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Reformism and the Class Struggle

This following article by Laurens Otter approaches the question of what constitutes reformism. As that article suggests the generally agreed definition of reformism is the enactment of a series of legislative reforms by which, it is argued, capitalism can, over time, be reformed out of existence and be replaced by socialism. We do not need to spend any time at all in proving that the reformist arguments lay in tatters. The same would apply to the argument that capitalism can be reformed to work in the interests of all so that we no longer need to work for a co-operative society based on common ownership and production for use based on free access. The reformism label can also rightly be stuck boldly across the chests of those who see themselves as socialist revolutionaries but whose only vision is a change from capitalism dominated by giant corporations to the same system run by the state. As if we have not witnessed the grotesque nature of state capitalism enough over the last ninety odd years to prove that this is just to move from one form of dictatorship to another.

It is pretty clear what reformism is but the lines seem blurred between this and the necessary act of engaging in the class struggle. Unfortunately there are those who label any groups or individuals who see engagement in the class struggle as a part of the process of building a movement or movements to end capitalism as being reformists. There is the point that to live within capitalism you engage in the class struggle whether you like it or not but the point is how you relate to the struggle within the system in terms of organising to put an end to it. The term class struggle is often confined to issues such as wages, conditions of employment and unemployment and certainly these come within the term but it is wider than workplace issues. Community concerns such as housing, education, the health service as well as wider issues such as the environment and war also come within the remit of the class struggle.

The relationship between the class struggle within capitalism and revolution is that change can only be brought about by majority consciousness and as we all know this is nowhere near in evidence at the moment. However people all over the world are involved in battles against the profit system and these are not confined to economic issues, wars, the threat of war, the danger to the future of the planet and the threat to peoples' local environment are issues concerning millions of people across the planet. Involvements in such issues for those of us who want to change society are twofold. Firstly victories in such struggles, and these will often only be partial ones, gives people the experience of organising themselves and confidence of being able to run their own lives. So such involvement is not about taking control of the situation but offering encouragement and encouraging self organisation. The second purpose is to make clear the link between seemingly unrelated struggles and also between movements developing in different parts of the world. Most of all, in this regard, we need to point to the link between the issues blighting people's lives and capitalism.

Such involvement is not reformism but neither is it unproblematic. Very often participation in this way will not seem to make much of a dent in the ability of capitalism to control peoples' ideas. Because people become involved in struggles against capitalism does not mean they will automatically seek a revolutionary change in society and people can learn the wrong lessons, defeat can bring the idea that all struggle is hopeless. Probably the biggest danger for groups of the anti state, non market sector who engage in movements related to class struggle is that they become too deeply embedded and become sidetracked from their main aim, to abolish the wages system itself. However this should not occur with groups that do not set themselves up with the intention of leadership and/or having some involvement with the running of the system. Trying to retain a purist position and refusing to get involved with workers struggles within capitalism also comes at a cost, that cost is the danger of isolating yourself from the only section of society who can bring about the change that all humanity needs. At the end of the day there are no easy answers but we need to be clear that there is a world of difference between engaging in the class struggle and reformism.

The Question of Immediate Reforms. **By Laurens Otter**

"Anarchism is reformist, reformism by blows certainly, but reformist nevertheless" Adam Buick (SPGB)

Explanatory Note: This quote dates from the early 1960s and is taken from correspondence between the author and Adam Buick (SPGB) and relates to a proposed debate between the SPGB and OXAN a paper produced at that time by Anarchists in Oxford. It is reproduced here as an introduction to what is still a vital question for the Anti State, Non Market sector.

Nearly half a century after the exchange that produced the above, I still happily plead guilty as charged; if direct action produced piecemeal advance is reformism, (a word that is normally restricted to legislated reforms,) by all means. As a syndicalist - though I may hope for an eventual social general strike - I am happy at the prospect of a succession of partial gains; as a Kropotkinist a gradualist or reformist by construction perspective appeals; (as a civil disobedient, anti imperialist, war resister or green yes I am happy to advocate a reform if it is to be obtained by direct action;) certainly I can

accept that if such gains are achieved in isolation with no follow-up, no element of the appetite growing with eating, the ruling class may well be able to negate their value. But over the years this has caused me to wonder just how true Adam's implied argument is to the truth of SPGB history. The SPGB declaration of principles nowhere disclaims the concept of a transitional state, (though for a very long time such repudiation has been the distinctive characteristic of the SPGB.) Nor - a fortiori - does it insist that there be no immediate demands; though even if it had done that might not necessarily

mean what the SPGB would now mean by that, since at about the SPGB was founded Eugene Debs was campaigning within the SPUSA to get it to delete the immediate demands from its party policy.

The SPGB has always insisted that only when the vast majority vote for socialism can socialism come; if one considers that when the party was founded the majority of the working class lacked the vote, as did all women, and that even if those had had the vote, Britain was then an imperial power and the vast majority of the people in the Empire, would not have been able to vote for a British Government; it follows that in some sense the SPGB acted in support of the reform of enfranchising the working class, women and imperial subjects.

The SPGB, (as a break away from De Leonism) naturally participated in what is generally referred to as the syndicalist upsurge of 1909-13 which saw a fundamental change in trade unionism; again reformism by deed. It then participated to the resistance to WW1; no doubt attacking all other resisters for not being sufficiently consistent; but still reformism by deed. It was perhaps, at this stage, certainly not before, that the SPGB felt is necessary to assert its hostility clause, in a way that distinguished itself, *not merely in the electoral field, but in the sphere of reformism by deed*, from all others. A new assertion that handicapped the party in its resistance to WW2, as, to a lesser extent, it had through the Thirties.

A few years after my exchange with Adam, the SPGB - occasioned by the growth of the squatting movement - partially rationalised its position, by the large claim that: **"Wherever the working class acts to defend its interests under capitalism SPGB members are active with them."** (Though only economic interests seem to have been meant, resistance to nuclear extermination, racist attack, gender or homophobic prejudice doesn't seem to qualify.) This would seem to an outsider, to sanction reformism by blows/deeds; which did initiate actions which led to a split in the party, though a further elaboration would seem desirable.

Feedback

In the last issue Laurens Otter made some comments about the Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Party of Great Britain including the hostility clause. We have had a letter replying to the points relating to the hostility clause and for sake of clarity we are reprinting the relevant section of the original article followed by the reply.

The Hostility Clause: Laurens Otter

However much as an anarchist I am on the wrong side of it, I don't really object to the hostility clause. The thing is that early on it was given a meaning that its wording doesn't imply; and this was purely because the SPGB founders were tired of being patronized by De Leon. They like him had reacted against Hyndman's on - off line on going in to the nascent Labour Party (then the Labour Representation Council) but he hadn't informed them that he was leaving; Allen had fallen out with the Edinburgh De Leonists and Lehane had done so with James Connolly. So they didn't want to talk to the SLP, and used the hostility clause as a justification for refusing to do so, though only a few months before they had regarded the De Leonists as fellow **"impossibilist"** socialists; which - by a literal reading of the clause - should have meant that both groups should unite as the same party.

A Reply - For the Record: KAZ

Cox and Otter and just about everyone else in the Lib Comm seem obsessed with the SPGB's Declaration of Principles. This is ironic since most party members could not give a stuff about it. Rather than some more navel gazing (it's not even your navel you pervs!), I only want to comment about Otter's remarks in Lib Comm 3 as to the early use of the 'hostility clause'. While it was true that there was a disagreement between the early SPGBers (London Impossibilists) and the SLP (Scottish - not just Edinburgh - impossibilists), Otter gets this rather jumbled. In a nutshell the cockneys were a bit miffed that the jocks had jumped ship without telling them. De Leon had very little to do with the SLPers decision to leave the SDF and there is no evidence that they were **"tired of being patronized"** by him. The 'hostility clause'

would not have been used as a justification for refusing to have any further dealings with the group. The decision to reject (or rather not even consider) unification was based initially on democratic grounds (their unilateral action) and later on broader grounds (the British SLP were incredibly Wobbly).

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Human Nature -Torgun Bullen (World in Common

Instincts

"There is no human nature, only human behaviour". This statement is false, if by "human nature" we mean that aspects of our common human behaviour is in-built and therefore with us from birth - in other words, instincts.

Darwin wrote about instincts in animals in Chapter 7 in the Origin of Species. He developed this further in his later book, "On the expression of the emotions in man and animals", where he expresses the idea that behaviours are biological adaptations that have evolved by natural and sexual selection, and that emotions are biological processes the same as any other, and therefore subject to evolutionary pressures.

I think that the following quote from William James' "Principals of Psychology", explains very well how we ought to think about instincts in humans:

"It takes...a mind debauched by learning to carry the process of making the natural seem strange, so far as to ask for the why of any instinctive human act. To the metaphysician alone can such questions occur as: Why do we smile, when pleased, and not scowl? Why are we unable to talk to a crowd as we talk to a single friend? Why does a particular maiden turn our wits so upside-down? The common man can only say, Of course we smile, of course our heart palpitates at the sight of the crowd, of course we love the maiden, that beautiful soul clad in that perfect form, so palpably and flagrantly made for all eternity to be loved!

And so, probably, does each animal feel about the particular things it tends to do in the presence of particular objects. ... To the lion it is the lioness which is made to be loved; to the bear, the she-bear. To the broody hen the notion would probably seem monstrous that there should be a creature in the world to whom a nestful of eggs was not the utterly fascinating and precious and never-to-be-too-much-sat-upon object which it is to her.

Thus we may be sure that, however mysterious some animals' instincts may appear to us, our instincts will appear no less mysterious to them." (William James, 1890) (As reproduced in "Evolutionary Psychology: A Primer" by Leda Cosmides and John Tooby.)

So, it could be argued (and some people have) that humans have more instincts than other animals; take, for example, our liking for company, the way small children in prams and push chairs always return a smile from an adult (try it, you will be surprised - it is as if they cannot help but smile back!)

Isn't it curious that "human nature" has got such bad connotations? It always seems to be associated with the worst aspects of human behaviour, not great and self-less acts of bravery which we could also point to.

Why has there been such reluctance in our area of politics to embrace new discoveries in genetics, evolution and human behaviour? One reason is the persistent "human nature" argument from our opponents, or from people who think we cannot ever achieve a better society. These people always pull out the worst aspects of human behaviour and conveniently forget about the rest.

"The blank slate"

This theory has also been called the "Standard Social Science Model", a theory attributed to the Social Sciences in the 20th century. This term was first coined in "The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture, an edited volume, first published in 1992 by Oxford University Press and edited by Jerome Barkow, Leda Cosmides And John Tooby. The claim is that it was a more or less ubiquitous concept in the Social Sciences that people were born as

complete “blank slates”, i.e., that a person’s genes contributed nothing to his or her behaviour. The concept probably was not universally accepted within the Social Sciences, but there was certainly enough of it around to have shaped the thinking of a generation from the mid 1900’s onwards, particularly among “liberal minded” people.

Whereas instincts tell us about human being’s **common** behaviours, with the concept of the “blank slate” you start discussing whether, or to what extent, character or behavioural traits **vary** between individuals due to natural variance in the gene pool.

However, a lot of interesting research has been done which shows that inheritance most likely influences behavioural traits. For example, the neurobiological disorder called autism tends to run in families. The disorder is characterised by distinct differences in behaviour between autistics and “neuro-typicals”.

There has also been a lot of publicity about studies showing that homosexuality is linked to the X chromosome, for example this one carried out in the USA:

A team at the National Institutes of Health took family histories from 114 gay men and noted that the men tended to have gay relatives on the mother's side of the family, but not on the father's side. This tendency, confirmed in interviews with relatives, suggested a trait passed on by mothers exclusively, which in turn suggested a gene on the X chromosome. Using genetic mapping, the team found that a set of five genetic markers at the tip of the long arm of the X chromosome were identical in 33 of 40 pairs of homosexual brothers. This finding indicates with more than 99 percent certainty that a gene associated with homosexuality lies in that area of chromosome X. (Published in Journal Watch General Medicine August 6, 1993)

So why has there also been reluctance among “liberal minded” people to accept that behavioural traits can be inherited and are thus subject to variation? I think it is because some people are not just trying to change the world for the better; they are also aiming for “Utopia”, where there is no irksome anti-

social behaviour **at all**. I also suspect some of a liking for control - they would like to be able to control behaviour by controlling the environment - a kind of “environmental determinism”.

In this context, arguments from **Sociobiology** often crop up. This fairly new branch of science is a neo-Darwinian synthesis of scientific disciplines. Sociobiology attempts to explain social behaviour in animal species by considering the evolutionary advantages the behaviors may have. I don’t find it hard at all to imagine and accept that behavioural traits vary in humans along with eye colour and the shape and efficiency of your liver. Just because sections of the right wing have pounced on some of these ideas and tried to twist them to show that we are doomed to live in a dog-eat-dog society forever, does not mean that we should shun this area of science.

If we are going to lay claim to being “scientific”, we have to go with new scientific theories if they are proved by reputable research to be true - even if we feel the results are uncomfortable.

If you are **not** aiming for Utopia, just a much more sensible society without private ownership, then the fact that behaviour will vary is not going to be an obstacle. I don’t think we have to abandon hope of a better future just because we can now be fairly certain that humans do indeed have instincts; neither because our behaviour is capable of variety due to both environment **and** nature.

I thought it was very heartening, having the reports of sexual abuse from the island of Pitcairn in mind, that an altogether different kind of society can also emerge, namely the one I was made aware of existed on the island of Tristan da Cunha:

In 1937, as part of a Norwegian scientific expedition, PETER MUNCH visited Tristan Da Cunha. He was surprised to discover that the form of social organisation on the island was ANARCHY... And had been for over 100 years.

There was no government, police, money or headman/woman. Munch wrote, ‘The principles of freedom and anarchy were firmly

established in the Tristan community as a social order based on the voluntary consensus of free men and women. In such a community not only is authority, control or any kind of formal or informal government considered unnecessary and undesirable but is felt to be a menace and a threat to individual rights.'

The inhabitants of Tristan were not a self-selected commune who had gone there to establish utopia. They were of all races and survivors of shipwrecks or ex-whalers who had washed up there over 100 years. That anarchy became their natural form of social organisation and persisted against all efforts of the British government to undermine it is all the more remarkable.

<http://ianbone.wordpress.com/tristan>

Communism is a society without money, without a state, without property and without social classes. People come together to carry out a project or to respond to some need of the human community but without the possibility of their collective activity taking the form of an enterprise that involves wages and the exchange of its products. The circulation of goods is not accomplished by means of exchange: quite the contrary, the by-word for this society is **"from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs."** *John Grav Website*

The "Middle" Class Byron Donelius

The Origins of the "Middle Class"

There is a reason that this article has quotations around Middle. If one speaks of a middle it usually denotes "in between," but in this case *in between* what? There was a time when the term "middle class" had a definite economic and sociological meaning. Back in the Middle Ages about 500 years ago, the middle class meant in between the upper class of nobleman and lower class of serfs. Feudalism had several classes: feudal lords ,

theologians, artisans, and finally the lowest rung of the ladder—the serfs that went with the land owned by the feudal lords. Each class was clearly defined into law that reflected feudal society.

Presently this number has been drastically altered. As Rosa Luxemburg pointed out almost 100 years ago unlike acquired rights, capitalism is based on "real economic relations—the fact that wage labor is not a juridical relation, but purely an economic relation. In our juridical system there is not a single formula for class domination of today."ⁱ The reason for this is that when capitalism overthrew feudalism and placed the upcoming merchant class—the bourgeoisie (the capitalist class)—in the dominant position, laws defining classes became meaningless. Defining classes into law, which can't be fully explored here, prevented the development of capitalism. As Marx and Engels explained:

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinct feature: it has simplified class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other — bourgeoisie and proletariat[wage workers]ⁱⁱ

This split into two classes has been completed many years after the aforementioned was published in 1848. With only two classes left, there is no class in between, hence no middle class. Let there be no equivocating, capitalism's two class divisions are the capitalist class and the working class. The term "working class" seems repugnant to many intellectual and salaried workers, but this is a vanity left over from the final overthrow of feudalism. America didn't experience feudalism. The idea of middle class notions emanated from Europe. Paul LaFargue noted that the modern idea of "middle class" began with the intellectuals in the French Revolution. They had high hopes. As LaFargue noted:

Promises cost it [the Revolution] little; it announced to all men that it brought them joy and happiness, with liberty, equality and fraternity, which, although eternal principles, were now born for the first time. Its social world was to be so new . . .even before the Republic was proclaimed. . . [but] It did not take long to determine the value of the promises of capitalism; the very day it opened its political shop, it commenced proceedings in bankruptcy. . . .

In 1790, an electoral act. . . established inequality before the law, no one was to be a voter but the “active citizen,” paying in money a direct tax equal to three days’ labor, and [only those in this category were] to be eligible for office. . . The electoral law deprived so many citizens of political rights, that in the municipal elections of 1790, at Paris, a city which counted about half a million inhabitants, there were but 12,000 voters, Bailly was chosen mayor by 10,000 votes.ⁱⁱⁱ

The middle class grew from these early intellectuals. It didn’t take long for this prestige to evaporate. By 1848, Marx and Engels observed:

”The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage laborers.”^{iv}

Accompanying this lowered status was law of supply and demand. Lafargue continued:

“in all branches there is an overproduction of intellectuals, and. . . when a place is vacant, tens and hundreds offer themselves to fill it; and it is this pressure which permits the capitalists to lower the price of the intellectuals and to put it even below the wage of the manual laborer. . . . The capitalists have degraded the intellectuals below the economic level of the manual laborers.”^v

And of course, the “middle class” to this day is still awash in its fantasies:

These intellectuals of industry and politics, the privileged portion of the wage class, imagine that they are an integral part of the capitalist class, while they are only its servants; on every occasion they take up its defense against the working class [meaning workers with lesser education], which finds in them its worst enemies. . . . They think their education confers on them a social privilege, that it will permit them to get through the world by themselves, each making his own way in life by crowding out his neighbor or standing on the shoulders of everyone else. They imagine that their poverty is transitory and that they only need a stroke of good luck to transform them into capitalists. Education, they think, is the lucky number in the social lottery, and it will bring them the grand prize. They do not perceive that this ticket given them by the capitalist class is a fraud, that labor, whether manual or intellectual, has no other chance than to earn its daily pittance.^{vi}

In our times, the wages of the “middle class” have usually been above what LaFargue referred to as a “daily pittance.” So what does “middle class” mean today? Usually those that aren’t on the lower rungs of the wage scale, but they still retain the same economic quality of their lower paid colleagues. Both must present themselves to an employer to get a job for their existence. As a class there is no distinction. That distinction only exists in their fantasies. But rungs on the wage-scale ladder sometimes collapse to the lower rungs. Losing higher paid positions to lower ones from outsourcing is an example—but more on this later.

Education

The percentage of degreed workers in the U.S., bachelors and above, stands at 27.2 %.^{vii} In my location—Minnesota—it is about one-third of the work force. It’s difficult to retain one’s illusions of superiority when such a large portion of workers are educated. Employment is a reflection of our increased technology and unless one has familiarity with this technology only the lowest paid jobs are available. The education “advantage” has evaporated and changed into a necessity to find employment.

In 2004, John Podesta and David Sirota posited that “The gateway to the middle class is considered to be a salary of about \$35,000 a year.”^{viii} But despite this very modest definition of entry into the “middle class,” Podesta and Sirota went on to note that the Bush Administration had stripped these middle classers of Federal overtime pay protections and cut job training outlays by billions. The level of \$35,000 is only what one can expect with a high school education. They also noted that providing adequate health care for this middle class had also suffered by inauguration of health savings accounts. As was suspected:

The president’s health savings accounts, which would put money into the consumers’ hands, also would allow employers to contribute less to workers’ coverage. In other words, annual health insurance deductibles probably would go up.”^{ix}

As expected, nothing good could possibly come out of the Bush administration—criminal even under the standards of capitalism. Podesta and Sirota went on to comment on the alleged “drug

coverage” for seniors who once considered themselves “middle class.”

As prices skyrocket, the president's Medicare bill all but ensured hundreds of billions in profits for the pharmaceutical industry without providing truly comprehensive drug coverage to seniors. The bill did nothing to prevent drug companies from charging Americans the highest prices in the world.^x

What can the “middle class” look forward to?

In a piece by Floyd J. McKay, “The Rapid Disappearance of America’s Middle Class,”^{xi} he quotes Elizabeth Warren, Harvard Law School professor about the prospects of the middle class:

During the past generation, the American middle-class family that once could count on hard work and fair play to keep itself financially secure has been transformed by economic risk and new realities. Now a pink slip, a bad diagnosis, or a disappearing spouse can reduce a family from solidly middle class to newly poor in a few months.”

The danger, Warren finds, comes from both ends of the financial spectrum: a decline in real wages for full-time workers and huge increases in basic family expenses. As a result, families are staying afloat only because both partners work. Male full-time workers in 2003 earned \$800 less than their counterparts in 1970, after adjustment for inflation. Enter the second paycheck, and the family's combined income goes to \$73,700 a year, a huge 75 percent increase from 1970.

Sounds great, right?

Not so, says Warren, and most of us would agree. Extra earnings increase costs for transportation, child care and taxes. Additional higher costs of mortgages and health care simply erase the added earnings – and then some. Warren estimates today's two-income family actually has \$1,500 less per year in discretionary spending. If you prefer the 70's style family of one working parent and the other keeping the home fires burning Warren warns that you had better be ready for a 72% drop in discretionary income compared with a generation ago. McKay continues on about Warren's observation:

There's no room for error with both parents working and up to their necks in debt and

obligations. "A once-secure middle class has disappeared. In its place are millions of families whose grip on the good life can be shaken loose in an instant."

Added to these worries are stratospheric credit-card interest, adjustable mortgage rates, and a banking industry that has made bankruptcy only an option of the wealthy or faltering business enterprises.

Another historical mark of “middle class” entry has been home ownership. “Home ownership” doesn't really mean ownership but living in a house owned by one's mortgage holder. The year 2007 hasn't shown much promise to this earmark of middle classism. As the Houston Chronicle put it,

The number of U.S. homes facing foreclosure surged 58 percent in the first six months of the year, the latest sign of growing problems in the mortgage industry, a data firm said today. In all, 573,397 properties across the nation reported some sort of foreclosure activity in the first half of this year, including receiving notices of default, auction sale notices or being repossessed by lenders, Irvine-based RealtyTrac Inc. said. That was 58 percent higher than in the first six months of 2006 and 32 percent higher than the last six months of 2006. . . .^{xii}

And from the June, 2007 issue of the *Monthly Review* it shouldn't be a revelation to workers that income disparity has greatly increased. From 1980 to 2004 U.S. worker productivity increased by two-thirds while wages [inflation corrected] actually fell. Wages at the 90th percentile [the point where 90% are doing poorer] had only a 1% increase. To fathom where the great difference is we must go up to the 99.9th percentile and note that income there rose 181% while those in the 99.99th level rose 497%.^{xiii} The share of income in the top one-tenth of one percent quadrupled from 1970 to 1998.^{xiv} At these giddy heights we have long left the ranks of those that must work for a living.

Outsourcing

Where have the jobs gone that once made it possible to eke out a minimal “acceptable” living? To understand their emigration we must first address the assertion that wages determine prices. Diamond miners in South

Africa produce a very expensive commodity and are paid low wages. High priced labor such as mechanical and chemical engineers are in charge of factories that produce vast quantities of inexpensive goods still command higher wages than most other workers. In a nutshell, the value of commodities isn't connected to wages, but reflects the amount of efficient productive time it takes to produce them. Thus, candy bars are cheaper than bulldozers; since bulldozers take more expended effort to produce than individual candy bars. Likewise the value of the commodity labor power (wages or salaries) reflects the amount of useful time it takes to produce it. In short, this means the amount of necessary time to produce the food, clothing, shelter, furthering education, etc. for its production just like any other commodity. It takes more to produce an engineer than other types of workers. Wages/salaries reflect this.

So what happens when a factory is sent to low-wage countries from the U.S? In short, the lesser standards of living in Indonesia and other similar locations mean that wages are lower, meaning that profits begin to soar. As Thom Hartmann put it,

When wages go down, profits go up. American wages [this also pertains to salaries—just another word for wages] have been falling steadily since Reagan first reintroduced con economics in 1980, and American corporations are generally more profitable than they've been in decades. In part this is not only because wages are going down within the United States but also because U.S.-level wages are being replaced by India- and China-level wages through outsourcing and offshoring.^{xv}

In essence, if the American "middle class" wants to compete with their low-wage counterparts they must learn to live with their offshorers level of existence. Since the cost of living in the U.S. is much higher this is almost impossible. Only when American wages reflect the level of the poverty ridden areas where their former jobs have migrated will jobs return to the U.S. Then world-wide low wages/salaries will be the new standard. Paul Craig Roberts, former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury had a dire outlook for former middle class high tech jobs^{xvi}:

At a Brookings Institution conference in Washington, D.C., in January 2004, I predicted that

if the pace of jobs outsourcing and occupational destruction continued, the U.S. would be a third world country in 20 years. Despite my regular updates on the poor performance of U.S. job growth in the 21st century, economists have insisted that offshoring is a manifestation of free trade and can only have positive benefits overall for Americans. Reality has contradicted the glib economists. The new high-tech knowledge jobs are being outsourced abroad even faster than the old manufacturing jobs.

Declines in the highest paid "middle class" jobs have become the rule. From 2001 to 2005 computer science and computer engineer pay fell 12 to 13%. Individuals holding graduate degrees in computer science, computer engineering and electrical engineering fell from 7 to 14%.^{xvii} Non-computer related engineering and architectural jobs were reduced in the five years of 1999 to 2004 by 100,000.^{xviii} Higher paying technical job so closely intimated to middle class membership, that can be outsourced, will eventually be.

The Politics of Capitalism and the Middle Class

Charles Sullivan, writing in *CounterPunch* said it clearly in a 2004 article, "Corporatism and Single Party Politics": "the two parties long ago merged into a single political force that is fueled by corporate money. This single party system not only caters to the rich--it exploits the shrinking middle class. . . . Under the rules of corporate governance, the working poor and the eroding middle class--indeed more than ninety-five percent of the population--are left out in the cold to fend for themselves. . . . That party unifying force is the ruling class power structure of corporate governance. It is driven by the economic engine of capitalism that concentrates wealth at the top of the economic ladder. Capitalism makes the rich richer by exploiting the poor much in the way that slave labor built the pre-civil war south into an economic power--a power that could not endure because it rested on the precarious underpinnings of social injustice."^{xix}

Future Possibilities

Has the last 40 years cast all exits from this nightmare hopeless? The U.K. Ministry of Defense's Development, Concepts &

Doctrine Centre produced a report that paints a possible dire outcome for capitalism that includes "The middle classes could become a revolutionary class, taking the role envisaged for the proletariat by Marx." As reported in *The Guardian*, April 9, 2007,

The thesis is based on a growing gap between the middle classes and the super-rich on one hand and an urban under-class threatening social order: "The world's middle classes might unite, using access to knowledge, resources and skills to shape transnational processes in their own class interest". Marxism could also be revived, it says, because of global inequality.^{xx}

The middle class is an illusion. To call on the "middle class" to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions: that condition is capitalism itself!

ⁱEndnotes

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