'WSWS is a Trotskyist outfit and therefore presumably sympathetic to a Leninist slant on the state. The notion that Marx concluded in "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" that it was folly to aspire to take over the state is nonsense and is based on Lenin's distortion of what Marx was saying. Marx was talking about the need to break up - or smash - Napoleon's bureaucratic state machine AFTER the workers had won power whereas Lenin made it appear that the state should be smashed beforehand rather than taken over. I don't believe that at any point did Marx ever say the state should not be captured or taken over.'

There is a useful article from the SPGB archives on the subject here
<http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/socialist-standard/1970s/1970/lenin-v-marx-state>
 Cheers, Robin'

2) *'What Marx said in 'The Civil War in France', was that the working class cannot simply take over the state and use it in its existing form for socialist purposes.'* From Stephan

****The economic crisis in fact and fiction. Interview with Paul Mattick*
<http://www.brooklynrail.org/2011/06/express/the-economic-crisis-in-fact-and-fictionpaul-mattick-with-john-clegg-and-aaron-benanav>

****<http://www.cuizy.cn/Recommended/coops/MarxItalyCooperative.pdf>

Fourth and final article in the discussionCo-operatives: the positives and negatives. By Ricardo Monde

The objective here is to briefly examine points that have been left out of the discussion and make some general points. Hopefully people can pick up on some of these points for further discussion in future issues.

Form and Substance

It could be argued that one of the shortcomings when discussing co-operatives and their role within and in opposition to the capital system is that the term co-operative is used as if all co-operatives have the same basis and this is something that this article disputes. What has to be considered is their substance, i.e. how they came about and why. Co-operatives come about under different circumstances and their purposes and structures are affected by those circumstances. For example one which comes about as a result of the owner of a business handing it over to the workforce will have a different perspective to one which is set up by a group of workers themselves. Even in the latter case there will be a difference between a co-operative set up to preserve jobs to one which is established because those involved are seeking a change in their working environment. This latter example is perhaps a minority case and is more likely to remain small, operate in a less competitive environment and have a much higher regard for its democratic structure and in many ways is what we should be thinking of when we use the term co-operative in a socialist sense. So a genuine type of co-operative is one that is set up for the right reasons by those who are going to be its owner members and there needs to be an awareness of the fact that they are operating in a hostile environment. In this regard for form and substance the Mondragon "co-operatives" were never even attempting to set up a socialist experiment. As the first article informs us the Fagor co-operative was set up by a Catholic priest whose aim was to attempt to diminish or even end any conflict between labour and capital. Those on the left who held the Mondragon so-called experiment as socialism in action (see article 1) did so because they had as little understanding of socialism as they did of capitalism.

What is a successful co-operative?

In light of the above we need to re-evaluate how we judge the success of a co-operative in terms of any contribution they can make in moving beyond the capital system. In most analysis of co-operatives their success is based on their ability to survive and maybe go beyond that, in the hostile environment they operate in. Viewed on that basis the Mondragon based group, despite its present problems, can be said to have been successful. The first article in this discussion informed us about this success;

"Mondragon is the world's largest federation of worker co-operatives, comprised of 289 companies, 110 co-operatives and 147 subsidiaries. Based in the Basque country, it is the leading business group in the region contributing 7 per cent of the GDP, has the highest turnover of Spanish companies and employs 60,000 workers in Spain, 35,000 in the Basque region itself. With the development of globalisation it has established itself overseas"

In addition to the above The Economist article tells us that it is Spain's seventh largest industrial group with interests ranging from supermarkets and finance to white goods and car parts and it is described as a model for co-operatives from California to Queensland. But if we are viewing co-operatives in a socialist type of perspective success cannot be judged in this way. After outlining the success of the Mondragon group of co-operatives as in the above quote the first article went on to outline that this so-called success has led to it compromising its co-operative principles. We would add that maybe those principles were lacking in the first place. The Economist article then informs us where such compromise leads by telling us that Mondragon has more subsidiary companies than co-operatives and has two employees for every co-op member. There is then the problem that worker owners become the bosses of other workers. The same article then sums up, what we regard as a false view of success based on their economic sustainability when it states:

"The most successful co-ops, however, are those least shackled by ideology"

Put simply that means economic success depends on ridding yourself of democratic decision making structures and becoming more or less a normal business. The Mondragon model is not a good example of

co-operatives in terms of a socialist perspective. Success should be based on if and how a different working environment can be introduced and maintained, to what extent those working in the enterprise have a control over its internal workings and its outside dealings including the markets it operates in. In these and other practices it has to be totally different to how a normal business operates. This may mean it has to operate on a small scale and in a less competitive market environment and it may mean that in these terms one that fails economically has been more successful than those that survive long term.

Co-operatives and Capitalism

From the above discussion it is clear that if co-operatives are to be seen as any meaningful alternative to the capital system they have to exhibit radically different organisation and outlook to traditional capitalist enterprises. They are bound to struggle in this regard but not because Marx said so, (*as we have seen he did seem to offer favourable and unfavourable comments about them, probably depending on the aspect he was dealing with*), but because they are operating in an economic climate that gives them two choices; either compromise their principles for more likely economic success or seek to offer an alternative approach in the realisation that they will remain as small enterprises who very often are confined to a minority market. Whilst from a socialist perspective the so-called Mondragon experiment is a bad example of co-operatives it is a good example of what happens if they seek to develop beyond a certain point. It is true enough that the problems at Fagor is not evidence in itself that co-operatives must always fail, the problem there was that this type of co-operative movement was never intended to present an alternative to capitalism. That much is clear from some of the analysis in the first article in this discussion but it would be unwise to widen this to all co-operatives because of the very nature of the Mondragon "experiment" itself. As was indicated at the outset of this particular article so much depends on how individual co-ops are set up and what is also important from a socialist perspective is the level of understanding of capitalism and socialism when they are set up so they are aware of the pitfalls. This alludes to something we will move on to in the next section the vast difference between setting

up such alternatives whilst a majority of people are stuck within a capitalist maze, to what might happen when there is at least a large minority of people who are seeking a real and viable alternative.

Co-operatives, common ownership and socialism.

The positives about co-operatives is that they can offer in the here and now an example that people are capable of organising themselves in a democratic fashion in an industrial context and it is true that however limited we need such practice to take place within the capital system whatever their short-comings. Another positive aspect about them is the role they could play in the situation where there is a large minority but not a majority movement for socialism. The idea that where such a situation exists people are just going to sit around and wait for the day when they can vote delegates into power to convert the means of production from minority to common ownership is so ridiculous it is hardly worth discussing. In such a situation people will be doing as much as possible to change their lives and convince others to do the same and in that environment setting up such things as co-operatives will be a radically different concept.

In the situation touched upon in which a socialist consciousness has intervened, experiments with co-operatives and the like may well involve experiments with common ownership albeit in a small and localised fashion, it would be limited as it would still be operating in a perhaps less harsh but still harsh environment but time alone can only answer that problem. However as we are not in that situation at present it is perhaps unwise to consider co-operatives as experiments in common ownership. Individual worker co-operatives are owned by those who work in them not by their local communities or by society as a whole so at present rather than being a form of common ownership they are more in tune with private ownership. Despite what has been said here it is unwise to look upon co-operatives in their present form as a pathway to socialism because of the fact that they belong to their worker owners. There is of course a vision of socialism as a society where all enterprises belong to their workers and they consume the benefits of the surplus value that they create (apart from the portion that is

reinvested to create further value), this is termed as "Market Socialism" or perhaps "Workers' capitalism" or "capitalism without capitalists" but it has nothing to do with what we would term as socialism which is a society of common ownership where all the resources and means for producing useful articles are owned by all or belong to no particular section of society. That is something we have to be careful about when discussing this topic.

On a final point one other aspect we have to be aware of when discussing co-operatives or people self management or so on is that it concentrates too much on how we might organise work/production within a socialist society. This is so much so that what we often seem to foster is almost a vision of how capitalism is organised now but on the basis of common ownership and democratic control and production directly for use. It is almost of though people will still be governed by their work. What also has to be emphasised is that socialism is about liberating people from being dominated by work, of breaking down the division between work and leisure, using the latest technology to release people from unsafe conditions and so-called dirty work wherever possible. Yes we still have to come together to produce the necessities of life, yes in its early stages there will be a need to up production in some areas because of the want and poverty the capitalist system will have left behind but as it develops it will be more about people coming together to produce and distribute what is needed and carry out projects that are needed. It is unlikely that workers will be confined to just one job or one place of work or to some particular type of labour. In addition much of the work that is carried out today will be unnecessary and is harmful to the health of our planet as is the daily commute forwards to and back from work. This obsession with work and its organisation from some in the socialist movement stems from its fetish with the working class when most members of the working class would surely prefer to live as human beings rather than enslaved as workers. This point needs to be emphasised more in our literature and then the people who make up the working class might be more inclined to listen to what we are saying rather than believing that we just wish to alter their form of slavery rather than abolish it altogether.

The Communist Movement: Jim Davies

What is the Commons?

Anything that belongs to us all and is used by all outside of the market system.

What do we want?

We want to hold all things in common.

Who is a Commoner?

One who expands the commons and keeps it out of the hands of the state.

What do commoners do?

They join together and build a Communist movement (commoning)

What is the Communist movement?

The Communist movement is a group of commoners who aim to create a society in which all things are created and held in common.

The Communist movement starts with you engaging in commoning and levelling (ending hierarchies)

The Communist movement is: the administration of things by people and never of people treated as if they were things; the beginning of a new history, not its end.

The Communist movement is always open to new ideas and situations and incorporates the insights of eco-socialism and green anarchism into its praxis.

The Communist movement envisions an economy based upon friendship and the gift.

The Communist movement is striving towards full automation (powered by infinite energies) with the productivity increases shared by all.

The Communist movement supports progressive unemployment and the end of forced labor of all kinds.

The Communist movement does not wait for a revolution event, it seeks to extend the commons and level the powerful every day.

The Communist movement renounces Terror; the world we want cannot be built on corpses. The Communist movement is face to face democracy and never representative democracy.

The Communist movement aims for an open society without secrets.

The Communist movement builds a democracy without hiding behind a secret ballot.

The Communist movement is not a Party or a union but it can be found in parties and unions as well as other organizations of the oppressed.

The Communist movement does not engage in the circular firing squad of the Left. The Communist movement is the abolition of the State, the end of wage-labor and the end of money.

The Communist movement welcomes people of faith but also welcomes atheists and agnostics.

The Communist movement is the end of private property.

The Communist movement is all masters without slaves.

The Communist movement unites the world by anarchy.

The Communist movement is the natural end of most criminal behaviour; it is the end of the prison, the police and of the asylum.

The Communist movement is the end of the school as organs of mass indoctrination and discipline.

The Communist movement is the triumph of science over ideologies.

The Communist movement is workers councils and commune committees.

The Communist movement is the social revolution.

The Communist movement is the end of dictatorship, the end of executions and the end of 10,000 years of Terror.

The Communist movement is gradual unemployment thru automation while sharing all wealth with all.

The Communist movement is healthcare for everyone.

The Communist movement is the realization of the best of feminism without leaving behind men meaning equal rights for everyone.

The Communist movement is sustainable agriculture.

The Communist movement is international.

The Communist movement is the end of the will to power.

The Communist movement is ever before the communist horizon.

The Communist movement is the end of empire and the beginning of the world-wide commonwealth.

Peace from Jim Davies: Ozark Bioregion, USA, Planet Gaia

See books at:
http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/from_alamut

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Forthcoming from Chronos Publications.

*The following is a short excerpt from M Postone book *Theorie du Fetichisme Capital Le capitalisme, l'antisemitisme et la gauche*. [PUF, 2013, Paris]. P.135 [Theory of the Capital Fetish, Capitalism, anti-Semitism and the Left] This, is said, to have stirred things up a bit with the left.*

(...) "This has ironically contributed to reinforce the Israeli Right (and projects of settlements) and the reactionary forces such as Hamas, the Islamic Jihad and the Hezbollah, stupidly considered by some western leftists as "progressists". This type of "revolutionary" position lacks a socio-economic content and has contributed to a polarisation which ruins the position of the progressists and liberals in Israel and also in Palestine and which reinforces the ultra-nationalists of both sides. At this stage of the struggle for the Palestinian self-determination, a solution with two states ought to be the objective of the internationalist movements - even if such an objective is more and more threatened as much by the Israeli policies and the settlements than by the actions of the so-called "resistance" (Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah) which feed and reinforce on each Other."

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The World Is (Not) a Commodity

Ernst Lohoff: From the Krisis website

The anti-globalization protest has formed as a movement against neoliberalism. Across the spectrum of protest, certainly the ideas on

how the ruling order is to be critiqued differ widely. There is also not exactly consensus on how the path to a more humane society could look. But all realize that the neoliberal dream of a total market is a nightmare.

This concentration on critiquing neoliberalism explains the remarkable response that the protest has gotten in the last years. But at the same time, because of this, it has to face fundamental orientation problems. Even though the policy of the capitalist powers and international organizations has not become more ecological or social by even a millimeter, the protest is in danger of losing the familiar front-line position. The official policy has long since backed off from the classical neoliberal project. Because of the crash of the New Economy, the USA has followed Japan in radically altering its course. In order to steer the setback of the burst speculative dreams of prosperity back toward the real economy and to prevent a devaluation shock, the Bush administration has no choice but to dip into the Keynesian instrument box. The staccato of interest-rate lowerings by the American central bank and the exploding budget deficit stand for a curious turn: the continuation of the dynamic stock-market capitalism with exactly those control policies, with which ATTAC wanted to slow it down.

When the ATTAC spokesperson Bernhard Cassen proclaims "that Bush was never so close to ATTAC as today" (the German weekly *Die Zeit*, 10/19/01), then his joy is pretty shortsighted. The stock-market etatist turn of policy does not at all demonstrate that a return to a postwar Keynesianism is possible or can even be implemented. On the contrary, it stands for a helpless crisis administration which unscrupulously shrugs off its own dogmas as long as the valorization of capital can be continued. However, every attempt to give the this crisis administration a "humane face" has already lost, because its priorities and criteria must be accepted. It is not an arbitrary political decision when money is pumped into the financial markets and not into the social sector, but only follows the inner logic of a system which clings to "fictive capital" because its basis, the valorization of living labor-power, irrevocably erodes.

A better life can therefore no longer be struggled for as a by-product of the state-

regulated capitalist modernization. A movement that racks its brain on how the path to a "better," socially regulated and lasting globalization could look, hunts a phantom and paralyzes itself. The practical impulse of the anti-globalization protest is legitimate as well as dangerous. It leads straight to a dead end, when it agrees to the guidelines of politics and only allows demands which are compatible with the market and statehood. It is forward propelling, however, when it makes an issue of the concrete phenomena of devastation that arise from the imperatives of economization and business rationality. Whether in public health care, in the question of old-age pensions, or in the relations to the Third World—*everywhere it can be shown that it is the worst of all possible solutions to transform everything into commodities.*

It is a welcome development when, at the ATTAC grass-roots level, the demand for the Tobin Tax has lost popularity and topics such as the privatization of the pension system or the repression of the unemployed come to the fore. What can be wrong about confronting the neo-liberal project on the same ground, on which it carries on? Every illusion about the reform potential of the state, however, stands in the way. The improvement of living conditions by means of health care, nutrition, or housing can only be carried through by overcoming the logic of the eroding valorization of capital and its political administration. It is a matter of snatching the material wealth, the means of production and existence, from the clutches of the market and state.

In comparison with the self-image the critical-of-globalization spectrum has, it is rather paradox when etatist-Keynesian concepts now call the tune in the discussion. How can a movement, which rightly sees itself as transnational, place its hope in getting its rights on the nation state? Why would a movement, which understands diversity as being positive, want to get its rights restored by the state, the great standardizer? The great strength of the anti-globalization protest does not lie in the makeshift answers that one or the other person has at hand, but in the questions which are brought up. The motto from Chiapas, "preguntando caminamos" (asking we walk), is suited for the protest as a whole. The false etatist answer certainly hinders this sort of movement.

The way in which the world community can escape the economic irrationality and the terror of the economy is known by no one and cannot be known beforehand. There is no "one way," but many paths, and their discovery is essentially to be found by practical activity. *Much can be said about the ruling order, but above all, one thing: The diversity, of which the protest is always so proud of, contrasts violently with the monotony of the commodity society makeup.* For the anti-globalization movement, this insight is not new. Certainly the outward forms of the market totalitarianism are as diverse, as the conditions which it meets in the different continents and social terrains. But the Procrustean bed of business rationality, which everything is to be subjugated under, is always the same. *The innocent little sentence, "The world is not a commodity," gets to the heart of the matter. The wealth and diversity of the world community can only unfold in the battle against the negative universalism of the commodity form.*

Translated by Richard Torres

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Capitalism and Love.

A quote from Alain Badiou received via email which is well worth inclusion and a fitting end this issue.

"If you limit yourself to sexual pleasure it's narcissistic. You don't connect with the other, you take what pleasure you want from them."

"Capitalism atomizes human beings, it forges connections of work and domination that serve capital, while it shatters the ability to create all other kinds of connections that sustain, heal and resist. Capitalism promotes connects based on usage, predation, profit and self interest."

"And because we all (for this particular historical moment) exist within that framework, the driving ethos of capitalism creeps into our own attempts to recreate, procreate and live. It enters our intimate lives, and it enters our networks of politicized solidarity and organized dreaming,"

<http://kasamaproject.org/threads/entry/badiou-in-praise-of-love>

Anti State, Non Market Sector Groups

worldsocialistmovement/SPGB:

worldsocialism.org/spgb: Postal address: 52 Clapham High Street London SW4 7UN.

Email spgb@worldsocialim.org

Promotional Material for the World Socialist Movement:

See previous issues or contact

veronica.clanchy@hotmail.co.uk or phone 01202 569826

“Role Modelling Socialist Behaviour: The Life and Letters of Isaac Rab. Further details can be obtained by contacting the address below.

World Socialist Party US (WSPUS) website:

www.wspus.org Postal address: World Socialist Party, Box 440247, Boston, MA02144

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<http://stephenshenfield.net> contains all issues of The Libertarian Communist and a host of useful articles for the ASNM sector.

Andy Cox's website looks at how socialism might be developed: <http://socialistmatters.webs.com/>.

World In Common: www.worldincommon.org

Email worldincommon@yahoogroups.com

www.libcom.org;

The Commune

For workers' self management and communism from below. Website: www.thecommune.co.uk

Postal address: The Commune, Freedom book shop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E17QX

Comrades may be interested in the following links:

For Libertarian Communists in Russia and Belarus:

<http://wiki.avtonom.org/index.php>

“Eretik” (Heretic) is a left communist journal in Russian and English that appears both on the net and in print. This is produced by a group in Moldova.

See: [http://eretik-](http://eretik-samizdat.blogspot.com/2012/immunity-of-rich-and-powerful.html)

[samizdat.blogspot.com/2012/immunity-of-rich-and-powerful.html](http://eretik-samizdat.blogspot.com/2012/immunity-of-rich-and-powerful.html)

A couple of places to purchase Literature and help support the ASNM sector.

“There is an Alternative!”

STIMULANTS: A collection of material highlighting an opposition to the Mantra that “There Is No Alternative” to

how we live today. Journals, Pamphlets, Books, DVDs and Cds etc available www.radicalbooks.co.uk **Libertarian Communist Literature** has a selection of pamphlets and journals related to the anti state, non Market sector. Journals Include: **Black flag, Aufheben, Socialist Standard, Organise** and others. We have a variety of pamphlets and a few books.

If you are interested please contact the postal or email address on Page 2 with your details

The Libertarian Communist is now available from **Housemans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX** email shop@housemans.com <http://www.housemans.com/>

And

News from Nowhere, 96 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY tel 0151 708 7270, email nfn@newsfromnowhere.org.uk <http://www.newsfromnowhere.org.uk/>

Chronos Publications
BM Chronos, London WC1N 3XX

The Life and Death of Capitalism Series No.1

No Revolution Anywhere By Robert Kurz
Available now

The Substance of Capital by Robert Kurz (forthcoming)

Worth taking a look at

The Socialist Labour Party of America (www.slp.org), and the Marxist Internet Archive Library and Marx Myths and Legends www.marxmyths.org

Direct Action Industrial Unions

Industrial Workers of the World: www.iww.org Or P/O Box 7593, Glasgow, G42 2EX Email: rocsec@iww.org.uk.

Workers International Industrial Union.

www.wiiu.org or www.deleonism.org/wiiu.htm see the article on Industrial Unionism in issue 9

See Also

International Libertarian Socialist Alliance: Formerly called the World Libertarian Socialist Network

www.libertyandsocialism.org

Wrekin Stop War www.wrekinstopwar.org or contact

Duncan Ball, 23 Sunderland Drive, Leegomery Salop, TF1 6XX email: Duncan.ball@blueyonder.co.uk. Not sure this is still active (please inform)

The following are additions to the directory and well worth taking a look at:

www.theoryandpractice.org.uk

www.marxisthumanistinitiative.org

For information on issues related to Global Heating See:

<http://thinkprogress.org/climateissue/>