

Getting Free

*A Sketch of
An Association of Democratic,
Autonomous Neighborhoods
And How to Create It*

And Other Essays

Plus
An Annotated Bibliography
in English for the Libertarian Left

*By Jared James
2002*

© Copyright 2002 by Jared James and
placed in the public domain. Please reproduce freely.

Getting Free (the main essay), first edition, fall 1998, eighty copies.

Second (Internet) edition, revised and expanded, January 2000.

Final version, February 2002.

Table of Contents

Getting Free

Acknowledgements	4
Preface	5
1. An Awareness of How We Do <u>Not</u> Want to Live	8
2. A Notion of How We Might Want to Live	10
3. Basic Agreements of the Association	12
4. Obstacles	13
5. Strategies That Have Failed	16
6. The Strategy Described Abstractly	23
7. Ways to Begin Gutting Capitalism	24
8. General Comments on the Strategy	38
9. Ways to Finish Gutting Capitalism	40
10. Further Discussion	40
11. Some Comments on the Literature	48
Appendix: A Draft General Agreement for "An Association of Democratic, Autonomous Neighborhoods"	57
A Footnote on Terminology	59
Supplementary Essays	
Breaking Out of the Cage, and Destroying our Jailers	62
The Weakness of a Politics of Protest	67
Seeing the Inadequacies of ACF's Strategy Statement	77
A Stake Not a Mistake: On Not Seeing the Enemy	91
Is Greed All That's Wrong with Capitalism?	104
Majority Rule	114
Indigenism	120
Identities	127
The Loss of Anti-Capitalism: A Review of 'Audacious Democracy'	131
An Annotated Bibliography in English for the Libertarian Left	137

Acknowledgements

The main essay, *Getting Free*, in a much shorter version, was first prepared for the conference on "Critical Issues in Contemporary Anarchism" held at Montague, Massachusetts on June 7-9, 1996. I would like to thank the organizers of that conference, John Petrovato and Cindy Milstein, for providing an incentive to get it written.

I would like to thank the following friends and acquaintances who read an early draft of the essay and returned comments to me (my apologies if I have overlooked anyone): George Salzman, Betsy Rueda Gynn, Libardo Rueda, Jaime Becker, Brian Hart, Juan Carlos Oretga, Sonya Huber, Gary Zabel, Chris Pauli, Brian Griffin, Henry Jung, Bob McKinney, Thomas Reifer, Marianela Tovar, Behrooz Ghassemi, Monty Neill, Charlene Decker, Steve Heims, Danielle Zabel, Jon Bekken, Sanya Hyland, Mark Laskey, Suzanne Miller, Sarah Shoemaker, Barry Tilles, and Andrew Nevins.

I was able to improve the essay considerably because of the many suggestions, although I did not agree with several of them. I've tried to answer some of the criticisms voiced in this revised version. I did the typesetting and proofreading myself, but I had much appreciated help in reproducing and distributing the first edition from Betsy Gynn, Jon Bekken, Kenn Browne, and Chris Pauli.

I would especially like to thank George Salzman. Without his interest and encouragement I doubt if the essay would have reached this finished form. He carefully read the various versions of the essay, and made comments that helped clarify the text at numerous places. He has also promoted the essay vigorously in many ways, including posting it on his web site.

A first edition was published in the fall of 1998 in only eighty copies, photocopied (not printed), but bound in book form. A second version, revised and expanded, was posted on the Internet in the winter of 2000. This last

reworking was mostly done in the summer of 2001 and finally wrapped up in February, 2002.

Preface

The main purpose of this essay is to try to persuade revolutionaries to shift the sites of the anti-capitalist struggle, and to select new battlefields. I identify three strategic sites for fighting - neighborhoods, workplaces, and households - which I believe will not only enable us to defeat capitalists but also to build a new society in the process.

The advantage of shifting the battleground to the three strategic sites is that it is an offensive strategy, not merely a defensive one. That is, it is not merely our reacting to things we don't like and want to stop, not merely our resisting what they are doing to us, but rather our defending what we are doing to them through our new social creations. It means that we would begin to take the initiative to build the life we want, and then fight to defend this life, and defend our social creations from attacks by the ruling class. I think people will be much more willing to fight for something like this, than to fight to stop outrages of the ruling class elsewhere, which often seem remote from their everyday lives. But we should be quite clear that this will involve us in terrible fights. We will never be able to establish free associations on any of these sites without directly confronting ruling class power.

In listing all the strategies that have failed it isn't my intention to denigrate the revolutionary efforts of past generations. Resisting and defeating capitalism has been an historical project of enormous scope; revolutionaries have poured their lives into strategies they considered best at the time. I'm simply trying to take stock, and to reflect on where we've been and what we've tried, and on where we ought to be going now, and what we ought to be trying to do. I do not claim that the strategy I outline here is the end all and be all. It's a proposal, that's all, an assessment, a reflection on what I think it

will take for us to win. But I'm only one person. Fashioning a new anti-capitalist strategy for our times is obviously a task for millions.

Nor is it my intention (in listing what I claim are failed strategies) to say that people should stop resisting altogether. It is to argue that these forms of resistance, although they have accomplished a lot, haven't gotten us very far toward our ultimate goal of destroying capitalism. They haven't enabled us to overthrow the system, defeat the ruling class, or build a free society, and I don't think they ever will.

Some of these failed strategies, like the leninist vanguard party, social democracy, dropping out, and guerrilla warfare, should be abandoned completely. Others, like demonstrations and single-issue campaigns, should clearly be subordinated to the main task of building free associations in neighborhoods, workplaces, and households. It's not so much that strategies like strikes, civil disobedience, or insurrections are wrong in themselves. It's that they are not enough, and by themselves cannot defeat capitalism. To win we must add another whole dimension.

The sad truth though is that the three strategic sites we could be fighting on, and which might lead us to victory, are largely being ignored. The workplace struggles going on are largely reformist, as are most neighborhood organizing initiatives, while there is very little organizing at all being done around households. So the bulk of our energies are not going into these three strategic sites at all, but into other arenas. I would feel much better about all the demonstrations, the marches, the civil disobedience, the single-issue campaigns, if significant struggles were also being waged in workplaces, neighborhoods, and households. But in the absence of these fights, where does all the rest get us? Not to victory, that's clear enough.

The recent, spectacular resurgence of radical movements the world over, first symbolized by the Battle of Seattle in November 1999, and continuing on through Quebec City and Genoa, highlights the issues I've raised in a most urgent way. As heartening as these developments have been, and as wonderful as they are to see, it's all too possible that they will go nowhere, and will eventually fizzle out and disappear, just like the revolts of the sixties did, unless they can be linked to struggles to seize control of our lives on the local level. The mobilizations against corporate globalization can accomplish

a lot. It's quite important for example that the Free Trade Agreement for the Americas be stopped, and the vigorous opposition launched by militants in Quebec City in late April 2001, at the Summit of the Americas, at least put stopping it on the agenda. But I suspect that the treaty will go through anyway. Are mass demonstrations a sufficient tactic to stop something like the FTAA? Or do we need something else?

Somehow, it has come to be accepted that this is what radicals do - demonstrate - when they want to protest or stop something, and that mass demonstrations take priority over everything else. I will be arguing that we have it just backwards, upside down. If we had reorganized ourselves into neighborhood, workplace, and household assemblies, and were struggling to seize power there, then we would have a base from which to stop ruling class offensives like the FTAA, and if we then chose to demonstrate in the streets, there would be some teeth to it, and not be just an isolated, ephemeral event, which can be pretty much ignored by our rulers. We would not be just protesting but *countering*. We have to organize ourselves in such a way that we have the power to counter them, not just protest against them, but refuse them, neutralize them. This cannot be done by affinity groups, NGOs, or isolated individuals converging periodically at world summits to protest against the ruling class, but only by free associations rooted in real everyday life.

And if we were organized like this it might not even be necessary to go to mass demonstrations at all. We could simply announce what we were going to do to them if they didn't cease oppressive practices. But opposition movements gravitate again and again to these kinds of demonstrations. "Taking to the Streets", we call it. We can't build a new social world in the streets. As long as we're only in the streets, whereas our opponents function through real organizations like governments, corporations, and police, we will always be on the receiving end of the tear gas, pepper spray, rubber

bullets, and, almost everywhere in the world but North America or Europe, real bullets, napalm, poisons, and bombs. This predilection for protests and demonstrations prevailed throughout the sixties, as the movement traveled to Washington DC time and again, taking to the streets. We are still like children, only able to 'raise a ruckus'. We are not yet adults who can assemble, reason together, take stock of our options, devise a strategy, and then strike, to defeat our enemies, and build the world we want.

We are living in a window of opportunity. Anti-capitalist forces have been at a strategic impasse for decades, with widespread confusion over both the shape of the new world we want and how to dismantle the present order. But the complete collapse and discrediting of the Bolshevik model in Russia and all over the third world, and the equal bankruptcy of Social Democracy in Europe, opens up the possibility of redefining radical politics, of rethinking the goal of the revolution and its strategy. For the first time in over a century anarchist perspectives are back on the agenda in a serious way. Anti-statist approaches are gaining ground, even among some communists and marxists. I think of my essay as a contribution to this world-wide effort to redefine radical politics and to break out of the impasse that has stymied the revolution ever since the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917, the Socialist Democrats were defeated in Germany in 1919, and the Spanish Revolution went down to defeat in 1939.

My essay helps renew radical politics in several ways, I believe. By outlining a three pronged attack on the system, by focusing not merely on the workplace (seizing the means of production) but also on neighborhoods, and households, it anticipates a recapturing of decision-making, that is, its relocation, out of state bureaucracies, parliaments, and corporate boards, and into our assemblies. It also emphasizes capturing the means of re-production (and not only of production) through household associations. Its guiding principle is *free association*. It focuses squarely on the necessity of building an opposition movement and culture, and of creating for ourselves new social relations. It also integrates the goal and the strategy for achieving the goal, suggesting very concrete steps that ordinary people can take to defeat

capitalism and build a new world.

I have taken some ideas for granted, in addition to an anti-capitalist outlook, which the reader needs to be aware of in order to understand why I have written as I have. My sketch of a new social world and a strategy for achieving it is based on a firm commitment to direct democracy, not representative democracy or federation. I am aware that almost everyone now automatically dismisses direct democracy as being no longer possible in a "complex industrial society." I have always disagreed with this view.

You will also not be able to understand my remarks unless you are aware that I think of capitalism as a worldwide system, which is approximately 500 years old. Capitalists started establishing their way of living in Europe, between 1450 and 1650 roughly, and then, over the next several centuries, carried their

practices to every corner of the globe, destroying and displacing other traditions, usually through warfare. World history for the last 500 years is thus in the main the story of this assault capitalists have thrown against the world's peoples, beginning with the peasants of Europe, in order to seize their lands and force them into wage-slavery (wealth making laborers), tenancy (rent paying residents), and citizenship (tax paying subjects). It is also the story of the worldwide resistance to this invasion. A good part of the story of course is taken up merely with the fights among capitalists themselves.

You should also be aware that, from this perspective, countries that came to be called communist were just capitalist states doing what capitalists always do, enslaving and exploiting their populations. There was always a radical tradition that perceived the Soviet experiment, and the colonial revolutions that aped it, in these terms (council communists, western marxists, anarchists, and anarcho-syndicalists). Now that the Soviet Union is gone, more people are realizing that communist countries were just capitalism in a different form, and had little to do with the struggle *against* capitalism.

A further assumption I make is that it is impossible to defeat our ruling class by force of arms. The level of firepower currently possessed by all major governments and most minor ones is simply overwhelming. It is bought with the expropriated wealth of billions of people. For any opposition movement to think that it can acquire, maintain, and deploy a similarly vast and sophisticated armament is ludicrous. I have nothing against armed struggle in principle (although of course I don't like it). I just don't think it can work now. It would take an empire as enormous and rich as capitalism itself is to fight capitalists on their own terms. This is something the working classes of the world will never have, nor should we even want it.

This does not mean though that we should not think strategically, in order to win, and defeat our oppressors. It means that we have to learn how to destroy them without firing a single shot. It means that we have to look to, and invent if necessary, other weapons, other tactics. But we must be careful not to fall into the nonviolence/violence trap. Is tearing down a fence a violent act, or resistance to the violence of those who erected the fence in the first place? Is throwing a tear gas canister back at the police who fired it an act of violence, or resistance to an act of violence? Nonviolence is a main ideological weapon of a very violent ruling class. They use it to pacify us. They use their mass media to preach nonviolence incessantly. It's an effective weapon because we all (but they don't) want to live in a peaceful, nonviolent world. We would do well to chart a careful course through this swamp.

In this essay I have focused on the three strategic associations that are needed to defeat capitalists. I have not attempted to discuss also the numerous and varied cultural associations that will undoubtedly be created by free peoples, covering every conceivable interest.

As will become evident, I'm writing from the perspective of someone who lives in the United States of America. This is the only culture that I'm familiar with in any depth, although I have traveled abroad, lived two years in the Middle East, and have studied other cultures. My remarks are therefore most relevant to others living in this country, and to a lesser extent to persons living in other core capitalist countries, and to a still lesser extent to persons living in the rest of the world, although I hope everyone may find value in it. This essay has been written for those who already want to destroy capitalism.

It is not intended to persuade anyone that it ought to be destroyed. That is a task of a different kind. What is self-evident to me, as it is to most radicals, is unfortunately not so self-evident to others, not even to the working class itself. Nevertheless, I have included a short initial section on how we do *not* want to live, in hopes of attracting a wider range of readers, readers who may be quite unhappy with their lives but who are far from attributing their misery to capitalists.

Rather than load this essay down with footnotes, I've decided to refer the reader instead to another work of mine, *An Annotated Bibliography in English for the Libertarian Left*, which gives references to most of the topics discussed here.

1. An Awareness of How We Do Not Want To Live

There are places where you can come over a bridge and see a whole big city spread out before you. The Mystic River Bridge coming into Boston is such a place, as is the Brooklyn Bridge into Manhattan, or the Golden Gate Bridge into San Francisco. Driving over one of these bridges you can see the dozens of skyscrapers, the hundreds of office buildings and factories, the hundreds of stores and shops, thousands of people bustling along, traffic everywhere, and ships in the harbor. And you think to yourself, how could we ever presume to change all this? It is so vast. Countless activities. Millions of people going to work everyday. Thousands of enterprises. Goods being shipped. Phones ringing. How could we ever presume to change it?

And yet this whole enormous edifice is built on one tiny single social relation: wage-slavery (the extraction of wealth by force from the direct producers by the accumulators of capital). The government bureaucracies, the

police, the thousands of lawyers, the schools, the courts, are all there to enforce this tiny single social relation. But hardly anyone knows this anymore. This fact has been carefully hidden in dozens of ways. The knowledge that this wealth *is* extracted by force has long been lost, even though brute force is used all over the world on a daily basis to defend this relation, and even though millions of us face unemployment (and hence destitution) not so infrequently. The knowledge that we are *slaves*, being bought by the hour rather than by the lifetime, has also been lost. We have been wage-slaves for so long we have forgotten there is any other way to live. We have forgotten that once we had land and tools and could live independently, providing for ourselves, without being forced to sell our labor power for wages.

So this is the first and most important awareness we can come to: we should not be living as slaves but as free people. Seen in this light capitalism does not seem so invincible, but actually rather vulnerable. If we could only sever this single relation we could destroy capitalism and free ourselves to create a new social world. This is undoubtedly why capitalists go to such lengths to camouflage, mystify, and deny the wage-slave relation. It is their Achilles' heel.

A second awareness is more easily come by. If we take a stroll around one of these cities, noticing the kinds of buildings that exist, we will come up with something like this list: banks, factories, department stores, warehouses, office buildings, shops, churches, houses, apartment buildings, museums, schools, an occasional union hall, sports arenas, theaters, restaurants, convention centers, garages, airports, train stations, bus depots, nightclubs, hospitals, nursing homes, gyms, malls, hotels, courthouses, police stations, post offices. *What we will never see is a Meeting Hall.* If we happen to live in a capital city we will be able to find there somewhere a single chamber, where the politicians meet. Worshippers congregate in churches of course. Unionists hold meetings sometimes in their union halls, businessmen convene in downtown centers, spectators aggregate in theaters and arenas to watch games, movies, plays, ballets, and concerts, and students gather for lectures, sometimes in large auditoriums. But there are no Meeting Halls, as such, for citizens, where we can assemble to make decisions and govern our

own lives. So how can it be said that we live in a democracy, if we don't even assemble, nor have any facilities for doing so? Here is a second awareness we can come to. Not only should we not be living as slaves, we should not be living in an undemocratic society, but rather in a real democracy, where we govern our own communities.

Beyond these two basic awarenesses, there is the awareness of the linkages between our many miseries and the wage-slave system. This awareness is more difficult to acquire, mainly because capitalists, and their PR men, take such pains to blame the sufferings of the world on anything and everything other than their own practices. If there is starvation in Bangladesh, it's because there are too many people, and not because agricultural self-sufficiency has been destroyed by capitalist world markets. If the oceans are dying from oil tanker flushes, this is a shame, but it's really no one's fault; it's just the price we must pay for progress and civilization. If millions are living in abject poverty in the shantytowns of third world cities, there is nothing unusual about this; it's just part of the worldwide "process of urbanization"; they never mention that governments and corporations have seized the peasants' lands, forcing them to leave their homes. If cities are filling up with the homeless it's because these people are lazy and won't look for

work, and not because there aren't enough jobs for everyone, and rents are sky high. If there is filth and trash everywhere it's our own fault because we litter. And it's no mystery why cities are congested with traffic; we just keep refusing to use car pools. The list of such subterfuges is endless.

The truth is that most of the suffering in the world now is directly attributable to capitalists. I wouldn't want to put an exact percentage on it, but it is way way up there. But for capitalists, most of the illness in the world could be eliminated, as well as most of the hunger, most of the ignorance, most of the homelessness, most of the environmental destruction, most of the congestion, most of the warfare, most of the crime, most of the insecurity, most of the

waste, most of the boredom, most of the loneliness, and so forth. Even much of the suffering caused by hurricanes, floods, droughts, and earthquakes can be laid at the feet of capitalists because capitalists prevent us from preparing for and responding to these disasters as a community, in an intelligent way. And recently, capitalists are to blame for the increased severity of some of these events, which is due to global warming, which capitalists have caused. Unless you're already convinced, I know you're not going to believe these bald claims. But others have documented the linkages between these various evils and the profit system, if you care enough to study their works.

I have my own personal hate list. I hate advertisements, seriously. Nothing could be sweeter to me than living in an advertisement-free world. I hate congested cities, being stuck in traffic jams, not being able to park, being ticketed unfairly, having to suffer the rudeness of Boston drivers. I hate car alarms, a perfect example of a totally unnecessary aggravation, but for the insanity of capitalism. (To see the connection between the scourge of car alarms and capitalism will be a test of your newfound awareness of linkages.) I hate insurance companies, the biggest racketeers in America (not counting the Savings and Loans crooks of course). I hate the Internal Revenue Service, the Registry of Motor Vehicles, and the Metropolitan Transit Authority. I hate telemarketing. I hate call waiting. I hate weather forecasters; they are alarmists, and not one of them likes rain (among their many other faults). I hate cops; and they are everywhere now, even at the movies, in workplaces, department stores, parks, and libraries. I hate bosses. I never had one who was a decent human being (at least not at work), but always twisted in some way, mean, self-centered, or arrogant, or else incompetent, bluffing through it, pretending not to be, with no one daring to say otherwise. I hate mechanics. I hate the terrible insecurity of not having a reliable income. I hate this precarious existence. I hate looking for a job, big time. This is when you realize what a bind they've got you in. No way to live without a job; so hustle, make the rounds, update the resume, get the interviews, all for free (i.e., job hunting is unpaid labor which benefits corporations). Money running out or already gone; no one to help. Desperate to find someone to buy your poor self by the hour. Desperately seeking slavery in order to go on living. This is what I hate. And then, once a buyer is found, the boredom,

drudgery, and fatigue starts all over again, and you see your life slipping away, all used up by *businessmen*, and all *for nothing*. I hate living alone, with my crippled emotions and aborted love life. I hate television with a passion, and have ever since the first set appeared in my parents' home in 1951. I hate doctors. I hate seeing the earth, such a beautiful place, go down the tubes, just so some greedy morons can make a profit. I hate not being around small children, they being the loveliest creatures to grace our lives (most of them). I hate social scientists. Nothing has done more to make the world unintelligible than their decades of jargon and gibberish. I hate standing in line at banks (and I hate banks). It's bad enough that I'm paying them to use my money to make themselves a profit. It's the standing in line to do it that rankles. I hate automobiles, in too many ways to even count. I hate nondairy creamer. I hate seat belts, the thousandth way they have found to blame the victim. I hate being chased off the beach during a hurricane. I hate Smoky the Bear. I hate lawns. I haven't even begun to list all the things I hate about our present disorder.

I suppose, to be fair, I should list now all the things I love, in order to balance the picture, but it wouldn't be in character.

2. A Notion of How We Might Want To Live

We can turn now to a notion of how we might want to live. Let's assume, for the moment, that we could start from scratch to build a totally new social world, building up our neighborhoods just the way we wanted. What would they look like?

I have imagined a neighborhood with the following features (see below, p. 59, for a Footnote on Terminology):

Households: Households are units of roughly 200 people cohabiting in a building complex which provides for a variety of living arrangements for

single individuals, couples, families, and extended families. The complex will have facilities for meetings, communal (as well as some private) cooking, laundry, basic education, building maintenance, various workshops, basic health care, a birthing room, emergency medical care, and certain recreational facilities. Households are managed democratically and cooperatively by direct assembly of members (the Household Assembly).

Projects: Projects include all cooperative activities (more than one person) in agriculture and husbandry, manufactures, higher education, research, advanced medicine, communications, transportation, arts, sports, and so forth, plus cooperative activities undertaken within the household itself (cooking, teaching, child care, health care, maintenance, etc.). Buildings will be designed and constructed for these various activities. Internally, projects are managed democratically and cooperatively by a direct assembly of members (Project Assembly). Some projects, perhaps most, are controlled, in the larger sense, directly by the neighborhood, through the Home Assembly. Other projects are controlled by agreements worked out among several or many Home Assemblies.

Peer Circles: Peer Circles are units of roughly 30-50 people. All persons in the neighborhood will belong to just one peer circle, located at their primary project. For some this will be in the household but for most it will be in a project outside the household, or even outside the neighborhood. All projects are broken down into such circles. These circles meet within the project to discuss issues, and, where necessary, coalesce into project-wide general assemblies. Votes are taken within meetings but tallied across meetings, within each project. Peer circle meetings are necessary because genuine face-to-face discussion and deliberation are seriously constricted in groups larger than 50 people.

Because households contain many persons whose primary project is not within the household, but who are nevertheless living there, and who will want to be engaged in the self-governing of the household, I will refer to the Household Assembly as a distinct entity, different from Project (workplace)

Assemblies, even though the household includes Peer Circles for such projects as cooking, teaching, childcare, and healthcare.

Home Assembly: The Home Assembly is the core social creation. It is an assembly of the entire neighborhood, roughly 2000 people, meeting in a large hall designed to facilitate directly democratic discussion and decision-making. In practice of course the size of Home Assemblies will vary considerably. Its upper limit though is determined by the number of people who can meet in one large hall and still engage in democratic, face-to-face, unmediated decision-making.

An Association of Home Assemblies: Home Assemblies will join together, by means of a pact or a treaty agreement, to form a larger association. There will be an overall agreement which will define the association in general, as well as many specific agreements for particular projects.

The Home Assembly is the neighborhood governing itself. The neighborhood makes its own rules, allocates its own resources and energies, and negotiates its own treaties with other neighborhoods. The neighborhood will control the land on which it lives, and all projects and households within it.

Please note what this arrangement of social relations does *not* have: hierarchy, representation, wage-slavery, profit motive, classes, private ownership of the means of production, taxes, nation-states, patriarchy, alienation, exploitation, elite professional control of any activity, or formal divisions by race, gender, age, ethnicity, looks, beliefs, or intelligence. This neighborhood, so organized, will be the basic unit

of the new social order.

Those familiar with radical traditions will recognize in this sketch a melding of the anarcho-communist focus on community, the anarcho-syndicalist focus on workers control, and the feminist focus on abolishing the distinction between public and private spheres of social life. It is my belief that each of these cannot be achieved without the other. The achievement of workers control alone would leave no way for the community as a whole to allocate its resources (e.g., to decide whether to phase out a project or start up a new one), whereas the achievement of community control alone, without simultaneously controlling the means of production, is meaningless, empty. And the failure to democratize and socialize households, including them (and hence reproduction) as an explicit and integral part of the social arrangements, would leave a gender based division of labor intact, thus perpetuating the public/private dichotomy.

New towns have occasionally been built from scratch in recent decades, primarily by "developers" as commercial enterprises. Also, many completely new utopian communities were established throughout the nineteenth century in the United States, and perhaps elsewhere. It will surely be possible, given the resources, to build new communities from scratch in the future, at least on a limited scale. This will certainly be the exception though rather than the rule, especially at the beginning of this revolution. For the most part building from scratch will be out of the question for the first 50-75 years.

The actual task we face then is to transform *existing* structures (buildings, plant) and social relations into the desired ones. We need to try to imagine how our model neighborhood would look after having been *converted* from a typical urban neighborhood (rather than built from scratch). Let's see first if we can convert the existing physical plant into something more useful for democratic, cooperative living, keeping in mind that this is the easy part; the hard part is transforming social relations (e.g., property, family, work, and play relations). I will deal with this more below in discussing how to get there.

Factories and shops can be converted easiest of all. These can be used pretty much as they are (after they have been seized of course). Space will have to be cleared somewhere in them for peer circle meetings and project-wide assemblies.

More difficult is how to convert a street full of individual residences into households. It can probably be improvised however as follows: build passageways and tunnels between the buildings; set aside certain rooms for workshops, child care, health care; block off certain streets to sort of enclose the unit; expand one or two kitchens into a communal unit; rearrange bedrooms; clear an apartment for a meeting hall.

It will also be difficult to find a meeting space for the Home Assembly. There are options however. There may be a union hall, a church, a roller skating rink, or a high school gym in the neighborhood. But also, warehouses, supermarkets, and department stores have large open floors which could be cleared and made into meeting halls. Most of these spaces however could not hold 2000 people. It may be necessary to begin with smaller Home Assemblies - say five households of 200 each - for a Home Assembly of 1000 members, instead of ten households for a 2000 member Home Assembly. Later on, after the flow of wealth out of the neighborhood to the ruling class has been stopped, and after the stolen wealth of the ruling class has been re-appropriated, neighborhoods will undoubtedly want to, and have the resources to, build specially designed Home Assembly Halls, as well as new Household complexes. But at first we will have to make do with what already exists. The wealth of centuries is embedded in the existing architectural plant, a plant which reflects capitalist values, priorities, and social relations. It will take a long time to tear down and rebuild this physical world, rebuilding it to express the needs of a free people.

But when we do rebuild, the mark of our new civilization will be its assembly halls. Just as earlier worlds have been marked by the pyramids of ancient Egypt, the temples and theaters of ancient Greece, the castles and cathedrals of medieval Europe, and the banks and skyscrapers of modern capitalism, so the new social world of a cooperatively self-governing people will be known by its meeting halls. They will be its most distinguishing architectural feature. They will undoubtedly come in all shapes and sizes. Besides the large general assembly chambers for neighborhoods (Home Assemblies), there will need to be small caucus rooms in every project and every household for peer circle meetings, as well as project-wide

and household-wide assembly rooms. A deliberating people will design, build, and equip excellent and beautiful spaces for deliberation.

To complete this sketch we would need to imagine at least two more arrangements, one for a typical small town, and another for a typical peasant village, two rapidly disappearing social entities (given the continuing, violent enclosures forced through by our corporate rulers). Peasant villages the world over, although under heavy attack and rapidly disappearing, nevertheless still possess a basis for community, with many communal traditions still in tact. These traditions are not always and everywhere relevant to creating a free, anarchistic society, but some of them are. Marx, after all, believed that Russia could skip capitalism and move directly to communism by building on the peasant commune. Small towns still exist too, in every country. Even in a highly urbanized country like the United States, there are still 20,000 towns with a population below 10,000, 15,000 of which are below 2500. There is no reason why these small towns couldn't switch to direct democracy right now if they wanted to.

It will be easier I think to transform small towns and peasant villages into our desired neighborhoods than suburbs or dense urban areas. But maybe not. Megalopolises and suburbia will surely wither away, decade by decade into the new civilization, as the countryside is repopulated with livable, cooperative, autonomous communities of free people. (Needless to say, the vast shantytowns of the neo-colonized world will be the first to go.)

A neighborhood is a very small place, relatively speaking. Although there may be many villages or small towns left in the world with populations as low as 2,000, they are rapidly disappearing. Most settled areas are much more densely populated. Consider a town of 90,000 for example, which is a very small town by today's standards. An average Home Assembly size of 2,000 members means we will have 45 Home Assemblies in the town. A city of 600,000 will have 300 Home Assemblies. A city of 1,800,000 will have 900,

a city of 9,000,000 will have 4500.

This shows us immediately the tremendous power of this strategy. For the people in a small town of 60,000 to reconstitute themselves into 30 deliberating bodies to take charge of their lives, resources, and neighborhoods is an unbelievably powerful revolutionary act. Just the mere act of assembling is revolutionary, without even considering all that these assemblies can do. Capitalists depend a lot on keeping us all isolated. Our assembling starts to destroy that isolation. It is an act that will be next to impossible to stop, an act that has the power to destroy capitalism and an act that has the potential to build a new civilization.

This is the way to think of the revolution. It is a people re-assembling themselves (reordering, reconstituting, reorganizing themselves) into free associations at home, at work, and in the neighborhood. Capitalists will fight this. They may outlaw the meetings, bust them up by force, arrest those attending, or even murder the assemblers. But if we are determined they will not be able to block us from reconstituting ourselves into the kind of social world we want.

3. Basic Agreements of the Association

The basic social unit is the Home Assembly, as described above. For many purposes however these Home Assemblies will want to cooperate with other Home Assemblies. They will coalesce to accomplish certain objectives. In other words they will sometimes form larger associations. They will do this by treaty negotiations. They will negotiate agreements to govern all supra-neighborhood projects. Sometimes these agreements will involve just a few Home Assemblies, sometimes many. That is, agreements will encompass larger or smaller numbers of Home Assemblies, depending on the nature of the project. A telephone system will require a regional or even inter-regional pact. A local park may involve only three or four neighborhoods. The highway system will require regional agreements. A large manufacturing facility may involve 15 or 20 Home Assemblies. Similarly for hospitals, large research facilities, orchestras, and so forth. A considerable amount of the

activity in the world at present is governed by such treaties and not by legislation (for example, the worldwide postal service among nations). Also, contracts between corpo-

rations are more in the nature of treaties (mutually agreed upon terms and conditions) rather than laws (although they are enforced by a nation's laws). So we should not be frightened by this. The number of inter-neighborhood agreements the Home Assemblies will have to work out to regulate our common endeavors will be well within the range of complexity manageable by human intelligence. It probably won't exceed a hundred agreements (not counting trade agreements, which may run into the thousands).

Beyond agreements governing particular projects there will need to be a general agreement about the nature of the association. Becoming a signature to this agreement or pact is what it means to join an "Association of Democratic Autonomous Neighborhoods." There will need to be agreements about membership in neighborhoods, about the basic structures of the neighborhood itself (Households, Projects, Peer Circles, Home Assembly), about voting procedures within the assemblies, about territory and resources, about leaving the association, about not even joining the association, about aggression and defense, and so forth. (See the Appendix, p.57, for a draft general agreement for such an association.)

Negotiating these treaties will involve a lot of work at first, less so later. Nevertheless, it will be an ongoing process. Procedures and facilities for negotiating will need to be established. These treaty negotiating procedures will probably not differ all that much from the way treaties are negotiated among states: delegates from each neighborhood will be sent to regional treaty drafting conferences, with the final ratification resting with the Home Assemblies. The main difference lies in the number of negotiating parties, a hundred and a half nations versus tens of thousands of neighborhoods.

Although this may seem cumbersome, there is no alternative if we want to govern our own lives. The alternative is to relinquish control into the hands of regional or inter-regional rulers, thus voiding our determination to be autonomous, free peoples. Besides, it probably looks a lot worse than it will prove to be in reality.

4. Obstacles

Once we have in mind a clear notion of how we might want to live we can begin to see ways to bring this new world into being, and to see what obstacles have to be overcome.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle we face is the enormous capacity capitalists have acquired to shape and control what people think and how they see the world and events taking place in it. Radio, television, and movies are the greatest weapons ever to fall into the hands of any ruling class. Add to this all the other instruments of mass communication - books, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, advertising, videos, computers; then add years and years of schooling, ruling class control of all major institutions, propaganda at work, the homogenization of culture, and the destruction of families, neighborhoods, and communities. Given all this it is hard to see how an autonomous, oppositional consciousness could ever emerge, or survive the system's attacks if it did emerge.

Nevertheless, capitalist control of consciousness and culture is not total. Opposition movements continue to be born even now. There are cracks in the empire through which the irrepressible creative subjectivity of human beings can find outlets. This is our main hope. The rapid creation of a worldwide Indymedia, in just two years (dating from Nov 1999), is a spectacular manifestation of this hope. I'm sure there are many other ways that we can break the hold of ruling class thought, prove that we have not been totally brainwashed by the doublespeak of their media, and assert our own values and perceptions.

Another big obstacle we face is the labor market itself. We have to go to where the jobs are. This means that many of us are moving all the time. Many

of our current neighbors will be gone in a couple of years (or we will be gone ourselves). Even if we managed to set up neighborhood assemblies, their members would be constantly turning over. Nevertheless, in every neighborhood, there are also many who manage to stay put and who could provide the needed continuity and stability.

Having to follow the jobs also results in a huge disjunction between where people live and where they work. The vast majority of people who live in urban or suburban areas, throughout the world, do not work in the neighborhoods where they live. They commute to jobs somewhere else. Even if this job is only half

a mile away it most likely takes them out of the Home Assembly district (depending on population density of course). That is, even if a neighborhood succeeded in establishing a Home Assembly and even if workers in a neighborhood seized the factories and offices there, we would still be dealing with two sets of people. (And many suburban neighborhoods do not even have factories and offices; thus suburbia itself is an obstacle, and will have to be dismantled or rebuilt.) So how could a neighborhood-based Home Assembly become a decision-making unit governing the projects in that area? It would take decades, even if capitalism were destroyed, for people to get relocated into projects nearer home. This must of necessity be a gradual process. In order to avoid total chaos and disintegration, most people must go on working at the jobs they have and know. Otherwise we would all die. There would be no food, no transportation, no medical care, no electricity, no heat, no clothing. So it is quite clear that at least initially there cannot be an integrated neighborhood decision-making unit comprised of a gathering of Peer Circles from Projects and Households into a Home Assembly.

But this is not the whole story. There are still compelling reasons for sticking with the strategy. For one thing, even in a thoroughly reconstructed social

world, there will be many inter-neighborhood projects which will be governed by pacts struck by several Home Assemblies rather than being controlled solely by a single Home Assembly. So some people will always be working away from the neighborhoods where they live. That is, some persons will attend their Home Assemblies as individuals who are members of Peer Circles from outside their neighborhood. Secondly, it is only by reconstituting ourselves into neighborhood, workplace, and household associations that we can destroy capitalism and thus slowly start to undo the absurd work/home spatial patterns thrown up by this idiotic system.

Another huge obstacle to creating the envisioned Association of Autonomous Neighborhoods sketched above is the worldwide division of labor. Every little enterprise (office, workshop, clinic, classroom) gets supplies and equipment from all over. Light bulbs come from way off. Paper, pens, electricity, computers, furniture, medicines, machines come from way off. In the short run, no enterprise could continue to function if these networks of trade were disrupted. But at present this trade is corporate controlled. In recent decades, given transnational corporations and the further globalization of capital, the worldwide division of labor (and trade networks) has taken another expansive leap. It has suited capital's purposes to decentralize production, scattering plants all over the world, all made possible by the new communication and information technology. It doesn't have to be this way, of course, nor is this necessarily the best way to organize production. But this existing division of labor, induced and shaped by the imperatives of capital, certainly does constitute an obstacle to establishing democratic, autonomous communities of free people. It will take time to restructure trade to reflect the principle of freedom rather than slavery.

In the meantime, the existing trade networks will have to be maintained and worked with. But *who* will maintain them? And how? Obviously you can't overthrow the corporate world but somehow maintain its division of labor. Which leads us to an important insight: residential patterns and divisions of labor *cannot be overthrown*; they have to be *replaced*. (This is true also for capitalist property relations and capitalist institutions of decision making.) I have no doubt that Home Assemblies and self-managed Projects will be able to eventually build up extensive trading networks to replace the existing

corporate-controlled ones.

Speaking of capitalist property relations, they have traditionally been seen as the greatest single obstacle to achieving communism. The fact that the capitalists "own" the land and factories, and that this "ownership" is inscribed in law, upheld by the courts, and enforced by the police, this fact is what has led anti-capitalist forces to focus primarily on the state in their efforts to abolish these property relations. This strategy proved ineffective, through nearly a century of trials. In any case, any attempt to establish autonomous neighborhoods, with cooperatively run households and projects, would run smack up against capitalist property relations, and they would have to be overcome.

The military might of the capitalist ruling class is of course an obvious obstacle to the establishment of democratic, autonomous neighborhoods. Their ability to simply murder us, if they choose to, to protect their profits, is very daunting indeed. Nevertheless, although this firepower is overwhelming, it is not

invincible. We can defeat it. I hope I am beginning to show how in this essay.

We must never forget however that we are at war, and have been for 500 years. We are involved in class warfare. This defines our situation historically and sets limits to what we can do. It would be nice to think of peace, for example, but this is out of the question. It is excluded as an option by historical conditions. Peace can be achieved only by destroying capitalism. The casualties from this war, on our side, long ago reached astronomical sums. It is estimated that thirty million people perished during the first century of the capitalist invasion of the Americas, including millions of Africans who were worked to death as slaves. Thousands of peasants died in the great revolts in France and Germany in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During the enclosures movement in England and during the first wave of industrialization, hundreds of thousands of people died needlessly.

African slaves died by the millions (an estimated fifteen million) during the Atlantic crossing. Hundreds of poor people were hanged in London in the early nineteenth century to enforce the new property laws. During the Paris uprising of 1871, 30,000 communards were slaughtered. Twenty million were lost in Stalin's Gulag, and millions more perished during the 1930s when the Soviet state expropriated the land and forced the collectivization of agriculture, an event historically comparable to the enclosures in England (and thus the Bolsheviks destroyed one of the greatest peasant revolutions of all time). Thousands of militants were murdered by the German police during the near revolution in Germany and Austria in 1919. Thousands of workers and peasants were killed during the Spanish Civil War. Hitler killed 10 million people in the camps (including six million Jews in the gas chambers). An estimated 200,000 labor leaders, activists, and citizens have been murdered in Guatemala since the coup in 1954. Thousands were lost in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Half-a-million communists were massacred in Indonesia in 1975. Millions of Vietnamese were killed by French and American capitalists during decades of colonialism. And how many were killed during British capital's subjugation of India, and during capitalist Europe's colonization of Asia and Africa? A major weapon of capitalists has always been to simply murder those who are threatening their rule. Thousands were killed by the contras and death squads in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Thousands were murdered in Chile by Pinochet during his counter-revolution, after the assassination of Allende. Speaking of assassinations - Patrice Lumumba, Rosa Luxemburg, Antonio Gramsci (died in prison), Ricardo Flores Magon (died in prison), Che Guevara, Gustav Landauer, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Fred Hampton, George Jackson, the Chicago anarchists, Amilcar Cabral, Steve Biko, Karl Liebnicht, Nat Turner, and thousands more. Thousands are being murdered every year now in Colombia. Thousands die every year in the workplace in the United States alone. Eighty thousand die needlessly in hospitals every year in the United States due to malpractice and negligence. Fifty thousand die every year in automobile accidents in the US, deaths directly due to deliberate capitalist decisions to scuttle mass transit in favor of an economy based on oil, roads, and cars (unsafe cars to boot). Thousands have died in mines since capitalism

began. Millions of people are dying right now, every year, from famines directly attributable to capitalists, and from diseases easily prevented but for capitalists. Nearly all poverty-related deaths are because of capitalists. We cannot begin to estimate the stunted, wasted, and shortened lives caused by capitalists. Not to even mention the millions of us who have died fighting their stupid little world wars, and their equally stupid colonial wars. (This enumeration is *very* far from being complete.)

Capitalists (generically speaking) are not merely thieves. They are murderers. Their theft and murder is on a scale never seen before in history, a scale so vast it boggles the mind. Capitalists make Alexander, Caesar, Genghis, and Attila look like boy scouts. This is a terrible enemy we face.

I can just hear the cries of protest now that we cannot blame all this on capitalists, Hitler's holocaust as well as Stalin's Gulag, racial murders as well as famines. I can and I do, and if this were another essay than it is, I could present reasoned arguments and evidence to back up this claim.

5. Strategies That Have Failed

1. *Social Democracy* (gaining control of the state apparatus through elections). We can't destroy capitalism by running for office. It hasn't been done and it won't be done, even though numerous governments have been in socialist hands in Europe, sometimes for decades. It won't be done because governments don't have the last say, they don't control society. Capitalists do. The government doesn't control capitalists; capitalists control the government. Modern government (i.e., the nation-state system) is an invention of capitalists. It is their tool and they know how to use it and keep it from being turned against them. Although building worker-controlled political parties, and then using those parties to win elections and get control of governments, and then using those governments to establish socialism, seemed like a plausible enough strategy when it was initiated in the mid-

nineteenth century, it's way past time for us to recognize and admit that it simply hasn't worked. Capitalism goes rolling on no matter who controls the government.

2. *Leninism* (capturing the state apparatus by force of arms). We can't destroy capitalism by taking over the government in a so-called revolution. This has been the most widely used strategy during the past century in countries on the periphery of capitalism (National Liberation Movements), beginning with the Russian Revolution. Dozens of "revolutionary parties" have come to power all over the world, but nowhere have they succeeded in destroying capitalism. In all cases so far they have simply gone on doing what capitalists always do, accumulate more capital. They become, inevitably (and in spite of their intentions), just another government, in a system of nation-states, inextricably embedded in capitalism, with no possibility of escape. Generations of revolutionaries devoted their lives this strategy. It seemed like the best thing to do at the time, and maybe it was. But now, after nearly a century of trials, it's painfully clear that the strategy has failed, and more and more revolutionaries are coming to this conclusion. The few remaining die-hard leninists, who are still struggling to build a vanguard party to seize state power, are definitely, and thankfully, a dying breed.

3. *Guerrilla warfare*. We cannot destroy capitalism with guerrilla warfare. This strategy has been mostly deployed as part of National Liberation Movements in colonial countries in order to capture the governments there. It is a form of Leninism. As noted above, Leninism in general didn't work. And now, guerrilla warfare, as a particular tactic within Leninism, doesn't work. Capitalists have learned how to defeat it. The strategy was based on the assumed unwillingness of the capitalists to murder the civilian population in order to kill the guerrillas too. Capitalists showed no such reluctance. They are willing to murder on a massive scale, and uproot and displace whole populations, in order to defeat guerrilla movements. And they win. (The current war in Colombia will perhaps serve as the final test of the strategy.)

Some wild-eyed romantic revolutionaries have thought to adopt the strategy

for use in the core countries, with disastrous results. Capitalists have been delighted to have a new enemy, namely "terrorists" and "anarchists," now that "communists" are gone. But of course they will malign any opposition movement, so this is not the reason guerrilla warfare will not work here. It won't work because it is part of Leninism (seizing state power) and Leninism didn't work. It will not work because of the overwhelming firepower amassed by every advanced capitalist government. It will not work because it doesn't contain within itself the seeds of the new civilization. I would think twice before joining the underground.

4. *Syndicalism* (federations of peasant, worker, and soldier councils). We cannot destroy capitalism by seizing and occupying the factories and farms, at least not in the way this has been tried so far. Nevertheless, of all the strategies that have failed, syndicalism is the only one that had a ghost of a chance of succeeding, and the only one that even came close to creating a new world. It came close in the great Spanish revolution in the thirties. Unfortunately, that magnificent revolution was defeated. In fact, all syndicalist revolutions have failed so far.

I believe there are serious flaws inherent in the strategy itself. For one thing, the syndicalist strategy ignores households, as if households weren't part of the means of production. Thus it excludes millions of homemakers from active participation in the revolution. Homemakers can only serve in a supporting role.

It also excludes old people, young people, sick people, prisoners, students, welfare recipients, and millions of unemployed workers. To think that a revolution can be made only by those people who hold jobs is the sheerest folly. Perhaps immediately after syndicalists "seize the factories" and make a revolution this exclusion could be overcome by having everyone join a council at home or in school, but this is no help beforehand, during the

revolution itself. The whole image is badly skewed, wacky.

Moreover, syndicalists have never specified clearly enough how all the various councils are going to function together to make decisions and set policy, defend themselves, and launch a new civilization. In the near revolution in Germany in 1918 the worker and soldier councils were for a few months the only organized power. They could have won. But they were confused about what to do. They couldn't see how to get from their separate councils to the establishment of overall power and the defeat of capitalism. In the massive general strike in Poland in 1980, factory, office, mining, and farm councils were set up all over the country. But they didn't know how to coalesce into an alternative social arrangement capable of replacing the existing power structure. Moreover, they mistakenly refrained from even attacking ruling class power, with the intent of destroying it. Instead they merely wanted to coexist in some kind of uneasy dual structure (perhaps because they were afraid of a Soviet invasion; but a strategy that has not taken external armies into account is badly flawed).

Workplace associations would have to be permanent assemblies, with decades of experience under their belts, before they could have a chance of success. They cannot be new forms suddenly thrown up in the depths of a crisis, or in the middle of a general strike, with a strong government still waiting in the wings, supported by its fully operational military forces. It is no wonder that syndicalist-style revolts have gone down to defeat.

Finally, syndicalists have not worked out the relations between the councils and the community at large, and to assume that workers in a factory have the final say over the allocation of those resources (or whether the factory should even exist) rather than the community at large, simply won't do. Nor have syndicalists worked out inter-community relations. In short, syndicalism is a half-baked strategy that has not been capable of destroying capitalism, although it has been headed in the right direction.

5. *General Strikes.* General strikes cannot destroy capitalism. There is an upper limit of about six weeks as to how long they can even last. Beyond that society starts to disintegrate. But since the General Strikers have not even

thought about reconstituting society through alternative social arrangements, let alone created them, they are compelled to go back to their jobs just to survive, to keep from starving. All a government has to do is wait them out, perhaps making a few concessions to placate the masses. This is what DeGaulle did in France in 1968.

A general strike couldn't even last six weeks if it were really general, that is, if everyone stopped working. Under those conditions there would be no water, electricity, heat, or food. The garbage would pile up. We couldn't go anywhere because the gas stations would be closed. We couldn't get medical treatment. Thus we would only be hurting ourselves mostly. And what could our objectives possibly be? By stopping work, we obviously wouldn't be aiming at occupying and seizing our workplaces. If that were our aim we would continue working, but kick the bosses out. So our main aim would have to be to topple a government, and replace it with another. This might be a legitimate goal if we needed to get rid of a particularly oppressive regime. But as for getting rid of capitalism, it gets us nowhere. I don't think we should put any energy into agitating for a General Strike.

6. *Strikes.* Strikes against a particular corporation cannot destroy capitalism. They are not even thought to. The purpose of strikes is to change the rate of exploitation in favor of workers. They have only rarely been linked also to demands for workers control (let alone the abolition of wage-slavery); nor could capitalist property relations be overcome in a single corporation. The strike does not contain within itself any vision for reconstituting social relations across society, nor any plans to do so.

In recent years strikes have even lost most of the effectiveness they once had for gaining short term benefits for the working class. More often than not strikers are defeated: their union leaders sell them out;

the owners bring in scabs, or simply fire everyone and hire a whole new crew; the owners move their plants elsewhere; the government declares the strike illegal and calls out the state militia. Strike breaking is a flourishing industry on Consultant Row. Decades of anti-union propaganda by corporate controlled media has destroyed a pro-labor working class culture, which in turn helps management break strikes. Nowadays, for strikers to get anywhere at all, entire communities have to be mobilized, with linkages to national campaigns. Even so, they are still aiming only at higher wages, health benefits, and the like. They are not anti-capitalist. With rare exception, they are not even fighting for a shorter work week, not to mention workers control.

I do not believe that this situation is temporary or can be reversed. So however important strikes are, or once were, in the unending fight over the extraction of wealth from the direct producers, they cannot destroy capitalism as a system.

7. Unions. Unions cannot destroy capitalism. Although unions were created by workers, mainly to help protect themselves from the ravages of wage-slavery, they have long since lost any emancipatory potential. They were easily co-opted by the ruling class and used against workers, as a disciplinary tool, to prevent strikes, to prevent job actions, to drain power from the shop floor, to stabilize the work force and reduce absenteeism, to pacify workers, to water down demands, and so forth. Almost from their beginnings in the middle of the nineteenth century (and with rare exception) unions have been "business unions", working in cahoots with capitalists to manage "labor relations." There is an inherent flaw in the strategy. It is based on constructing a bureaucratic institution *outside* the workplace instead of free association of workers *inside* the workplace. In any case the heyday of unions is long since past and any hope of bringing them back is delusive.

In recent years there has been a movement to rebuild unions, even in the United States, which is notoriously lacking in labor consciousness, and where union membership is down to eight percent in nongovernment workplaces.

Also in other countries though, especially poor ones, there are some strong union movements, arising in response to industries having been moved there, or to the appearance of sweatshops. With rare exception, these unions are not anti-capitalist. Naturally, it's important to fight for better working conditions, higher wages, shorter hours, and health benefits. Such struggles do often highlight the evils of the wage-slave system, as well as improve the lives of workers. Who could not be excited by the rapid emergence of the student anti-sweatshop movement on college campuses across the country? But something more is needed if we want to get rid of capitalism. Even if current labor activists succeed, and rebuild unions back to what they once were, can we expect these newly rebuilt unions to accomplish more than previous ones did, at the height of the unionization drives of a strong labor movement, a movement that was embedded in communist, socialist, and anarchist working class cultures, cultures which have now been obliterated? Hardly.

8. *Insurrections.* Insurrections cannot destroy capitalism. I don't even think the ruling class is very frightened of them any more. You can rampage through the streets all you want, burn down your neighborhoods, and loot all the local stores to your heart's content. They know it will not go anywhere. They know the blind rage will burn itself out. When it's all over these insurrectionists will be showing up for work like always or standing again in the dole line. Nothing has changed. Nothing has been organized. No new associations have been created. What do capitalists care if they lose a whole city? They can afford it. All they have to do is cordon off the area of conflagration, wait for the fires to burn down, go in and arrest thousands of people at random, and then leave, letting the "rioters" cope with their ruined neighborhoods as best they can. Maybe we should think of something a little more damaging to capitalism than burning down our own neighborhoods.

9. *Civil Disobedience.* Acts of civil disobedience cannot destroy capitalism. They can sometimes make strong moral statements. But moral statements are pointless against immoral persons. They fall on deaf ears. Therefore, the act of deliberately breaking a law and getting arrested is of limited value in actually breaking the power of the rulers. Acts of civil disobedience can be

used as weapons in the battle for the

hearts and minds of ordinary persons I guess (assuming ordinary persons ever hear about them). But they are basically the actions of powerless persons. Powerless persons must use whatever tactics they can of course. But that is the point. Why remain powerless, when by adopting a different strategy (building strategic associations) we could become powerful and not be reduced to impotent acts like civil disobedience against laws we had no say in making and which we regard as unjust?

Moreover, civil disobedience is a tactic used primarily by more well off and securely situated radicals who can count on friends and family to raise bail and who can be pretty sure of not getting a long prison term. This is not true of course for those strongly motivated religious persons who sometimes embrace long prison sentences as part of bearing witness to a higher morality. But you almost never see poor people or minorities deliberately getting themselves arrested, because they know that once in prison they are not likely to get out.

Civil disobedience has the additional disadvantage that the movement has to spend a lot of precious time and money getting people out of jail. Enough people get arrested anyway, against their wills. We don't need to be having to struggle to free persons who voluntarily put themselves in the hands of our jailers.

10. *Single-issue campaigns.* We cannot destroy capitalism with single-issue campaigns. Yet the great bulk of the energies of radicals is spent on these campaigns. There are dozens of them: campaigns to preserve the forests, keep rent control, stop whaling, stop animal experiments, defend abortion rights, stop toxic dumping, stop the killing of baby seals, stop nuclear testing, stop smoking, stop pornography, stop drug testing, stop drugs, stop the war on

drugs, stop police brutality, stop union busting, stop red-lining, stop the death penalty, stop racism, stop sexism, stop child abuse, stop the re-emerging slave trade, stop the bombing of Yugoslavia, stop the logging of redwoods, stop the spread of advertising, stop the patenting of genes, stop the trapping and killing of animals for furs, stop irradiated meat, stop genetically modified foods, stop human cloning, stop the death squads in Colombia, stop the World Bank and the World Trade Organization, stop the extermination of species, stop corporations from buying politicians, stop high stakes educational testing, stop the bovine growth hormone from being used on milk cows, stop micro radio from being banned, stop global warming, stop the militarization of space, stop the killing of the oceans, and on and on. What we are doing is spending our lives trying to fix up a system which generates evils far faster than we can ever eradicate them.

Although some of these campaigns use direct action (e.g., spikes in the trees to stop the chain saws or Greenpeace boats in front of the whaling ships to block the harpoons), for the most part the campaigns are directed at passing legislation in Congress to correct the problem. Unfortunately, reforms that are won in one decade, after endless agitation, can be easily wiped off the books the following decade, after the protesters have gone home, or after a new administration comes to power.

These struggles all have value and are needed. Could anyone think that the campaigns against global warming, or to free Leonard Peltier, or to aid the East Timorese ought to be abandoned? Single issue campaigns keep us aware of what's wrong, and sometimes even win. But in and of themselves, they cannot destroy capitalism, and thus cannot really fix things. It is utopian to believe that we can reform capitalism. Most of these evils can only be eradicated for good if we destroy capitalism itself and create a new civilization. We cannot afford to aim for anything less. Our very survival is at stake. There is one single-issue campaign I can wholehearted endorse: the total and permanent eradication of capitalism.

Many millions of us though are rootless, and are quite alienated from a particular place or local community. We are part of the vast mass of atomized individuals brought into being by the market for commodified labor. Our

political activities tend to reflect this. We tend to act as free-floating protesters. But we could start to change this. We could start to root ourselves in our local communities. This will be more possible for some than others of course. There can be no hard and fast rule. Many of us though could start establishing free associations at work, at home, and in the neighborhood. In this way our fights to stop what we don't like, through single-issue campaigns, could be combined with what we do want. Plus we would have a lot more power to stop what we don't like. Our single-issue campaigns might start being

page20

more successful.

What is missing is free association, free assemblies, on the local level. If we added these into the mix, we would start getting somewhere. We could attack the ruling class on all fronts. There are millions of us, plenty of us to do everything, but everything must include fights on the local level, especially at the three strategic sites.

11. *Demonstrations.* We cannot destroy capitalism by staging demonstrations. This most popular of all radical strategies is also one of the most questionable. As a rule, demonstrations barely even embarrass capitalists, let alone frighten them, let alone damage them. They are just a form of petition usually. They petition the ruling class regarding some grievance, essentially begging it to change its policies. They are not designed to take any power or wealth away from capitalists. They only last a few hours or a day or two and then, with rare exception, everything goes back to the way it was. If they do win an occasional concession, it is usually minor and short-lived. They do not build an alternative social world. They mostly just alert the ruling class that it needs to retool, or to invent new measures to counter an emerging source of opposition.

But even if demonstrations rise above the petition level, and become instead a way of presenting our demands and making our opposition known, we still have not acquired the power to see that our demands are met. Our opposition is empty. It has no teeth. In order to give some bite to our protests we would have to reorganize ourselves, reorient ourselves, by rooting ourselves, assembling ourselves, on the local level. Then when we went off on demonstrations to protest ruling class initiatives and projects there would be some muscle behind the protests, rather than just shouted slogans, unfurled banners, hoisted placards, street scuffles, and clever puppets. We would be in a position to take action if our demands were not met. Then when we chanted: "Whose Streets? Our Streets!", our words might represent more than just a pipe-dream.

Demonstrations are not even good propaganda tools, because the ruling class, given its control of the media, can put any spin it wants to on the event, and the interpretation it puts is invariably damaging to the opposition movement, assuming they even report the event, for their latest approach to these events is simply to ignore them, and black out news about them. This is very effective.

And what are the gains? An issue can be brought to the attention of the public, or rather, to a small minority of the public, because for the majority, the protesters' message is neutralized by the corporate spin. Also, more people can be drawn into the opposition movement. For those participating, a demonstration can be an inspiring experience. (In many cases, though, this high is offset by the onset of dispiritedness upon returning home.)

Demonstrations can thus contribute to building an opposition movement. But are these small gains worth the expense? Large national demonstrations drain energy and resources away from local struggles. Are they worth it? But even local demonstrations are costly, requiring time, energy, and money, which are always in short supply among radicals. Are demonstrations worth all the work and expense they take to organize? No matter what, they remain just a form of protest. They show what we're against. By their very nature, demonstrations are of limited value for articulating what we are for. We were against the war in Vietnam, but what were we for? We are against the World Trade Organization, but what are we for?

Rather than taking to the streets and marching off all the time, protesting this or that (all the while the police are taking our pictures), we would be better off staying home and building up our workplace, neighborhood, and household associations until they are powerful enough to strike at the heart of capitalism. We cannot build a new social world in the streets.

12. *New Social Movements.* The so-called New Social Movements, based on gender, racial, sexual, or ethnic identities, cannot destroy capitalism. They haven't even tried. Except for a tiny fringe of radicals in each of them, they have been trying to get into the system, not overthrow it. This is true for women, black, homosexual, and ethnic (including 'native') identities, as well as all the other identities - old people, the handicapped, welfare mothers, and so forth. Nothing has derailed the anti-capitalist struggle dur-

ing the past quarter century so thoroughly as have these movements. Sometimes it seems that identity politics is all that is left of the left. Identity politics has simply swamped class politics.

The mainstream versions of these movements (the ones fighting to get into the system rather than overthrow it) have given capitalists a chance to do a little fine tooling, by eliminating tensions here and there, and by including token representatives of the excluded groups. Many of the demands of these movements can be easily accommodated. Capitalists can live with boards of directors exhibiting ethnic, gender, and racial diversity, as long as all the board members are pro-capitalist. Capitalists can easily accept a rainbow cabinet as long as the cabinet is pushing the corporate agenda. So mainstream identity politics has not threatened capitalism at all. These have been liberal movements, and have sought only to reform the system, not abolish it. The radical wings of the new social movements however are rather more subversive. These militants realized that it was necessary to attack the whole

social order in order to uproot racism and sexism -- problems which could not be overcome under capitalism, since they are an integral part of capitalism. There is no denying the evils of racism, sexism, and nationalism, which are major structural supports to ruling class control. These militants have done whatever they could to highlight, analyze, and ameliorate these evils.

Unfortunately, for the most part, their voices have been lost in all the clamor for admittance to the system by the majorities in their movements.

There have been gains of course. The women's movement has forever changed the world's consciousness about gender. Unpaid housework has been recognized as a key ingredient in the wage-slave system. Reproduction, as well as production, has been included in our analysis of the system. Identity politics in general has underscored just how many people are excluded, and exposed gaps in previous revolutionary strategies. Also, the demand for racial and gender equality is itself inherently revolutionary, in that the demand cannot be met by capitalists, given that racial and gender discrimination are two of the key structural mechanisms for keeping the wage bill low, and thus making profits possible.

Nevertheless, I'm convinced that unless we can return to class politics, and integrate the fights for gender, racial, sexual, and age equality into the class struggle, we will continue to flounder.

13. *Boycotts.* Boycotts cannot destroy capitalism. They have always been an extremely ineffective way to attack the system, and almost impossible to organize. They almost invariably fail in their objectives. In the rare cases where they have succeeded, the gains are minor. A corporation is forced to amend its labor policies here and there, or drop a product, or divest somewhere. That's about it.

In recent years boycotting has become a way of life for thousands in the environmental movement. They publish thick books on which products are okay to buy and which must be boycotted, covering literally everything, from toilet paper to deodorants, foods to toys. All they have succeeded in doing is creating a whole new capitalist industry of politically correct products. They have bought into the myth that the "economy" will give us anything we want

if we just demand it, that it is our demands that have been wrong rather than the system itself.

It's true that it is better to eat food that hasn't been polluted with insecticides, better to wear clothes not made with child labor, better to wear make-up not tested by blinding rabbits. But capitalism cannot be destroyed by making such choices. If we are going to boycott something, we might try boycotting wage-slavery.

14. *Dropping-out.* We cannot destroy capitalism by dropping out, either as an individual, a small group, or a community. It's been tried over and over and it fails every time. There is no escaping capitalism. There is nowhere left to go, nowhere to drop out to. The only escape from capitalism is to destroy it. Then we could be free. In fact, capitalists love it when we drop out. They don't need us. They have plenty of suckers already. What do they care if we live under bridges, beg for meals, and die young? I haven't seen the ruling class rushing to help the homeless.

Even more illusory than the idea that an individual can drop out is the idea that a whole community can withdraw from the system and build its own little new world somewhere else. This was tried repeatedly

by utopian communities throughout the nineteenth century. The strategy was revived in the sixties as thousands of new left radicals retired to their remote rural communes to groove on togetherness (and dope). The strategy is once again surfacing in the New Age movement as dozens of new age communities are being established all over the country. These movements all suffer from the mistaken idea that they don't have to attack capitalism and destroy it, but can simply withdraw from it, to live their own lives separately and independently. It is a vast illusion. Capitalists rule the world. Until they are defeated there will be no freedom for anyone.

15. *Luddism.* As wonderful as Luddism was, as one of the fiercest attacks ever made against capitalism, wrecking machinery, in and of itself, cannot destroy capitalism, and for the same reason that insurrections and strikes cannot: the action is not designed to replace capitalism with new decision-making arrangements. It does not even strike at the heart of capitalism - wage-slavery - but only at the physical plant, the material means of production. Although sabotage, on a large scale, if it were a part of a movement to destroy capitalism and replace it with something else, could weaken the corporate world and put a strain on the accumulation of capital, it is far better to get ourselves in a position where we can seize the machinery rather than smash it. (Not that we even want much of the existing machinery; it will have to be redesigned; but seizing it is a way of getting control over the means of production.)

Moreover, Luddites were already enslaved to capitalists, in their cottage industries, before they struck. They were angry because new machinery was eliminating their customary job (which was an old way of making a living, relatively speaking, and thus had some strong traditions attached to it). In current terms, it would be like if linotype operators destroyed computers because their jobs were being eliminated by the new equipment. Destroying the new machinery misses the point. It is not the machinery that is the problem but the wage-slave system itself. If it weren't for wage-slavery we could welcome labor saving devices, provided they weren't destructive in other ways, for freeing us from unnecessary toil.

We can draw inspiration from Luddism, as a fine example of workers aggressively resisting the further degradation of their lives, but we should not imitate it, at least not as a general strategy.

16. *Publishing.* We cannot destroy capitalism by publishing. I doubt if anyone believes that we can. I mention it here only because publishing constitutes for so many of us *our practice*. This is what we are doing. We justify this by saying that radical books, magazines, and newspapers are weapons in the fight against bourgeois cultural hegemony. Which is true. But we are permitted to publish only because the ruling class isn't worried one jot

by our "underground press." Their weapons - television, radio, movies, schools - are infinitely more powerful. It's conceivable though that capitalism could be destroyed without any publishing at all. The strategy of re-assembling ourselves into workplace, neighborhood, and household associations could catch on and spread by word of mouth from community to community. Destroying capitalism is more a matter of rearranging ourselves socially (reconstituting our social relations) than it is a matter of propagating a particular set of ideas. So instead of starting our own zine, why don't we call a meeting with co-workers or neighbors *to form an association?*

17. Education. We cannot destroy capitalism through education. Not many radicals recommend this strategy any more, although you still hear it occasionally. New Left radicals established free schools and even a free university or two, and there was a fairly strong and long lasting modern school movement among anarchists. But these are long gone. However, the notion that education is the path to change and the way out of the mess we're in is quite common in the culture at large. This is like the tail wagging the dog. We don't even control the schools, or what is taught there. Schools and education are artifacts, and minor ones at that, of the ruling class, and are a reflection of its power over society. It is that power that must be broken. This cannot be done through schools. Even the very notion of education, as an activity separated from life, needs to be overcome. Learning among free peoples will be strikingly different. When we have achieved our autonomy, by directly engaging and defeating our oppressors, that will be the time to worry about how to conduct our learning.

6. The Strategy Described Abstractly

It is time to try to describe, at first abstractly and later concretely, a strategy

for destroying capitalism. This strategy, at its most basic, calls for pulling time, energy, and resources out of capitalist civilization and putting them into building a new civilization. The image then is one of emptying out capitalist structures, hollowing them out, by draining wealth, power, and meaning out of them until there is nothing left but shells.

This is definitely an aggressive strategy. It requires great militancy, and constitutes an attack on the existing order. The strategy clearly recognizes that capitalism is the enemy and must be destroyed, but it is not a frontal attack aimed at overthrowing the system, but an inside attack aimed at gutting it, while simultaneously replacing it with something better, something we want.

Thus capitalist structures (corporations, governments, banks, schools, etc.) are not *seized* so much as simply *abandoned*. Capitalist relations are not *fought* so much as they are simply *rejected*. We *stop participating* in activities that support (finance, condone) the capitalist world and *start participating* in activities that build a new world while simultaneously undermining the old. We create a new pattern of social relations alongside capitalist relations and then we continually build and strengthen our new pattern while doing everything we can to weaken capitalist relations. In this way our new democratic, non-hierarchical, non-commodified relations can eventually overwhelm the capitalist relations and force them out of existence. This is how it has to be done. This is a plausible, realistic strategy. To think that we could create a whole new world of decent social arrangements overnight, in the midst of a crisis, during a so-called revolution, or during the collapse of capitalism, is foolhardy. Our new social world must grow within the old, and in opposition to it, until it is strong enough to dismantle and abolish capitalist relations. Such a revolution will never happen automatically, blindly, deterministically, because of the inexorable, materialist laws of history. It will happen, and only happen, because we want it to, and because we know what we're doing and know how we want to live, and know what obstacles have to be overcome before we can live that way, and know how to distinguish between our social patterns and theirs. But we must not think that the capitalist world can simply be ignored, in a live and let live attitude, while we try to build new lives elsewhere. (There *is*

no elsewhere.) There is at least one thing, wage-slavery, that we can't simply stop participating in (but even here there are ways we can chip away at it). Capitalism must be *explicitly refused* and replaced by something else. This constitutes *War*, but it is not a war in the traditional sense of armies and tanks, but a war fought on a daily basis, on the level of everyday life, by millions of people. It is a war nevertheless because the accumulators of capital will use coercion, brutality, and murder, as they have always done in the past, to try to block any rejection of the system. They have always had to force compliance; they will not hesitate to continue doing so. Nevertheless, there are many concrete ways that individuals, groups, and neighborhoods can gut capitalism, which I will enumerate shortly.

We must always keep in mind how we became slaves; then we can see more clearly how we can cease being slaves. We were forced into wage-slavery because the ruling class slowly, systematically, and brutally destroyed our ability to live autonomously. By driving us off the land, changing the property laws, destroying community rights, destroying our tools, imposing taxes, destroying our local markets, and so forth, we were forced onto the labor market in order to survive, our only remaining option being to sell, for a wage, our ability to work.

It's quite clear then how we can overthrow slavery. We must reverse this process. We must begin to reacquire the ability to live without working for a wage or buying the products made by wage-slaves (that is, we must get free from the labor market and the way of living based on it), and embed ourselves instead in cooperative labor and cooperatively produced goods. Another clarification is needed. This strategy does not call for *reforming* capitalism, for changing capitalism into something else. It calls for *replacing* capitalism, totally, with a new civilization. This is an

important distinction, because capitalism has proved impervious to reforms, as a system. We can sometimes in some places win certain concessions from

it (usually only temporary ones) and win some (usually short-lived) improvements in our lives as its victims, but we cannot reform it piecemeal, as a system.

Thus our strategy of gutting and eventually destroying capitalism requires at a minimum a totalizing image, an awareness that we are attacking an entire way of life and replacing it with another, and not merely reforming one way of life into something else. Many people may not be accustomed to thinking about entire systems and social orders, but everyone knows what a lifestyle is, or a way of life, and that is the way we should approach it.

The thing is this: in order for capitalism to be destroyed millions and millions of people must be dissatisfied with their way of life. They must *want something else* and see certain existing things as obstacles to getting what they want. It is not useful to think of this as a new ideology. It is not merely a belief-system that is needed, like a religion, or like Marxism, or Anarchism. Rather it is a new prevailing vision, a dominant desire, an overriding need. What must exist is a pressing desire to live a certain way, and not to live another way. If this pressing desire were a desire to live free, to be autonomous, to live in democratically controlled communities, to participate in the self-regulating activities of a mature people, then capitalism could be destroyed. Otherwise we are doomed to perpetual slavery and possibly even to extinction.

The content of this vision is actually not new at all, but quite old. The long term goal of communists, anarchists, and socialists has always been to restore community. Even the great peasant revolts of early capitalism sought to get free from external authorities and restore autonomy to villages. Marx defined communism once as a free association of producers, and at another time as a situation in which the free development of each is a condition for the free development of all. Anarchists have always called for worker and peasant self-managed cooperatives. The long term goals have always been clear: to abolish wage-slavery, to eradicate a social order organized solely around the accumulation of capital for its own sake, and to establish in its place a society of free people who democratically and cooperatively self-determine the shape of their social world.

These principles however must be embodied in concrete social arrangements. In this sketch they are embodied in the following configuration of social forms: (a) autonomous, self-governing democratic Neighborhoods (through the practice of the Home Assembly); (b) self-managed Projects; (c) cooperatively operated Households; and (d) an Association, by means of treaties, of neighborhoods one with another.

But how can this be achieved? Now we must turn to the task of fleshing out this strategy, but this time in concrete terms rather than abstractly.

7. Ways to Begin Gutting Capitalism

1. *Form a Neighborhood Association.* Get together with some neighbors and form a Neighborhood Association. Hold regular meetings. These meetings will form the basis, later on, for Home Assemblies. This, together with Employee Associations and Household Associations (see items 2 and 3 following) are the three most important things anyone can do. It may seem pointless at first, since these associations will have no power or money. But they will begin to attract energy and will become focal points for siphoning power and wealth out of capitalism back into the communities from which they were originally stolen. (See also "What can neighborhood associations do?" below at #1, p.40, under Further Discussion.)

2. *Form an Employee's Association.* Get together with some co-workers at your workplace and form an Employee's Association. Bypass unions. You will have to meet on your own time. Hold regular meetings. These meetings will form the basis, later on, for the Peer Circles of self-managed Projects (and part of the basis for escaping wage-slavery). There may be several such groups in one shop. It is only through face-to-face associations like these that an autonomous oppositional culture can once again be generated. Even if you start with only half-a-dozen people word will get around that there is a meeting where the problems of the workplace are being discussed. This will become the focal point of a consciousness that is opposed to corporate culture. Without this counter consciousness there is no possibility of

effective

opposition. (See also "What can employee associations do?" below at #2, p.41, under Further Discussion.)

3. *Form a Cooperative Housing Association.* This can be done right now. Several families can pool resources and buy a building to form an extended household. Groups of people, single and married, already rent houses together and live cooperatively. Where buying is clearly out of the question *form a Tenants Association* in your building. Try to begin sharing resources and living cooperatively. These cooperative housing associations will form the basis, later on, for *Households*, as in our initial sketch. (See also "What can household associations do?" below at #3, p.41, under Further Discussion.)

4. *Build a Meeting Hall.* Pool resources with neighbors and build a place to meet. The first neighborhood to do this will go down in history as having launched a new civilization. Most neighborhoods, no matter how poor, somehow find money to build churches. If they wanted to they could build Meeting Halls. Obviously, they must first perceive a need for them. They must want to associate, want to begin to exercise control over their lives in cooperation with their neighbors. They must see the meetings as the linchpin of a new way of life.

5. *Organize worker-owned businesses.* Worker-owned businesses, in and of themselves, cannot destroy capitalism. As long as they are operating in a capitalist market they will face bankruptcy unless they pay attention to the bottom line, that is, turn a profit. Actually, they merely replace the traditional capitalist owner with a shop full of capitalist owners. Thus worker-owners are

merely joining the petty bourgeoisie. Which is what the New Left did in a big way in the early seventies. We created a multitude of what we thought of as "alternative institutions" (we were actually just going into business for ourselves). There were food coops, bookstores, day care centers, clinics, publishing houses, auto repair shops, community newspapers, head shops, psychedelic shops (with clothing, leather goods, music), and so forth. But the capitalists were not hurt by this at all. On the contrary, they benefited greatly. They simply took over all our new creations and mass marketed them, making billions in the process.

Nevertheless, there are at least two very important differences between regular businesses and worker-owned ones. The latter can abolish internal hierarchies and self-manage the shop in a democratic way, and they have greater flexibility about using any extra wealth created. Instead of paying dividends to stockholders they can use income to support opposition movements, or they can simply raise their own salaries, shorten their work hours, or lower their prices. (Actually, in real life most worker-owners end up working longer hours for less pay than they would in a traditional enterprise. They also tend to start out democratic but end up managerial, due largely I think to the pressures and temptations of the surrounding capitalist market, and not I hope to inherent flaws in human nature.)

If there were dozens of worker-owned businesses in a community, providing needed services and making useful products, in addition to supporting anti-capitalist struggles, they could accumulate a wealth of experience and become the initial core, later on, for the self-managed Projects of democratic autonomous neighborhoods. They could become the basis for socially conscious, cooperative labor, democratically agreed upon labor, as opposed to labor that is bought and sold.

Worker-owned businesses are a growing movement in the United States (around 1500 majority-owned businesses so far I think). Some of them in the same trade are forming networks for mutual support and to share information. They can become revolutionary however only by becoming part of a movement to destroy capitalism and build something else, as sketched in this pamphlet, for example.

6. *Try to convert local business families to the democratic autonomous way of life.* That is, try to convince them to give up private ownership and switch to worker-managed projects controlled by the neighborhood Home Assembly. This may not be as hard as we at first imagine. The petty bourgeoisie (i.e., small business families) is one of the most desperate and miserable classes in capitalism. They work unbelievably long hours. Very few of them are getting rich. They go bankrupt by the thousands, losing everything they have, all their money and all their long years of labor. Those who do survive may still be on the verge of going under. They are constantly being gobbled up by chain stores and I doubt that the buyouts are all that wonderful. These people are on the fringe of the corporate world. They have been a shrinking

class for over a hundred years. Maybe some of them are ready to throw in the towel. They have sought not only to get rich, but "to be their own boss." That is, they have striven to escape wage-slavery by going into business for themselves. But there is another way to escape wage-slavery and be your own boss - participate in a worker-managed project. If we could convince even 10% of them to convert their properties to cooperatively owned and operated projects, this would provide a starting financial base for neighborhood autonomy. If we could convince 20, 30, or 40 percent, we would have a very substantial material base for transforming our neighborhoods.

7. *Change jobs and move to worker-managed projects as opportunities emerge.* We should shift our employment from the giant corporate world to worker-managed, neighborhood-controlled projects. The wealth that we produce in the former is siphoned off into the coffers of global capitalism. The wealth we produce in the latter can be retained in the neighborhood. There is a very big danger here though, namely that we will end up doing

poverty level work. So we must never let up on our overall attack on capitalism, as described herein. We must not be content to live in the backwaters, barely subsisting in our impoverished neighborhoods, however autonomous they may be, while capitalism goes rolling on.

8. *Set up local currencies.* Most people don't even know that we don't have to use ruling class money (government money) or that we can issue our own. Local currencies, of which there are many types, help us to get free from the world market, strengthen local markets, and thus build self-sufficiency and autonomy. They enable us to stop circulating the money of our oppressors, and thus escape, partially, the system of control based on that money. Local currencies also provide a way to stop wealth from being drained out of the community. Although local currencies are possible now (and many experiments are under way) they will probably be outlawed if the practice spreads.

9. *Organize a Community Land Trust.* These are not-for-profit corporations which acquire and hold land in the public interest. They are an existing legal form in the United States which autonomists should be using more than we are. They are a way of fighting the real estate industry, and of resisting the continuing concentration of land ownership. Like Community Development Corporations, they can easily become regressive, but if used properly they could become, later on, the basis for neighborhood control of all the lands upon which the neighborhood lives and works. Getting control of the land is always the first step capitalists take when beginning an attack on the autonomy of any people. With us, in the core capitalist countries, the land is long gone. But in many parts of the world the enclosure (expropriation of the land by the masters) is just now happening, and on a massive scale. Peasants and native peoples everywhere are being forced to register their holdings, which have traditionally been communally defined, thus turning the land into a commodity which can be bought and sold, under state and market rules.

Community Land Trusts do not overcome the problem of land being treated like a commodity of course, since the land still has a title registered

with the state. They are thus only a stop gap measure, but one which might be used now to start the process of reappropriating the land.

10. *Start switching to solar/wind energy.* This will be easiest for people living in small towns and villages. There are already solar and wind units that can supply all the electrical needs of a small community. It will be hardest for people living in dense urban or suburban neighborhoods. Solar and wind power has gotten cheaper and cheaper. It is about ready to takeoff, so to speak, but under corporate control - vast solar and wind installations feeding electricity into the corporate-controlled grids. What communities, and even private households, must do is use the new technology to get free from the grid and thus achieve a measure of self-sufficiency and autonomy. There may come a time when this will make the difference between survival or death. For now though it is an essential step toward taking power, in both senses, back from capitalists and returning it to democratic communities where it belongs.

11. *Start growing some of our own food.* This will make sense only in the context of struggles to re-empower local communities and destroy capitalism. The objective is to regain a degree of self-sufficiency and autonomy in order to be able to abandon and hence gut and destroy the profit-system. Otherwise

we play right into their hands. Capitalists no longer need vast millions of people. They couldn't care less if we scurry around in our little vegetable gardens, garage workshops, and utility rooms trying to scrape together the bare necessities of life. As long as they control the major technologies, the governments, and markets sufficient for the continued accumulation of capital, they are happy, and can control the world. They would be happy to see millions of us simply die off. In fact they are talking about this already, all the time, and looking forward to it.

So the tactic of 'starting to grow some of our own food' stems not from any romantic illusion about mother earth or about working with our hands, but from our dire need to establish independence in order to survive. Today's urban populations are unimaginably vulnerable to the disruption of food supplies. And don't think for one minute that governments and corporations won't block food shipments, if they have to, to protect themselves and the system they are devoted to. In fact, structurally induced famines have already reached epidemic levels in the contemporary world. So 'growing some of our own food' applies not just to first world neighborhoods, but also, and especially, to the poorer countries which have been forced into importing basic food stuffs while their own lands are given over to cash crops for export (e.g., coffee, sugar, bananas, beef).

We don't need farms to start growing food. We can do it in the backyard, or in roof top gardens. We can build solar powered greenhouses, and try aqua culture and hydroponics. There are many ways to start getting free from agribusiness.

12. *Set up a neighborhood storehouse to facilitate mutual aid.* At first this will simply be a depository where persons can put in things they don't need and take out things they do need. This could include food, for example, as people in the neighborhood start growing more and more of their own food. A person or family who has grown more food than they need will put it in the storehouse, where it can be taken out by persons and families who need food. It will be a way of facilitating mutual aid and sharing. It could also include clothing, especially children's clothing. As children outgrow clothes, these clothes could be put in (or returned to) the storehouse to be available to other children who need them. Same with toys, and many other items, like books, dishes, furniture, appliances, extra plants, scrap lumber, and tools. As the neighborhood gets more and more free from the market, more and more of the necessities of life (and even non-necessities) will be channeled through the storehouse. Eventually, all production - industrial, agricultural, etcetera - will be funneled into the storehouse. After the needs of the neighborhood have been met, excess production will be exchanged with other

neighborhoods. There might be inter-neighborhood, or even regional, storehouses for some items. It will be by means of arrangements like this that we will eventually be able to abolish money. Setting up such a storehouse is something that could be done right now, in every neighborhood. In some communities, there already exists a similar organization, in the form of thrift stores of various kinds (Salvation Army, Goodwill, Veterans). In these stores, although their goods have usually been donated, the items are nevertheless sold for money. But in a voluntarily organized and run storehouse, the money could be eliminated.

13. *Support orthomolecular medicine and the preventive health care movement.* Medicine as currently practiced is a ruling institution that seeks to control us just like schools do, and corporations, and the government itself. It also wants to sell us drugs, cut us up (for a high fee), and keep us coming back again and again. We must start breaking free from it, start reducing its influence over our lives, start gutting it of power. The best way to do this is not to get sick. We must take charge of our own health and learn how to take care of ourselves. A step in this direction is to become advocates and adherents of orthomolecular medicine - a new philosophy of health and sickness founded in the 1970s by Linus Pauling and his colleagues, which was actually mostly a crystallization of long-standing alternative health practices, although they certainly gave them a new twist and a firmer scientific foundation.

We should go to doctors and hospitals only as a last resort, and when we do go we must question everything they do. Never let them treat us like pieces of meat. Never let them do a single thing to us without forcing them to explain it, and to wait until we decide whether we want the treatment.

Some of us should also try to begin establishing neighborhood health clinics. This will be difficult because medicine is tightly controlled by the

state, together with the drug companies, insurance companies, and doctors themselves in their professional organizations. Nevertheless, some progress can surely be made toward neighborhood-controlled clinics even if it is only education at first to spread the preventive health care movement. These clinics will become, later on, the means whereby we take back control of health care in our democratic autonomous neighborhoods.

Naturally, people who presently work in hospitals should be forming employee associations, with an eye to eventually taking over the hospitals. But the seizure of hospitals will probably take place at about the time that it becomes feasible to seize factories, farms, offices, and stores. In the meantime, we should be getting free from mainstream medicine by practicing preventive health care and by establishing independent neighborhood clinics.

14. *Do not work hard at our jobs.* Generally speaking, this cannot be anything as obvious as an explicit slowdown (deliberate slowdowns have their place of course). Rather, when we start a new job we should work at a level far below our true ability. Never let them know we can do more. Do just the bare minimum not to get fired. This may still be quite a high level of output in a very competitive labor market where there are millions of gung-ho employees trying to impress the bosses and get ahead (i.e., get promoted) or perhaps just trying to keep their jobs. But as more and more workers adopt this attitude it will be harder and harder for the bosses to tell what the real capacities are. The centuries-old struggle between capitalists and workers turns precisely on the capitalists' need to extract more value from the direct producers than they pay out in wages and benefits. This battle has been, and is being, fought over the length of the working day, wages, speed-ups, breaks, vacation time, intensity of work, sick leave, lunch periods, overtime, age of retirement, health and pension benefits, and so on. Anything that requires capitalists to pay more while getting less weakens their world and strengthens ours.

But "not working hard at our jobs" goes somewhat beyond these other kinds of struggle. No business could last a year if it weren't for the enthusiasm,

energy, and dedication that workers bring to their jobs. This happens everywhere, at every construction site, in every factory, and in every office. There are always those few who keep the business going, or even keep it operating smoothly. Capitalism would collapse without this creative energy, without this problem-solving, without this free intelligence applied to new situations. Just look at what happens when a few workers do attempt to "work to rule" -- things start to unravel fast. Capitalists still continue to preach that workers should just do what they're told and not think about it ("Just Do It"). At the same time they usually blame workers when things go wrong, for not having seen the problem and taken the initiative to fix it.

The principle of "Not Working Hard at Our Jobs" means that we will assume no responsibility for the success of the business, bring no enthusiasm to our work, fix nothing when things go wrong, solve no production problems for them, volunteer no information, make no inventions, improve no procedures - in short do as little as possible. This is a way of stopping capitalists from extracting wealth from our labors. It also throws a monkey-wrench into the capital accumulation process, without which the system collapses.

There have always been people who sloughed off at work. This often creates tensions because other workers usually have to do the work the slackers are not doing. But what if all of us, or most of us, sloughed off? The strategy of "Not Working Hard at Our Jobs" suggests precisely this - that we all become malingerers. This does go against the grain however, at least for a lot of us. It is natural to want to do well, to develop skills, to be proud of our work. We have to realize though that our exploiters rely upon these good motivations of ours and use them against us. Our natural instincts to excel at our tasks are being used to destroy us, our communities, and in fact the earth itself.

Finally, the extent to which any individual can become a slough-off will vary depending on that person's situation and personality. People who live in extensive networks of family, friends, and co-workers, can risk getting fired more easily. Very isolated people can't. Also, some people are more afraid than oth-

ers, more subject to peer pressure, and to pressure from the bosses. Only fearless and secure people can snub their noses at bosses and peers alike. If we could get our neighborhood, workplace, and household associations going then more of us could be brave enough to become first rate slough-offs at work. Also, it would help immensely, in fact it is vitally important to the strategy, if we could use the energy thus saved for other skills and tasks not exploitable by capitalists, for activities which would build our world while undermining theirs.

The strategic principle of 'Not Working Hard at Our Jobs' strikes capitalism at its core, could become a central component of an oppositional culture, and is something that could be started today by every employed person. Just don't do it. Don't care. Don't try.

Naturally, there are safety precautions that must be observed. Crane operators, pilots, bus drivers, surgeons (and dozens more workers in critical jobs) must be skillful enough to ensure that nobody gets hurt. Within these limits though there is still plenty of room for sloughing off. Most jobs are not critical at all. Also, sloughing off at work must be accompanied by the determined effort to build something of excellence elsewhere. Otherwise, sloughing off becomes a way of life and amounts to nothing more than sinking into slothfulness and apathy.

15. *Organize locally to stop ruling class offensives in the community.* There are numerous examples of this already. A town has mobilized to stop a Wal-Mart from moving in and destroying all the local small businesses. Communities have mobilized to force the clean up of toxic waste dumps. Neighborhoods have organized to stop expressways from being built right through the middle of their homes. Some suburban sprawl (damn little though) has been blocked. Proposed dams have been stopped. Forests, wetlands, and seashores have been saved. And so forth. This is where capitalists have to be stopped - locally, in our communities. Why? Because this is where our strength is.

Even if one hundred thousand militants converged periodically in cities and capitals around the world to protest at the summit meetings of the world's ruling classes, this is nothing compared to the tens of millions, hundred of millions worldwide, who could become engaged in struggles at the local level. Most people *cannot go* to regional, national, or continental demonstrations. They have to work and cannot leave their jobs. Plus travel is expensive and beyond the means of many people. Plus they have family responsibilities. Hence protests at summit meetings is perforce limited mostly to more affluent students and other movement celebrities who can afford to operate on a national or global level. Quite a few less well off persons do manage nevertheless to go to these events, by taking vacation time, using up savings, and the like. But they are not the majority. Moreover, in order really to be able to defeat capitalists on the global level, we would have to get control of national governments, and that is simply not in the picture. So however useful national and global protests are for highlighting issues, articulating demands, and putting pressure on our rulers, it is at the local level that the real battles must be fought.

16. Start applying criminal laws to capitalists and government officials.

This has started to happen. It's quite surprising that it hasn't happened long before now. Not long ago a couple of corporate executives were convicted of murder, because they knowingly allowed an employee to be poisoned to death at the workplace. This was the first case of its kind in the United States. Pinochet has been arrested and may be placed on trial in Chile. Kissinger may well be brought to trial as a war criminal. All this is an excellent development. If we could only bring the criminal laws to bear on capitalists themselves, and their functionaries in government, this by itself would almost be enough to destroy capitalism, because capitalism cannot exist (that is, capitalists, as a world class, cannot make profits) without violence, brutality, oppression, theft, lies, and murder. It requires all that to keep the system going, speaking in global terms. If we could hold them to the same laws that all the rest of us must obey, their scam would be exposed, and the system would collapse.

17. Democratize all voluntary associations. By democratize, of course I mean direct democracy, whereby an association is operated cooperatively, through face-to-face assemblies. Unfortunately, the practice of direct democracy has almost disappeared from our culture. Instead, the first thing we do when

we get together to establish an association, is to elect officers and hand over authority to them, thus disbanding our meetings, and forfeiting our power of self-government. That is, we establish a hierarchy, even though this is seen as democratic (whereby we choose leaders periodically through elections). But this practice could be abandoned and we could return to the practice of direct democracy. No one is stopping us from doing this right now, in all the many and various associations we establish, whether they be educational societies, a chess club, a baseball team, parent-teacher associations, professional organizations, a quilting bee, orchestras, health clinics, youth centers, food coops, or what have you. This could be done in all organizations that we establish that are not registered with the state. So-called not-for-profit corporations, which *are* registered with the state (that is, incorporated by the state), are usually required, by law, to have a board of directors and officers. Nevertheless, in many cases, it is possible to do the paper work to meet the official requirements (which demand the establishment of hierarchy, that is, an authoritarian structure for the enterprise), but to run the project internally, unofficially, through direct democracy. At present, it is an unfortunate fact that not-for-profit corporations and so-called non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are almost invariably authoritarian. But this is something that we might be able to change, long before it becomes feasible to seize, and thus democratize, corporations per se. The experience we could thus gain now with direct democracy in our voluntary associations, non-profits, and NGOs would help us later in our workplace, neighborhood, and household

assemblies.

18. *Reject mainstream divisions of social knowledge.* About a hundred years ago, largely in response to a very powerful labor movement and a vigorous radical culture, conservatives in Europe began parceling up social knowledge into fields or disciplines, which rapidly became institutionalized as departments in universities, and then as occupations in the labor market. The main ones were economics, political science, and sociology. But also, history was partitioned off more completely as a specialized and more limited discipline, as was philosophy. Psychology had already been separated out earlier. Anthropology was added in. There is not the slightest justification for any of this. There is no such thing as an economy, for example. But such a claim sounds idiotic to contemporary minds. What conservatives have succeeded in doing is thoroughly trouncing another way of looking at human life which uses a different set of categories entirely, namely the radical critique of capitalist civilization. These false divisions are now one of the greatest barriers to understanding the world we live in.

19. *Don't watch television or listen to the radio.* I'm referring to corporate media of course. For most people it's probably best not to even own TVs or radios. Every hour given up to corporate programming is one hour less available for face-to-face association with friends and neighbors, one hour less available for building independent lives, for creating an autonomous culture, and for assembling the social arrangements that will replace capitalism. Mainstream television and radio are unspeakable evils, with their endless hours of advertising, their biased newscasts, their destruction of conversation, their silence about everything important, their trivialization of knowledge, their distortion of history, and their endorsement of greed, vulgarity, and brutality. Television creates a false, mediated world, a cultural world that has been filtered through the prism of capitalist values. We come to act and talk as if the only things we have in common are what we have all seen in the movies or on television or heard in the news. This comes to be the mediated linkage that binds us together. We no longer have direct cultural linkages emerging out of our own face to face interaction, but only these

round-about, second hand, artificial, distorted ones.

I have known only a few persons who could watch television without being damaged. These are persons who are already deeply steeped in an alternative culture. They don't so much watch television as they *study* it, like they would a species of insect never encountered before. They *examine* television, with a critical eye, bringing to the task already developed autonomous knowledge and values with which to judge it. They see it as data, to be analyzed, to discover what the ruling class is doing, and what spin it is putting on current events. They read between the lines to decipher what's happening in the world. This is a very important thing to do, but it is not for everyone. This presents a problem. We all need to be aware of what's happening in the world. We can read the

newspapers, but mainstream newspapers must be approached with the same 'reading between the lines' critical eye needed for television and radio. At present the best resource is the independent media, which can be consulted regularly to keep informed. Hopefully, a growing oppositional culture will continue to invent ways to bypass corporate media.

A report was made about what happened in a remote village in northern India when the first transistor radio arrived. Within a short time villagers no longer danced around their fires singing songs. Instead they sat and listened to the canned music from New Delhi.

20. *Support the Independent Media.* What began in the 1960s as Underground Newspapers, and continued to flourish in the 1970s and 1980s as the Alternative Press, has come into its own in the 1990s as the Independent Media. This is a much better name. Why should our publications be considered alternative rather than mainstream, instead of the reverse? It is corporate media after all that is not authentic, being nothing but a propaganda

machine, and is therefore out of line, dishonest, marginal, based on special interests (profit), inimical to human life, subterranean, and immoral. So why should this be considered mainstream? Well of course it *is* mainstream, for capitalism, and that is why the term mainstream is a dirty word for us. Still.

Our Independent Media now consists of hundreds of newspapers, magazines, journals, and zines, as well as independent radio and television. The most spectacular development in this area, in just the past two years since the Battle of Seattle in November 1999, has been the rapid creation, on a world scale, of IndyMedia Centers, using the Internet. These centers collect written, audio, and visual reports about current events and make them available to anyone with access to the Internet. This is a critically important strategic initiative. The new generation of activists seems to be very media savvy, far surpassing the media skills of earlier generations of militants. They seem to be focusing more on how central media are, and therefore how crucial it is to fight in this arena.

21. *Don't buy into the culture industry or commodified entertainment.* In the heavily commodified cultures of the core capitalist countries we can hardly move without using a commodity transaction. We certainly cannot live. We can't even die. There are options, nevertheless, in the hours when we are not forced into wage-slavery (the core commodity transaction).

I believe that in our non-working hours we must *consciously avoid* commodified activities. A commodified activity is one which is organized as a business to yield a profit to the entrepreneurs. Quite obviously this cannot be an absolute rule, otherwise we couldn't do anything, couldn't go out to dinner, couldn't go dancing, couldn't travel, couldn't listen to music, couldn't read a book. But what we can do is start shifting the emphasis, start shifting the ratio of commodified to non-commodified activities, and be more selective about which commodified activities we do (some are worse than others).

Most of us are heavily dependent on commercial entertainment, whether it be movies, television, CDs, rock and roll clubs, home videos, or spectator sports.

Every hour of our non-wage laboring time we spend on commodified entertainment strengthens capitalism and reduces the time we have available for creating an autonomous culture. The very worst commodified entertainment is that which reduces us to spectators, to passivity; movies, television, and commercial sports are the bad ones. (There is a highbrow version of spectator entertainment - plays, concerts, and ballets.) Even active entertainment requires equipment - boats, bikes, golf clubs, tennis rackets, binoculars, fishing gear - and as such ties us to the leisure time industry. But these uses of leisure are far better than spectator entertainment. But has someone who spends every available free hour playing golf been captured by the culture industry? I think so. Has someone who spends every available dollar maintaining a motor boat been captured by the culture industry? I think so. Add into this all the people who spend themselves broke every week playing the horses, buying the latest CDs, reading the latest romance novels, going to the latest rock concerts, eating out, taking the latest tours, going to bars, going to the latest movies, going to ball games, going to bowling alleys, skating rinks, and pool halls, going to nightclubs, going to stock car races, visiting amusement parks, and you see a population enslaved to the leisure time industry, to com-

modified entertainment and activities. All these activities destroy community and isolate us from each other.

The crazy thing is that this is all voluntary. No one is forcing us to do any of this. Capitalists have captured our laboring hours *by force* and turned us into slaves. But they have captured our so-called leisure hours *by seduction* and turned us into spectators and consumers. It's going to be hard to break free from the culture industry. The trouble is that most of this stuff is fun. We have to realize though that it is destroying us. We can, and we must, break free from it.

This is certainly one way we can all begin today to gut capitalism. We can

learn to play instruments again and make our own music. We can learn to sing together again, an ability which we have lost (yet people who have forgotten how to sing can never make a revolution; so here's a thought; we can destroy capitalism by starting to sing again). We can get together with neighbors and play sports. We can hike together and cycle, go on picnics, attend free lectures, form discussion groups and argue, play games in our own homes, go camping (but without a van load of equipment), read (good books instead of trash), organize community dances with live local musical talent, stage plays, sit and talk, visit friends and relatives, sleep, sit around and do nothing. The capitalist culture industry would collapse tomorrow without our endless purchases.

22. *Don't Vote.* There is a whole list of things not to do, namely don't waste time on any of the strategies that have failed. Voting deserves special mention though, because of the horrible ambivalence that still surrounds this issue. The ambivalence stems in large measure from the obvious fact that it can make a considerable difference in our lives whether the government is controlled by right-wing fanatics or liberal do-gooders. Governments, after all, if run by nice people, and if the internal dynamics of capitalism permit it (i.e., if the rate of profit is sufficiently healthy) can do many beneficial things for the average worker. What governments cannot do is destroy capitalism, because they are an integral part of capitalism.

We have to face up to this. Any time or energy put into winning elections will always fall short of achieving our true objectives. We cannot afford this waste. Time is short. We have to stop fighting for what we can get and start fighting for what we want. We have to reserve our energies for those strategies that *will* destroy capitalism and create a new world. Radicals who argue that we have to do both, that we should be electing socialists or at least progressive liberals to office, all the while we are building alternative institutions and attacking the system in other ways, just aren't being realistic. You can spend decades of your life trying to build a new labor or progressive party, but what have you got even if you succeed? Not what you really wanted!

There are in addition all the other objections to voting, like that it perpetuates the illusion that we are living in a democracy or at least a quasi-democracy, that it legitimizes the system, that running for office is an option only for the very rich, and so on. You may recall the anarchist quip that if voting could change anything it would be illegal. There is a bumper sticker which reads: "Don't Vote! It only encourages them." To refuse to even cast a vote, for the lesser of two evils (the "evil of two lessors"), even though it only takes an hour or two, is an *act of resistance*. It is a conscious rejection of capitalism, a refusal to be bought off with crumbs, and as such is a step toward building an opposition movement.

Although universal suffrage was won largely through working class, feminist, and civil rights agitation, it was long ago turned into a controlling mechanism by the ruling class, to be used against us. We should make a clean break with this practice and start taking *direct action* to destroy the system that is killing us by the millions.

23. *Recover our own language.* We no longer speak our own freely created language. We speak the language of our rulers and their hacks. It's no wonder, considering the bombardment from schools and mass media we have been under. Also, we don't really talk much with each other any more, which of course is the only way a language can be created. Instead we *listen*, to them. We walk around with earphones on our heads. We listen to teachers, sometimes for twenty years. We listen to the news, to talk shows, to weather forecasters, to advertisements by the thousands, and to the stock market report, even

though few of us own stocks (and those that do, don't own many). We listen to the President. We listen to bosses, ministers, doctors, and psychiatrists. Some people can't even sleep unless the radio or tv is on. There are radios in every car, in every workplace, in every kitchen. Millions of people wake up

every morning to clock radios. There are radios on the beach and in camp. We listen to the MBTA, over their loudspeakers in every station and train, telling us not to step over the yellow line, not to smoke, not to litter, to report vandals (222-1212), and to have a nice day, with nary a grimace of protest from a single passenger. We are constantly listening, to language not of our own making.

We even allow them to start piping their language right into our children's brains before they can even talk. It is a language filled with euphemisms, double-speak, psycho-babble, and befuddlement. It is an ugly language. Compared with only a hundred years ago our language now is impoverished, polluted, and degraded, with greatly weakened expressive powers. We cannot think straight using this language. Although it sounds strange to say so, words are very concrete things, and we can pay attention to them. We don't have to say "industrial society" instead of "capitalism", to cite only one example. Whole books are now being written on Double-Speak by oppositionists. We should study them. We should also study the words, whenever we can find them, of the very first victims of capitalism, in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. They had a clearer perception of what they were being hit with. Even in the 19th century, opposition language was still rich and powerful. Study the speeches of William Morris or Voltairine de Cleyre, for example, if you want to see how pitiful our language has become compared to theirs.

24. *Recover the capacity for self-defense.* Never before in history has a people been rendered so utterly defenseless before its oppressors as have the working classes of the capitalist world, classes which now include the overwhelming majority of people. We own no land and cannot grow the food we need. We own no tools and cannot make the necessities of life, not even clothing and shelter. We own no weapons and cannot defend ourselves against attack. Our communities and families have been broken up. We cannot control what our children are taught. We can no longer make our own music. Our language is no longer our own. Each week we hand over our money to the ruling class for safekeeping. We are completely at the mercy of

our rulers (and yet we think we are free!).

Even our character has been changed and weakened. Long gone from us is the fierce independence and resistance shown by peasants and native peoples the world over (including those in Europe) when they were first assaulted by capitalists. We are now a tamed class of people, so tamed that we are no longer even aware that we have been tamed. We are a subdued, cowed, pacified, controlled, contained, managed, manipulated class.

We are not *completely* tamed, however, and this is our strength and only hope (or despair, if all they need is to *mostly* tame us). The fact that they have so far failed, even with all their governments, schools, firepower, and mass media, to completely tame us, tells us that they can *never* completely tame us (short of genetically altering us, which I'm sure they're already working on around the clock). It tells us that we can win, that we are stronger.

Quite obviously, recovering the capacity for self-defense is not a simple matter of stockpiling Uzis. In fact it's not a simple matter at all. It's practically the same as recovering the capacity to live autonomously. Nevertheless there are many things we can do in the meantime. For example, we can establish cop watches. Whenever an incident happens involving the police, we should gather round and observe. This in itself will act as a brake on police brutality and provide eye witness accounts to anything that happens. Unfortunately, things at present are going in exactly the opposite direction. Many neighborhoods are setting up crime watches, under the direct supervision of their local police departments. In effect, they are turning themselves into cops, to spy on their neighbors, in the name of fighting crime. If this trend continues, before long it will be like it was in Russia, with family members ratting on other family members to the state's secret police. They will not see the crimes perpetrated by the government, corporations, and the police themselves, but only the street thugs that are threatening their neighborhoods. Feminists were on the right track when they started taking karate classes in the late sixties. They said

they were tired of feeling vulnerable and helpless. So they started learning karate and other methods of self-defense. We should revive this interest in self-defense but broaden it. It must be raised to the community level, and not remain just an individual practice. And since we can never acquire tanks, helicopters, patrol cars, gas grenades, and all that other weaponry (nor should we even want to), we have to invent social weapons with which to resist them and defend ourselves. I admit that this is a formidable and daunting task. Anyone who has survived in a ghetto for long realizes what it's like to live in an occupied territory. Half-a-dozen patrol cars can be at any incident within minutes, with more on the way, and helicopters hovering overhead. How can we possibly overcome such firepower?

To be quite honest about it, I don't quite see how break-away, autonomous neighborhoods could be defended against the military might of the bourgeoisie. But then, neither is it possible to see how a break-away nation could be defended. We have just seen, in their attack on Yugoslavia, what they can do to a whole nation which they want to break up. They bombed it back to a pre-industrial level, wiping out in seventy-eight days of bombing raids the productive toils and accomplishments of a whole people for half a century. So the difficulty we have in imagining a defense of our neighborhoods cannot be solved by reverting to a statist strategy, or by building armed forces to engage the ruling class militarily on its own terms -- Yugoslavia after all was well armed -- because we're just as bad off on that level.

The answer to the dilemma lies, I suspect, precisely in our smallness, in our ubiquitousness, and in direct action, and in the tactics of determined noncooperation and resistance to violent oppression. And after all, we're not starting from scratch. There is much to be learned from the long tradition of nonviolent resistance to physical force. We must also study tactics and strategies of war, however, because that's what we're involved in.

I do believe that we can win. But perhaps I'm just dreaming. We must never forget that they are willing to murder entire populations to protect their ability to accumulate capital, and have done so again and again.

25. *Get control over union pension funds.* At present, billions and billions of dollars that workers have saved are controlled by corporate bankers who use the money to bust unions, red-line poor communities, and finance more corporate enterprises, among other things. If you are in a union or know someone who is, begin to agitate to get these funds removed and re-deposited in worker- and community-friendly cooperative banks, or at least removed from corporate control in some other way.

26. *Don't cooperate with the police.* Except perhaps in urban ghettos, the police in the advanced capitalist states work in a very friendly social environment. This is a shame. It reflects some very bad attitudes on our part and lack of political awareness. Far too many people still think the police are here to protect us from crime, whereas in fact, by rendering us defenseless, *police are a major cause of crime*. Police may spend a tiny portion of their time, half-heartedly, on the problems of ordinary people (but when was the last time the police ever caught someone who robbed *you*, or recovered the stolen goods?). The great bulk of their work however goes to defend corporate property, to suppress unapproved movements and gatherings, to put down protests, to constantly watch us (surveillance), to ride herd on us (e.g., the ubiquitous patrol car), and to disarm us (you even need a permit to carry mace). Police are the front line mercenary troops of capitalists.

So here's what we do, at the very least. Never ask a cop for directions. In fact, don't even talk to cops unless you absolutely have to. Never invite a cop into our homes to advise us about security measures (they have such a program). Do not cooperate with any police programs designed to organize us and our neighbors to help fight crime. If we hear of police going into the public schools to give talks to grade schoolers about safety, pull our kids out of school that day. Whenever we see cops making an arrest, gather around to observe; our very presence is a deterrent. Organize cop watches. Never answer any questions beyond those legally required; instead exercise our right to remain silent (so we will have to know our rights). This may get us in trouble. Nothing infuriates cops more than refusals to answer their questions.

But it is an essential act of resistance, and if practiced widely, would rapidly lead to a clear awareness that cops are

not here for us.

27. *Don't join the military. Don't become a cop.* Most lackeys for the ruling class (e.g., managers, judges, politicians, lawyers) are taken from the richer middle income strata (a few from the ruling class itself) or else from working class people who have been carefully screened (i.e., filtered through the schooling system). In the case of cops and soldiers however working class people are inducted directly into the ranks of storm troopers and used to defend the capitalist order. The trouble is that for destitute persons the military looks like a pretty good deal, and police jobs are highly paid and hence highly prized. Nevertheless, the opposition movement should try, as far as possible, to throw a ban on these jobs. There is no chance of course that we could ever prevent capitalists from recruiting enough troopers, but what we could do is put such an onus on these jobs, through ridicule, disparagement, and ostracism, that anyone who signs up will know quite clearly they are doing something wrong, betraying their communities, and crossing over into enemy ranks.

28. *Do not become a boss.* The deeply entrenched ambition to be promoted up through the ranks of the corporate world is very destructive of community, equality, and freedom. It has served capitalism well, but less so in recent years with the decimation of middle income, middle management levels of employment. Promotion has never been an out for more than a few people anyway (relatively speaking, but still a large number in absolute terms). The cost is high however. In exchange for having a somewhat more comfortable life in the material sense (whether it is a better quality of life is doubtful) these people sell their souls to the capitalists, develop vested interests in

defending the system, adopt the viewpoints of the rulers, enforce corporate rules, and in truth become policemen for the accumulators of capital. For workers not to even aspire to be promoted, and to refuse promotion into the ranks of managers when offered, would weaken a strategic link in the system and would seriously undermine an enterprise's ability to operate profitably. As more and more workers adopt this attitude this would become a set of values opposed to the those of the bosses. There would be costs of course, in loss of income. But would these costs be unbearable, especially if the time and energy could be redirected into autonomous associations which further undermine the wage-slave system?

29. *Ridicule businessmen -- every chance you get.* Also: bankers, cops, lawyers, priests, professors, doctors, scientists, politicians, bosses, and weather forecasters. Do not defer to anyone in authority. Professionalism is another way they have discovered to destroy self-reliance, competency, and autonomy in the general population. We can hardly do anything for ourselves anymore without having to consult an expert first.

30. *Reject Robert's Rules of Order.* Robert's Rules, written by a retired army general in 1876, have become deeply embedded in popular culture in the United States, to the extent that they are often automatically taken as the bible for how groups should behave in meetings. They are like an external law, imposed on us from above. People forget that they can write any rules they want to for their meetings, or have no rules at all. Robert's Rules give far too much power to the chair. They encourage parliamentary maneuvering. They are stifling and rigid. They can quite easily be used by skillful manipulators to defeat the collective will. We need to invent more flexible and democratic, less centralized procedures for organizing our collective assemblies, procedures which allow for much more chaos, spontaneousness, interruptions, talking out of turn, quick trial votes, arguments, and different procedural options for discussing issues. It's definitely time to rule Robert out of order.

31. *Do not deposit your money in corporate banks.* Instead, seek out a

cooperative bank. If there is not one handy start one. It is perfectly legal at present. (Non-profit banking cooperatives will most probably be stopped through legislation if the trend becomes pronounced.) Corporate banks use our deposits to strengthen the corporate world and weaken the autonomous community world. It is simply crazy for us to voluntarily hand over our weekly earnings for them to use against us (and then pay them to do it).

32. *Try not to fall into debt* (unless it is a life or death matter). Personal debt is one way capitalists

have invented to yoke us to their world. It is extremely effective. Capitalists at present depend heavily on this mountain of debt. It would clearly hurt them if people began to opt out of it. Being in debt keeps our noses to the grindstone, makes us more afraid of losing our jobs, reduces our flexibility, and makes us blue. It is simply crazy to voluntarily give our rulers this leverage over our lives.

33. *Consider declaring personal bankruptcy, if you are heavily in debt.*

This is a smart move if you have nothing. If you have something it is a question of whether you are willing to live without those things that will be seized, in order to get unyoked from the usurers and reappropriate some wealth. If millions of people start taking advantage of this law it will probably be taken off the books. In the meantime it might be used to shed debts and get out of the credit card sink-hole.

34. *Leave school as soon as possible.* Compulsory education ends in most states at the age of sixteen. That's when we should leave school. For more than a century and a half the working class has bought into the idea that education is a way to improve our lives, and if not our own then the lives of our children. This worked for some in the core countries for a while. But even

in its heyday it was always overrated, because upward mobility faces severe structural limitations (i.e., there are only so many jobs at the top). By now, schooling has long since lost any liberatory value. Instead it has become a key institution for pacifying and indoctrinating the working class. It teaches obedience, punctuality, and passivity. It is a disciplinary tool. It destroys autonomy, curiosity, spontaneity, initiative, and creativity. It perpetuates ruling class values and points of view. It puts blinders on the population. It enforces hierarchy and ranking. It is crazy to voluntarily enter this system. Leaving school does not mean we give up learning. It means we will actively assume responsibility for educating ourselves. The following five points also pertain to schooling.

35. *Ignore grades.* Do not attach any significance to grades. Just do the minimum work needed to get barely passing grades in order to get through the compulsory years mandated by the state. Grades in the school system are similar to wages in the factory system in that they induce competition among ourselves rather than solidarity, and trick us into striving for the approval of the authorities. It is an attitude that serves capitalists well later in the workplace.

36. *Reject credentialism and certification.* I saw a friend once burst into tears of joy when she was finally awarded the doctorate degree. This is how deeply capitalist values have penetrated into our personalities. It's true that this was also a personal triumph against considerable odds. Nevertheless it shows that we have bought into the belief that we are better, more accomplished people if we receive the stamp of approval from the state. The idea of earning degrees is thoroughly reactionary. To seek credentials, to seek to be certified, by the government, is thoroughly reactionary. They have linked this certifying system to the occupational structure. Schools are training camps and screening (weeding out) centers for the corporate world. If you can tolerate 12, 16, or even 20 years of school perhaps you won't do too badly the rest of your life as a professor, an executive, a banker, a lawyer, or a priest. Even for ordinary working class jobs in offices, schools are screening centers. If you can't take the discipline, the regimen, of schools,

you won't be able to take the office regimen either. If you can't stand being graded, reprimanded, organized, punished, or insulted in school you won't like these things in the workplace either.

If we absolutely have to get credentials to survive in the labor market, we should nonetheless *never take pride* in having "earned a degree." Degrees should be regarded just like taxes, the draft, jury duty, or drug testing: onerous rules enforced by the government, something to be avoided wherever possible or minimized where not.

It is perhaps a little late for this advice. Capitalists themselves are abandoning schools and so-called public education, because they no longer need very many educated workers. They will be perfectly happy to leave millions, billions of people wallowing in ignorance. People are weaker that way. So our rejection of schools must absolutely be accompanied by iron determination to become a knowledgeable, skilled, highly educated people. But we can't do this by going to school. We must do it on our own, with friends, neighbors, and comrades.

37. *Don't go to college.* For all the reasons discussed above, going to college is an absurd idea. No one is forcing you to. So don't do it. The years can be used to better advantage elsewhere. It makes absolutely no sense to voluntarily give them another 2, 4, 5, or 8 years to work you over. Don't be seduced by the idea that you are bettering yourself by getting a degree, or that you are achieving something and being successful. Success has nothing to do with getting certified by the state. That may be the their definition of success but it is not ours.

38. *Engage in intensive self-education.* Seek out knowledgeable people in the opposition movements and get them to prepare readings lists, hold

seminars, or give lectures. Form study-groups. Read and study constantly. Read the alternative press. Watch videos and listen to tapes made by radicals. These things can be done with the time and energy saved from school. Obviously, this can be carried only so far. If you want to become a marine biologist or a brain surgeon, you probably have to go to school. But even here many ways can be found to partially disengage from the schooling system. There are often ways to establish competency independent of school certification, through tests or actual job experience. For some skills, like carpentry, you can go to a trade school (which requires less time) or become an apprentice.

The point is to stop seeing school as a place where we can learn. The great bulk of materials we are required to study there are detrimental to our health and well-being. Even purely technical subjects are riddled with ruling class values and prejudices. By rejecting schools we free ourselves from this illusion, free ourselves to begin to acquire the kind of knowledge we need to destroy capitalism, save ourselves, save the planet, and establish "freedom and justice for all."

39. *Support the Home Schooling Movement.* Home schooling is still schooling, and so does not achieve the long-standing radical objective of reintegrating learning and life. It is at best a stop-gap measure. Although the majority of people involved in this movement are right wing fundamentalists, there is a small left-wing contingent. Home schooling is legal in many states. We have to meet certain criteria. So the state still has a hand in it. Nevertheless, it is a way of getting largely free from state controlled education. It is hard for a single family to do, and works better for several families joining together, and better yet for a neighborhood. It is a way of taking charge of our own education.

You may be asking why we should give up all the resources of "public schools" - libraries, gyms, pools, classrooms, computers, art supplies, workshops, playing fields - only to scrounge around with practically nothing in our living rooms. Here's why. Public schools are not public at all and never

have been. They are system schools, ruling class schools. Capitalists have controlled the school system from day one. Even on the local level school boards are almost invariably conservative, are made up of the wealthier members of a community who support the status quo. Recently, even corporations and the military are being allowed to invade schools big time. Getting public control of the existing school system is like getting control of factories, offices, hospitals, or the government itself - no strategy yet tried has ever succeeded.

But persons who work in schools and colleges should definitely be creating employee associations, with an eye to taking over these institutions. If we could seize them it would obviously be better to do so, than to start from scratch elsewhere. But seizing schools, colleges, and universities, will, I believe, prove to be a task of the same order of magnitude as seizing corporations, and will probably happen at about the same time. I doubt if schools can be democratized in isolation from everything else, any more than hospitals can.

In the meantime, it is better to give up the resources in order to be free to teach our own values, acquire knowledge we need, reshape knowledge, even technical knowledge, to our own purposes, and generate an autonomous culture.

40. *Don't recycle.* Don't spend your life trying to clean up the mess capitalism is making of the earth. Spend your life destroying capitalism. Recycling was a bum trip from the very beginning. We're supposed to spend hours and hours of our free time sorting the garbage, taking papers one place, taking cans another, taking bottles another, all the while the factories are producing millions of tons of new trash every day,

more than we can ever possibly clean up. Why not stop them from making trash?

By now recycling has become a big business. It could never be profitable of course if the recycling entrepreneurs had to pay workers to go out and collect the trash. So, very cleverly, they have recruited armies of naive environmentalists to collect the trash for them, free of charge, and bring it voluntarily, on their own time, to the factory gates. The entrepreneurs then turn this raw material into profit (with a little help from wage-slaves of course).

Recycling will undoubtedly be a normal and integral part of everyday life among free peoples. But not now, not while it's being used to derail us from our true task of replacing a profit-oriented death economy with the life-sustaining activities of free peoples. So jump off the recycling merry-go-round.

41. *Don't wear a suit.* It has been customary for a long time for working class families to dress up for special occasions in their 'Sunday Best'. Dressing up has meant dressing like the ruling class - suits and ties for men and fancy dresses for women (now there are suits for women too). If you look at pictures of workers from a hundred years ago, for example the hundreds of men gathered in Union Square in New York City to hear Emma Goldman speak, they're all wearing suits. There are many such pictures. But over the past century, especially with the decline in church attendance, workers have been abandoning suits. We should finish the job and explicitly reject suits. Suits are the uniforms of businessmen, politicians, and bureaucrats, the world over. There is no point in our aping them.

It's possible this tactic could become outmoded though. It seems there is a trend in some corporations to require workers to come to work in suits, while the executives drift in later in casual wear. Like in the sixties when we grew beards as a sign of protest, only to discover a short while later that executives were growing beards too; beards thus lost their symbolic value.

I'm not too worried though about the ruling class changing its dress code anytime soon. Can you imagine a State of the Union address where they all aren't in suits? So don't wear a suit. It'll be good for your soul.

42. *Do not play the lottery.* Every dollar we spend on the lottery is like a gift to the ruling class. It's like saying "Here, take my money and use it to enslave me." The lottery is a thoroughly evil institution. The fact that millions of us spend money we can't afford on lottery tickets proves all too vividly that they have turned our brains to mush. We are just being fleeced. Even worse than the enormous financial rip-off is the enormous psychological rip-off - this illusory slim hope that we will win and be able to escape our misery. The lottery is just another little weapon they have invented to neutralize us, disarm us, and prevent us from taking real, direct, effective action to stop our exploitation, meet our needs, and create for ourselves satisfying lives and communities.

8. General Comments on the Strategy

Maybe some general comments are now in order about the above proposed tactics. Please note that all of them are things that can be started right now by all of us as individuals or as small groups. They don't require us to build vast national organizations (let alone international organizations, something which is once more being frequently called for given the latest surge in the globalization of capital). They don't require vast resources, guerrilla fighters, or extraordinary bravery. They don't require us to give up our lives for a cause or deny ourselves the pleasures of life.

On the contrary, they require us to start creating enjoyable, quality lives. They don't require us to be super intelligent, widely read, or highly educated. They don't require us to adopt a party line or have a correct consciousness. They don't require us to spend our lives building bureaucratic organizations like unions or parties. They don't ask us to petition the state. They don't require us to work for changes in legislation. (In fact, a good rule of thumb is that if a strategy requires changes in legislation drop it.)

You may notice also that many of the items listed above are designed to stop the ruling class from controlling what we think. This is in many ways the front line of the war. There are no longer any historical conditions, and

haven't been for a long time, which prevent us from building a new social world. It is the

consciousness-controlling weapons they have deployed against our minds that prevent us. They have managed to erase, for example, practically all knowledge of former anti-capitalist struggles. Instead they fill our brains with sports and media trivia. A top priority of an opposition movement must be to counter and neutralize these weapons so that we can learn to think for ourselves again.

Several of the items listed above are *acts of resistance*, for example, not voting, not watching tv, not going to college, not becoming a boss, not cooperating with the police. It is necessary and important to reject, refuse, and break with a host of small practices which support capitalist relations. It is mainly through such acts of resistance that we can generate an opposition movement and a counter-consciousness.

Many of the items are intended to weaken and subvert the government and corporations. The first and easiest step toward weakening a government of course is simply to withdraw our support and declare our opposition. After that we can start finding dozens of concrete ways to subvert it, including all those listed above. For example, we can increase our demands on the government, asking for more and more and more. After all, the wealth is ours. We can demand far more than the government can ever deliver. This puts their system under stress and opens up avenues for us to take action elsewhere. We can support the tax resisters league, a strategy which can't get very far as long as a government is strong enough to impose heavy fines and prison sentences. But perhaps it can lay the groundwork for later tax resistance on a massive scale. We can support draft resistance movements. We can oppose corporations: join every anti-corporate campaign we hear about. We can try to destroy their credibility, expose all the tax breaks they get, expose all the government subsidies they get, show how they never have

to pay to clean up the messes they make, and show how they buy the legislators. Once we have gotten over the idea that the government is ours, we can think of a hundred ways to weaken and subvert it.

The heart of the proposed strategy however is *free association* - in our neighborhoods, in our workplaces, in our households. This is how we can defeat them. You may think such associations will not be able to destroy capitalism, but you're wrong. There is great power in association. The capitalists will be scared out of their wits if the country starts to be covered with associations, in every neighborhood and at every workplace. Naturally, they will be scared only if these associations start taking direct action to monkey-wrench the system and reappropriate power and wealth. If all we do is gab, or throw a block party once a year, or throw a Christmas party at the office (one big happy family), they'll have nothing to worry about. The enslaved populations of the capitalist world have been rendered harmless precisely because our traditional associations have been destroyed and we have been reduced to the pitiful condition of living as isolated individuals, or as small nuclear families.

It's time to start associating again, this time not because of tradition, but because we know that's what we want. These associations will have to be defended obviously, because they are going to be attacked viciously. Our main fighting and militancy should be saved for defending the new social arrangements we are creating and not in attacking capitalist institutions directly. We must not forget that practically the entire world is embedded in capitalist relations and we are dependent upon these for survival. If we destroy capitalist relations and structures before we have created for ourselves alternative means of survival we will die. So the emphasis has to shift to building the new world we want, and then to defending it from attack, all the while we are trying to abandon, gut, and vacate capitalist premises and practices.

This proposed strategy has been criticized for not being very militant, for withdrawing from confrontation with corporations and the state. This is a misperception I think, probably caused by my rejection of so many traditional tactics, like demonstrations. But clearly, there is no way that we could create the free associations we want without confronting ruling class power.

Another question raised about the proposed strategy is whether it actually adds up to the defeat of capitalism. Do the forty-two tactics, most of which are about what not to do, really do the job? What is the mechanism? How will capitalism actually be defeated? It's true that many of my recommendations are about what not to do. They are mostly about building an oppositional culture. But the crucial first three, about setting up workplace, neighborhood, and household associations, are positive steps, as are other ideas scattered throughout the list, like setting up cooperative banks, community land trusts, worker-owned businesses, neighborhood health clin-

ics, local currencies, and so forth. But the decisive event in the overthrow of capitalism will be the shift of decision-making power from national legislatures and corporate boardrooms to neighborhood assemblies and worker-controlled projects. It is inconceivable that this could happen all at once everywhere. It will obviously be a gradual process, but one which nevertheless could take place within a definite historical time period. First the assemblies have to be created and defended. Then more and more decision-making has to be taken away from capitalist institutions (government, corporations, schools, etc.) and returned to local bodies. This will be slow at first, in scattered locales. But the process could gather momentum, as it spreads to more and more communities, so that later on, as capitalist structures begin to implode, the transfer of power and wealth back to home assemblies could be rapid and massive.

9. Ways to Finish Gutting Capitalism

Having just reviewed steps that we can take *now* to begin gutting capitalism helps us realize how very advanced the final steps are, and how completely impossible it is to accomplish them now, without decades of preparatory

work. Capitalism will have to be thoroughly weakened and on the verge of collapse before any of these final steps can succeed. The century-old demand by revolutionaries that workers "seize the means of production" is thus seen to be completely unrealistic. This is the last thing we do, not the first. By the time we are in a position to do this, victory will be assured. By the time we are able to do this we will already be acting on a daily basis through our new social arrangements; we will already have reconstituted society.

In any case, four of the final ways to gut capitalism are: (1) seize the land; (2) seize the factories, shops, and offices; (3) seize our residences; and (4) stop paying taxes. Without taxes governments collapse. To weaken a government to the point where it is no longer capable of collecting taxes or defending property is our task. If we can succeed at this, seizing the land and the means of production and reproduction will seem anti-climactic.

As a final gesture we should demolish the great architectural symbols of capitalism. Blow them up - the fortress-like banks, the domed capitol buildings, the great ugly skyscrapers. We might keep one or two, as museum pieces, as reminders of the nightmare world that once haunted our every hour. We'll keep Manhattan, but evacuate it, blow up the bridges and tunnels leading into it, and seal it off. Then we can stand across the river and look over at it in wonder that we could ever have tolerated a ruling class that could have built such a horror. It will be a mausoleum for our darkest age.

10. Further Discussion

1. *What can neighborhood associations do?* Plenty. As already pointed out, the mere fact of their existence, the mere fact that people *have assembled*, strikes a terrific blow at capitalism because by assembling we start overcoming the isolation and fragmentation upon which capitalism so much depends. Capitalists abhor all human relationships not fractured through commodity exchange and its supporting structures (e.g., hierarchical ties to government, corporations, schools, hospitals, landlords). Witness the continuing assault on marriage and family ties, kinship being the last great reservoir of non-commodified relationships.

Neighborhood associations can begin conducting the war against capitalism. There are many ways to do this: by working closely with any employee associations in the neighborhood, by encouraging the establishment of cooperative households, by encouraging the establishment of worker-owned businesses, by establishing a neighborhood-controlled fund to begin to have some resources to do things with, by starting to negotiate agreements with other neighborhoods, by endorsing and encouraging all the various ways of gutting capitalism enumerated above, by starting a building fund for a Meeting Hall to be constructed as soon as money is available, by beginning to prepare themselves to become Home Assemblies with full decision-making power for self-rule, by working out discussion and voting procedures within the Assemblies, by becoming skilled at working cooperatively and democratically, by organizing cop watch-

es, by trying to make our neighborhoods safe, by encouraging and organizing steps toward more self-sufficiency in electricity and food in the neighborhood, by regenerating community, by reestablishing self-reliance in dozens of small ways instead of dependence on state programs, by organizing resistance to corporate destruction in the neighborhood, by sponsoring dances. The list goes on.

2. *What can employee associations do?* Plenty. Ditto the remarks above about the revolutionary significance of simply assembling. Employee associations can begin conducting the war against capitalism from within workplaces. The waters are murkier here however because of 150 years of disastrous union practices. So first of all there must be *no outside bureaucratic organization*, no salaried union officials, no dues, no union halls, no secret midnight motel meetings between corporate executives and union officials. Employees will struggle for the space, time, and right to meet at work, and until then we will meet in our homes or in other co-opted spaces.

Not a dime will be spent on union officials, offices, or buildings. Secondly, *no contracts*. The fight must be conducted on a day by day basis. No promises. No deals. We want to get more and give less. That's the sum of it. Our objective must be to work toward the day when we can seize the shop or plant, take it over, run it ourselves, establish a self-managed project, and stop selling our labor-power. But this is the long term aim. Our immediate aim is to demand more while working less. This will put a crimp in the rate of profit, in the accumulation of capital, and hence in capitalism itself.

For the millions of shops with thirty employees or less, one peer circle will cover the whole operation. In larger plants there must be several, or many, peer circles, probably following the departmental lines of the enterprise. For example, in a newspaper plant with 1000 employees, there will be roughly 40 peer circles (taking 25 as the average size). Printers, engravers, artists, editors, truckers, mailers, compositors, bookkeepers, photographers, and secretaries will all coalesce into peer circle meetings.

Imagine how corporate executives will shake in their boots when they realize that their entire work force has organized itself into independent autonomous groups, that these groups are meeting, are communicating with each other, are discussing what happens at the plant, are generating demands and strategies, are planning direct actions, and are implacably hostile to management. Imagine how the ruling class as a whole will go into shock when they see entire cities covered with thousands of such groups in every factory, office, and store.

Employee associations must recover the knowledge that we are being ripped off, that capitalism is a system of theft, and that things don't have to be this way. They must recover the knowledge that we have created this wealth and that it belongs to us. They can endorse and support in many ways the steps enumerated above for gutting capitalism. They can establish ties and cooperate with the neighborhood associations near their workplace. This is an essential step, for although traditionally syndicalists have thought that workplace councils alone could destroy capitalism, I believe that workplace struggles must be combined with the establishment of neighborhood Home Assemblies (decision-making bodies). Together with household associations

we thus have a three-pronged attack which can succeed. Needless to say our autonomous employee associations will be violently attacked. Every effort will be made to destroy them or else co-opt and neutralize them. Make no mistake about this. This is no picnic we're planning.

3. *What can household associations do?* Here the objectives are more limited. First of all we want to try to reduce the cost of housing, and secondly to relearn how to live cooperatively and communally in extended groupings. We need to keep in mind how we're being fleeced. First of all the capitalists, as bosses, seize part of the wealth we have produced in unpaid wages. Then the capitalists, as government bureaucrats, seize a huge chunk of our wealth in taxes. Next, capitalists, as landlords, seize another huge chunk in rent. Finally, capitalists, as merchants, through monopoly control, seize yet another huge chunk with inflated prices. After this savage assault, there's little left for everything else.

So household associations are a vital part of our war to destroy capitalism. Getting control of housing is not as central as controlling the factories but it is still vitally important. We must be moving toward the day when we can seize these residential properties.

Let's review what they have done to us when it comes to residential living arrangements. They destroyed the dense warren-like residences of our peasant villages and medieval towns. They have forced us instead to live in single family houses or apartments. Then within each of these individual or small family dwelling units they installed a loudspeaker so that corporations and the state can talk directly into our homes (but we can't talk back).

Over the centuries many steps have been taken to further guarantee that we will not associate with our neighbors (actually the whole of bourgeois

culture works in this direction). For example, in the small town single-family dwellings of nineteenth century America there were front porches. In twentieth century suburban tracts these are mostly gone. No one walks around the block anymore, stopping to visit with neighbors sitting on their front porches. These individualized residences, in addition to destroying association, have a further advantage to capitalists in that they each have to be filled up with commodities. Millions of toasters sold, millions of refrigerators, washing machines, stoves, blenders, fans, beds, lamps, tables, and of course TVs and radios, and now CDs, VCRs, DVDs, and PCs.

Suburbia is surely the most socially destructive architectural development in history. But it has suited capitalists perfectly. That is why they built it, mostly in the last fifty years. In addition to being a depository for the hundreds of commodities capitalists want to sell, each little plot has to be kept up. Maintenance on the house, car, and yard consumes the bulk of the time left over from jobs, cooking and eating, and personal upkeep. The average suburban family spends more time mowing the lawn than it does in civic duties. Capitalists couldn't have found a more effective device for destroying community and depoliticizing the population than suburbia. The atomized household has served them well. Our household associations will be a direct threat to this key feature of capitalism.

4. How can we redress the existing imbalance of wealth between regions?

The normal operation of capitalism over a five hundred year period has produced poor regions and rich regions, most notably, on a global scale, between rich northern countries and impoverished southern countries, but also internally within nations, as for example between northern and southern Italy. My scheme of an association of democratic autonomous neighborhoods has been criticized for not providing a way to redress these imbalances. Each neighborhood must start where it is, first by stopping the ongoing extraction of wealth, and secondly by trying to recover some of the wealth already extracted. My critics want a much more rapid and forceful redistribution of wealth from rich to poor regions. This presupposes the success of either social democracy or Leninism, that is, a strong central government in radical

hands with the capitalists out of the picture. This has never yet happened, nor is there any reason to believe it ever will happen. So this hope they have of redressing the imbalances rapidly by force is unrealistic. Associations of free peoples however could undoubtedly take strong measures to level things out and to lift their impoverished members.

5. *Provincialism versus Universalism.* Some years ago I presented this scheme at a friend's class at the University of Massachusetts. The black students present immediately objected to the idea of community control, saying that they didn't want to be under the heel of a bigoted, racist majority in some small town. They had in mind I guess the role the federal government has played in enforcing civil rights in the South. But just think a minute. National governments are no less likely to be racist than local governments. In fact these students were grossly misjudging the amount of protection they have received from the government. If anything, capitalist governments are the main creators and upholders of racism.

But there is a larger issue buried here. What right does any national elite have to impose its values and beliefs on any local community? What right do secular people have to impose their beliefs on religious people? What right do fundamentalist Christians have to impose their beliefs on everyone else? What right do the Sandinistas have to impose their culture on the Miskito Indians? To ask these questions is to answer them. None. No one has any right to impose their way of life on others. Freedom means the right to live, act, speak, believe, associate, as we choose.

This whole debate between localism and cosmopolitanism, or universalism versus particularism, is a false one. It has arisen only because we have been living in hierarchical societies for at least 4000 years in

which the ruling classes have usually pretended to speak for everyone. The bourgeoisie especially has been insistent that its views are universal and

timeless and true for everyone. If, instead of class societies, we had been living all this time in a world made up of associations of democratic autonomous communities, there would be no question of anything being universal. There would only be those values or beliefs adhered to by greater or smaller numbers of communities. We should not let abstract debates like this stop us from gutting capitalism and getting free. We will be able to solve ethical questions about our relations on a case by case basis as we come to them.

6. *How do we get back the wealth already stolen?* It's not difficult to imagine the reappropriation of wealth as long as we're talking about material things. We can seize land, factories, equipment, houses, and goods. What is puzzling is how we can seize the accumulated corporate assets deposited as credits in the banks of the world. But perhaps this puzzle is not as difficult as it seems. This money represents claims on labor and goods. If it cannot be exchanged for these it is worthless. If we can contrive situations where this exchange can be blocked, then in a sense we have reappropriated this wealth, by freeing ourselves from its future claims on our labor and products. Such a situation would exist if governments collapsed and with them the international monetary system. The money would be worthless then. But if this happened the savings of working class people would be lost also. So we have to invent less catastrophic ways to render the money of the ruling class worthless. We also have to start getting our wealth out of ruling class banks and currencies and put somewhere safe. Further, we can create local currencies, reestablish barter in some cases, and have different kinds of currency for various purposes. Also, if we can establish a measure of self-sufficiency, there may be times when we can simply refuse to sell (our labor or products) in exchange for their currency. So if we can seize everything material, and then render their credit worthless, we will have gotten everything. Most of that paper wealth is an illusion anyway.

7. *Meetings.* My nastiest response to those who don't like meetings is that they should get out of the radical movement because they don't belong here. But of course this is too harsh. After all, we are 500 years deep in bourgeois

culture. The bourgeoisie doesn't like meetings - or assemblies, congregations, associations, communes, tribes, gatherings, festivals, jubilees. They hardly even meet themselves, except in their boardrooms and parliaments. (They do love "organizations" though.) For persons who have spent their entire lives in individual pursuits it is understandable that they would find meetings tedious, even unbearable.

There is another point of view however. Meetings are occasions when our true nature as social beings finds expression. It is through meetings that we will be able to create a new social world shaped by human intelligence. In our new civilization meetings will be natural and normal events in our everyday lives in our households, projects, and neighborhoods. They will be joyous occasions, or at least enjoyable occasions, not the drag they are now under very inimical conditions.

But it is a long way from here to there. One look at my scheme must make even the most gregarious radical blanch. There are peer circle meetings galore, both at home and at work, as well as household-wide and project-wide assemblies, plus the meeting of the Home Assembly itself. But this looks worse than it is. The project and household meetings will be just a regular part of running the household or project, like washing the dishes or keeping the books. As for the Home Assembly, how often will we have to meet once things are set up? The real trouble about meetings is not then, after we have won, but now, when we're fighting a war. How can anyone who is working full time at a job find time for an employee association, a household association, and a neighborhood association? There are not enough hours in the day. Obviously, we won't all be able to fight on every front. We'll have to split things up. Remember also that many millions of us are *not* employed full-time. And what if we didn't devote so much time to the culture industry? Consider also that if we stopped wasting so much time and energy on strategies that fail we would have a lot more time and energy to build associations that can destroy capitalism. Consider also where we might take our pleasure. Couldn't it be an intensely pleasurable experience to demolish a ruling class whose practices are responsible for millions of deaths, stunted children, a polluted planet, decimat-

ed species, and worldwide misery? Wouldn't this yield personal satisfaction at least equal to that of going to a ball game or concert?

So let's first get rid of capitalism through our associations and then give ourselves time to decide whether a way of life built on frequent social assemblies is pleasurable or onerous.

8. *Thinking Strategically.* There is a long-standing and widespread confusion in radical social thought about whether consciousness is determined or not (variously known as the base/superstructure problem, the subject/object duality, the relation between being and consciousness). A critic of my strategy said that it presupposed an already existing, widespread, anti-capitalist consciousness. And since he didn't believe such a consciousness existed at present, where was it going to come from? He went on to say that perhaps if capitalism started to collapse, and the survival of large numbers of people were at stake (actually the survival of millions of people is already at stake), perhaps then the strategy would catch on. The implication here is that radical consciousness is produced by historical conditions. This is a false way of looking at things. It leaves out the free, creative response people can make to their circumstances.

Fortunately, there is a clear way out of this muddle: think strategically. My critic did not seem to be aware that he was talking *about* history rather than acting *in* it. This is always the case with those with objectivist leanings. They are always standing outside history looking on, rather than making history as an active participant. When we have a project, when we are trying to do something (goal-oriented action), then this whole false dilemma of subject/object evaporates. We look at what we have to work with and what stands in our way and we take it from there. And where did we get the idea for this project? We created it, out of the blue.

Marx pointed the way, long ago, when he wrote in the *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." Unfortunately, this has been a difficult insight for radicals to absorb. They tend to forget about the first five words - "Men make their own history" - and instead remember only that our actions are circumscribed by the past. Even one of my favorite body of theorists, now coming to be known as Autonomous Marxists, but which I always called Third Road Radicals, Anti-Bolshevik Communists, or Western Marxists, is guilty all too often of writing *about* the working class from the outside, rather than from the inside as strategists for abolishing wage-slavery.

The funny thing is that this deterministic approach is only applied to the working class, never to the ruling class, even by radical intellectuals. It is considered utopian for workers to imagine how we want to live and to set about creating such a life. But no one would ever think to say that the lawyers, plantation owners, and merchants who gathered in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787 couldn't do that. There is hardly a radical intellectual alive who doesn't hold to the idea that we can't say much *now* about the shape of the new society we want, and who doesn't subscribe to the Marxist ban on utopian thinking (which has done enormous damage to the anti-capitalist struggle). But they would never even think to say that about the constitution writers of 1787. For who can deny that not only did they write down in detail a description of the institutional structures they wanted, but they went on to set them up, and succeeded beyond their wildest dreams in shaping the social life of a whole nation for the next two centuries?

Let us finally, please, at long last, have an end to all the talk that we are nothing but the pawns of history. We cannot be only that even if we wanted to, but as long as we believe that we are, it hurts our chances for freedom. We must become *conscious* actors on the stage of history. This is the only way we can defeat our rulers, who act this way as a matter of course, everyday, in doing the business of running and defending their empire. They constantly monitor opposition to *their* project, which is to accumulate capital, and take

steps to counter it. They don't agonize much about whether they are historically determined or not. In this instance, and only in this instance, we should take a tip from them. We have to if we want to survive. We have to start taking charge of our own lives. So remember: Think Strategically.

9. *Federation and other delusions.* Anarchists have long deluded themselves, with the idea of federation, that they have solved the thorny problem of how they can have both direct democracy and large scale organization at the same time. It's a pat formula they repeat, ritualistically - "federated at the municipal, regional, national, and international levels." It's a grand illusion. Federation obviously creates a hierarchy, by using delegates (i.e., representatives) to form smaller and smaller decision-making units, further and further removed from the neighborhood. But this idea is garnished, to make it more palatable, with three other illusions - (a) mandated delegates, (b) instant recall, and (c) the separation of policy making from administration. I believe all three ideas are flawed and are incompatible with direct democracy, and hence with anarchism, self-government, and autonomy.

The notion of a mandated delegate is a mirage, because as soon as a meeting convenes, everything is open. The discussion of the issues redefines those issues. Sometimes the change of only one word in a proposal can completely change the proposal's meaning and impact. In short, I do not believe that delegates *can* be mandated. There is no way delegates can avoid exercising their own judgement on the issues once the discussion gets under way, no matter how detailed their instructions were. So the idea that mandated delegates preserve the decision-making power of the neighborhood assemblies is an illusion.

So also with the idea of instant recall. For instant recall to work the people back home would have to be following the discussion as closely as if they

were there themselves. They would have to have detailed, current knowledge of the issues as they were unfolding in debates among delegates. Even if everyone back home were watching the conference live on television (an impossibility), in order to exercise instant recall they would have to convene themselves, in their home assemblies, and debate whether or not a delegate had deviated from the mandate far enough to warrant recall. But of course, if they are going to do this, and if they have this kind of intimate knowledge of the issues, and this kind of communication system, they might as well be making the decisions themselves, directly, without bothering to go through the hassle of setting up conferences of delegates. A moment's reflection shows that the whole idea of instant recall is ridiculous, but it has been repeated uncritically for decades by radicals.

Similarly with the idea of the separation between policy making and administration. Anyone who has worked on a project knows that all kinds of decisions have to be made constantly. It can be the most mundane decision, but have profound policy implications. But unless a decision happens to come under scrutiny, and is discussed and aired, it may not be clear what its policy implications are. In other words, it's next to impossible to separate purely administrative decisions from policy decisions, because almost any so-called administrative decision may be shown to have policy implications. The distinction is a false one. It is another illusion, a way of convincing ourselves that we still have a project based on direct democracy, when we do not. In this essay I have adopted the practice of treaty making as a way of avoiding hierarchy and delegated authority. Delegates from various neighborhoods will get together to hammer out agreements. But these agreements will then have to be taken back to the neighborhood assemblies for ratification. The draft of a treaty may go back and forth between the home assemblies and the delegate conference for a long time. It will be a cumbersome process. But it will be real democracy, direct democracy. Each neighborhood will keep all its decision-making power, rather than delegate it. If this proves unwieldy and too impractical, then it might be better to simply admit that we can't have pure direct democracy, and that we have to combine direct democracy with some form of delegated authority, in which case we ought to be examining social arrangements based on representative

democracy. But I'm not willing to concede this. It would mean giving up on the possibility of autonomous communities and genuine self-rule. It would mean relinquishing our decision-making power. I reject, as undemocratic, the transfer of this power to representatives. I believe it will be possible for neighborhoods to negotiate all the treaties they need, and to keep all the power in their own hands.

We need to remember that the endless legislative work of contemporary parliaments in bourgeois democracies is mostly concerned with conflicts generated by capitalism itself, either to manage the class

struggle between the rulers and everyone else, or to manage the conflicts within the ruling class. But in a free society, how much legislative work will there be? How many times will we have to negotiate a treaty to establish a telephone network or sewage system? Once the capitalist dynamic has been abolished, the struggle of all against all, and cooperation and mutual aid put in its place, there will be considerable, even extensive, stability and continuity in social arrangements. Passing legislation is not going to consume our entire lives.

10. *Individuality and Privacy.* A couple of persons objected to my sketch saying that it stifled individuality and privacy. One of these comments came from someone I knew to be a fanatic individualist, so I didn't pay it much heed. But the other one came from a radical friend who said that he would not like to live in the kind of society I had imagined. Too cloistered, too claustrophobic. He too said that it would destroy individual privacy and individuality in general.

I have been puzzled by these comments. One of the main radical objections to capitalism is that it prevents individuals from realizing their maximum potential. Wage-slaves are not free to, nor do they have the resources (especially time, but also material wealth) to really be all that they could be.

Capitalism in fact is not made up of individuals, but of an elite-mass. Those of us in the mass part of this duality are atomized, alienated, isolated, separated. We are mere units, commodities. We are not persons, unique and individual, in the true sense. Our strongest links are to those who are oppressing us, to the bosses, bureaucrats, and bankers. We're lucky if we manage to salvage a few family relations, and a circle of friends and acquaintances. Even if we have extensive personal contacts and memberships in a variety of voluntary organizations, we are still acting as atomized, alienated non-persons, not as true individuals. People who bemoan the 'end of the individual' have got it just backwards. Individuality has yet to be achieved. It is a goal of the revolution. It is possible only among free peoples. It is impossible among wage-slaves. Individuality, like freedom itself, is a social achievement, not a personal characteristic.

Capitalism gives only the illusion of individuality. If you have money, you can go anytime, live anywhere, do anything (as long as you don't try to live cooperatively, that is, or reject capitalism). The seemingly endless choices offered people by capitalists are possible only within the hierarchical and elitist framework capitalists have established. Choices outside that framework are savagely eliminated. So ultimately, the choices we have, no matter what our interests, are like the choice we have between Coke and Pepsi - it is no choice at all.

A true, rich individuality could only be achieved by a self-governing people, an autonomous people. Each person would be deeply embedded in a multitude of social relations, a rich matrix of ties to other persons, each of whom was an equal member of a cooperative, self-governing community. It is only through such ties that true individuality can emerge, not in this pitiful pretense of a life we have now.

As for privacy, we should be careful not to confuse privacy with isolation, forced isolation. Remember, one of the worst punishments dealt out in prisons is solitary confinement. I would happily trade a little privacy for a little conviviality. And I'm not worried about autonomous neighborhood, workplace, and household assemblies not allowing me to be me. I will for sure have more personal space there than I do here. Won't others in those

assemblies want to have room to grow and express themselves? Won't they want to free up time, space, and resources to permit the wild explosion of creativity made possible by our victory, by our emergence finally into the 'realm of freedom'?

11. Territories. If nation-states disappear from the earth, with their territorial boundaries, and if land is decommodified so that no piece of land is defined any longer as property with a title which is registered with the state to facilitate its being bought and sold, will there still be other territorial boundaries left? Will cities, towns, villages, and neighborhoods have territorial boundaries? Cities and towns in the United States are at present incorporated by the state, giving them distinct territorial boundaries. These boundaries establish the territory within which the authority of the city or town government holds jurisdiction, for things like collecting taxes, exercising police power, enforcing city ordinances, and providing services. Without larger states to incorporate them could cities and towns have territorial boundaries? Would neigh-

borhood assemblies draw territorial boundaries? I suppose they could, but wouldn't it be unwise to do so. Would it make any sense to say that a neighborhood owns and controls the land upon which it lives? I think not. The concept of ownership, certainly with regard to land (and the mineral deposits under it, the air over it, and the water and vegetation on it), will disappear along with the decommodification of land.

Many physical things do have boundaries of course. Buildings have walls which separate the inside from the outside, and fields have perimeters or edges. The boundaries of highway, telephone, water, sewage, or natural gas systems might be established by tracing out the roads, phone lines (or satellite links) or the pipes. Does the wind have boundaries, or sunshine. Well, some

areas get more of these than other areas, so questions might arise as to who gets to use the sunshine and wind where it is most abundant. This is now becoming clear with wind power. It is now being said that there is enough wind power in the American Midwest to supply electricity for the entire nation. If ownership can be claimed to the land over which this wind blows hardest, then even wind can be turned into a commodity, and it is.

I suppose even a river could be said to have boundaries, marked by its headwaters, tributaries, mouth, and delta. But since, in a commodified world, water runs through artificially defined territories imposed upon the land by social definition, there often arise struggles over water rights. Who has a right to use the water (and even how much can they use)? These questions have to be worked out socially and politically. Within the social arrangements proposed in this essay these questions will be worked out by negotiation among neighborhood assemblies. With the abolition of property rights, usage rights will take their place. Property of course is a social definition too, rights to which have been written into law by the ruling class, to facilitate capital accumulation. But usage rights could just as well be settled in our directly democratic neighborhood assemblies.

If a swimming pool or a gymnasium exists in a certain area, who will get to use it? If there are to be any restrictions on usage at all, then usage rights could be determined by membership in the Home Assembly nearest to them, or by the treaty that had been negotiated for the construction and maintenance of those facilities, and not by residence in a certain territory defined by boundaries drawn by home assemblies, since no such territorial boundaries have been drawn.

Similarly with the construction and maintenance of all systems that cut across large areas of land, like roads, railroads, telephones, sewage, water, natural gas, oil, cable, and so forth. These will be built and maintained by inter-neighborhood treaties worked out by the assemblies. To construct such systems usually requires the disruption of the land and those living upon it. Traditionally, under territorial governments (governments which claim a monopoly of force within a certain territory), the land needed for these systems has simply been seized, through their claimed so-called right of "eminent domain". Under anarchy, in the absence of such authoritarian

governments, all these questions will be up for discussion and debate, and mutually agreed upon settlements.

Underground minerals pose an especially hoary problem, because their extraction often involves severe damage to the surface land and displacement of anyone living there. If military might cannot be brought to bear to evict the traditional inhabitants of that land, then what? Hard negotiation. If a neighborhood is setting on top of a newly discovered rare mineral which practically the whole world (of autonomous, democratic communities) claims it direly needs, then what? Hard negotiation. Cooperatively, democratically fashioned agreements. Mutual Aid. Sharing.

This question applies to our system of Home Assemblies too. If each neighborhood has a Home Assembly, based on direct, face-to-face, democracy, over whom will the decisions of the Home Assembly have authority? My solution is to claim that a neighborhood is defined socially, not by territorial boundaries. That is, the decisions of the Home Assembly apply to the participants of the Home Assembly. The neighborhood is defined by membership in the Home Assembly, not by where a person lives. Naturally, broad and flexible definitions of membership will be needed, which will cover active members, as well as inactive members, guests, those with leaves of absence, temporary members, and so forth. For example, non-participants, like children, senile seniors, or the mentally impaired, who live in households comprised of persons in a given Home Assembly will be covered by the decisions of that Home Assembly.

By and large, members in a Home Assembly will tend to live in the same geographical area. But since there are no territorial boundaries, membership in Home Assemblies may be somewhat jumbled in certain areas. That is, households existing side by side may belong to different Home Assemblies. Also, certain Projects located in the geographical area where most members

of a Home Assembly live, might be controlled by inter-neighborhood treaties, rather than by the decisions of the Home Assembly it happens to be next to geographically. Which Projects and which Households fall under the jurisdiction of which Home Assembly is defined socially therefore, by participation in the Home Assembly, and not territorially. Some projects might be staffed by persons from different Home Assemblies (neighborhoods), but still be under the jurisdiction of a particular Home Assembly (the majority's Home Assembly probably). That is, even though a project may be somewhat mixed, it need not always therefore be governed by an inter-neighborhood treaty. Households, however, I would think, would not be mixed. Members of a particular household would tend to belong to a particular Home Assembly, and would thus fall under the jurisdiction of that Home Assembly. But even with Households there will surely be a need for considerable flexibility, as regards membership. This is why I argue that anarchism (true communism) can only be socially defined and has no territorial base.

11. Some Comments on the Literature

1. *Expanding the Autonomous Sphere - Andre Gorz.* (See for example, *Critique of Economic Reason*, Verso, London, 1989, 250 pages.) It is necessary to distinguish the strategy I have been describing from one proposed by Andre Gorz which sounds similar in many ways but isn't. Gorz has done a lot to refocus our attention on the liberation from work, and for this he must be thanked. But I cannot agree with the solution he advocates. Gorz divides the social world into heteronomous and autonomous spheres. He wants us to get more and more time free for the sphere of autonomous activity but he wants to keep, indefinitely, the heteronomous sphere, the sphere of economic calculation, "the sphere of economically rational commodity activities," in other words, the sphere of capitalism, which he now however calls industrialism. Thus Gorz has abandoned any desire to destroy capitalism completely, he just wants it to control less and less of our

lives. He wants us to start spending less and less time in waged work until it becomes a negligible part of our lives. With the rest of our time we can do whatever we want, but his description of this "autonomous activity" sounds suspiciously like the leisure activities in a commodity culture, or even worse, like subsistence labor. Unlike my proposal, which also calls for pulling time, energy, and wealth out of capitalism, he does not seek to eventually destroy capitalism, but rather leaves it intact together with the state, which will administer a "social wage", another feature of his plan. At a time when capitalists are busy dismantling the welfare state, it seems somewhat misguided to pin ones hopes on a state administered guaranteed annual income. Nor does Gorz face up to the fierce resistance capitalists will put up to anyone trying to escape wage-labor. Keeping millions of people unemployed or on dole (if they're lucky) is an essential feature of the wage-slave system, and always has been. Gorz's proposal presupposes therefore that radicals have gotten control of the state apparatus and have succeeded in instituting shorter hours, and a whole array of other proposals, including a social wage. It will never happen.

Gorz characterizes proposals like mine as "fundamentalist anti-modern or pre-modern." He thinks they are nostalgic, and seek to return to pre-capitalist times. But the desire for an association of democratic autonomous neighborhoods does not mean that these neighborhoods will be completely self-sufficient (or even mostly so), isolated and separate, like manors or villages in the middle ages. They will not be autonomous in the material sense; they will be autonomous in that no one will govern them. They will be self-governing. There will obviously be enormous trade networks, probably more than there are now, but this trade will serve human need not capitalist greed. And it will be intelligent. We won't be eating lettuce and tomatoes shipped in from across a continent. Things that can be grown or made locally will be. But people in the south will still want to eat wheat and potatoes and people in the north will want to eat avo-

cados and bananas. The association of autonomous neighborhoods we are talking about is not a regression; it is an advance. It represents a higher level of civilization than will ever be possible under capitalism. People seem to think that if it weren't for the profit motive humans would never do anything brilliant, never invent labor saving machines, never produce more than they immediately need. This is absurd. Capitalism is now nothing but a fetter on the creative genius of the human species. The so-called wonders of capitalism will look positively shabby beside the truly marvelous creations of free peoples.

2. *Libertarian Municipalism- Murray Bookchin.* It is necessary to distinguish the strategy I'm proposing from the libertarian municipalism of Murray Bookchin. (See Janet Biehl, *The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism*, for an exposition and references to the relevant Bookchin texts.) Bookchin's hostility to workplace organizing goes way back. Already in his 1968 essay, "The Forms of Freedom," published in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, he sketches his rejection of workers councils, in preference for popular assemblies. But at least in that essay he still recognized that workers councils are a "revolutionary means of appropriating the bourgeois economy". But over the years, this role for workers has disappeared. In the essays on libertarian municipalism, beginning in 1985 (although most of the themes were present much earlier), work, workers, and workplaces have all but disappeared, and his strident rejection of anarcho-syndicalism has intensified. A recent essay, published in *Left Green Perspectives* (No. 41, January, 2000), reasserts once again his belief that worker-managed workplaces and cooperatives cannot be part of a revolutionary strategy. The whole stress is on getting Popular Assemblies. But he wants to do this by winning elections in local municipalities!

I do not believe that we could turn the existing town governments into assemblies based on direct democracy even if we won the elections (and I do not even believe in elections). They are too intimately linked with state and federal bureaucracies. I think we have to bypass the existing municipal

governments and strike directly for neighborhood assemblies. But this by itself would never succeed. It has to be combined with the struggles for workplace assemblies and household assemblies. Mine is a three-pronged approach. You have to fight for direct democracy and self-rule everywhere (even in the existing multitude of voluntary organizations and non-profit corporations). The Home Assembly will be the supreme decision-making unit, but it cannot just be created out of the blue, separately and in isolation from everything else (the rest of social life).

In Bookchin's proposal it is not clear at all how these liberated municipalities are even going to get control of "the economy" (a category which I reject by the way), although that is an objective of his plan. He never any more mentions seizing the means of production at the point of production. Production is to be taken over by towns. But he never explains how. He never talks about cooperative labor as a foundation stone, along with direct democracy and face-to-face popular assemblies, of a free communal life. He never talks anymore about abolishing wage-slavery. He rarely talks about money, markets, or trade. Domestic democracy, and hence reproductive freedom, is not part of his scheme either.

One reason, among others, why he rejects workplace struggles is his long-standing identification of the proletariat with just industrial workers. It is surprising that such an erudite man could have made such an elementary error, but there it is. Naturally, if the working class is now just a tiny minority operating the rapidly disappearing industrial factories, rather than a class that encompasses practically the entire population of the planet, then there obviously can't be much of a role for it in making a revolution.

This body of work by Bookchin is very long on philosophy but short on concrete details. The actual proposal is usually summarized in one short paragraph, enmeshed in pages of theorizing. It's a heavy theoretical load to hang by such a thin thread. Here is a typical example from "The Meaning of Confederation":

"What, then, is confederalism? It is above all a network of administrative councils whose members or delegates are elected from popular face-to-face democratic assemblies, in the various villages, towns, and even neighborhoods of large cities. The members of these confederal councils are

strictly mandated, recallable, and responsible to the assemblies that choose them for the purpose of coordinating and admin-

istering the policies formulated by the assemblies themselves. Their function is thus a purely administrative and practical one, not a policy-making one like the function of representatives in republican systems of government."

That's it! Then back to the philosophizing. Back to expositions on the meaning of citizenship (a concept which is perhaps too closely tied to the nation-state and representative democracy to be any longer usable). And this is thought to represent direct democracy. My apologies, but I don't think so. On the other hand, a lot of his philosophizing is very useful in clarifying the meaning of decentralized social arrangements. He is certainly correct to focus on the local popular assembly as the cornerstone of a free, democratic, autonomous social life. Moreover, most of the limitations of a strategy based solely on worker-managed workplaces, which Bookchin calls attention to, are correct. In and of themselves, worker-owned workplaces can never overthrow capitalism. Thus, seizing the means of production can never lead by itself to the overthrow of capitalism either, or to the establishment of a new social world. We also have to seize decision-making power in general away from the ruling class and relocate it in our neighborhood assemblies, abolish labor as a commodity, and get out of markets based on commodities made for profit.

Bookchin has thrown out the baby with the bath. It is so sad that such a scholarly anarchist, with his voluminous writings, and widespread reputation and following, could have latched so doggedly upon this badly flawed strategy, one that could never succeed in a million years.

3. *An Imaginative Utopia - Bolo'Bolo.* This is a marvelously creative work (by P.M., *Bolo'Bolo*, Semiotext(e), 1985, 198 pages). It shows what can be thought up by an anarchist with a vivid imagination. Everyone who is interested in building a decentralized world of free communal peoples should read this book.

This said, we're forced to recognize that this scheme is riddled with contradictions. It is based, typically for an anarchist, on federation. Yet somehow this doesn't constitute hierarchy in p.m.'s view. In addition to the Bolo (neighborhood), p.m. projects these other units - towns, counties, regions, and the world. There are assemblies on each of these levels with certain powers and responsibilities. P.M.'s assumption that these assemblies will not get out of control is a little too facile for my taste. For instance, on page 149, p.m. writes: "A planetary assembly and its organisms can only do what the participating regions let them do." Well, in this scheme, lower level assemblies and bolos do control the resources, so maybe this will be true. But still, it worries me.

This book is perhaps best described as a detailed account, in advance, of customs and traditions that might evolve over a long period of time in an anarchist culture. But to present them like this, all at once, out of the blue, by fiat as it were, makes them seem almost as if they have been legislated. Bolos will do this. Bolos won't do that. Every traveler will be granted three days hospitality by any Bolo. No one can be expelled from a Bolo. Damages caused by fights (an accepted way of resolving personal conflicts) must be paid for by the contestants. Inside Bolos, there can't be any rules - yet the whole book is loaded with rule after rule, many of which would most probably have to be enforced somehow. But how? We're going to have state-of-the-art hospitals, advanced communication systems, well-kept roads, all maintained by compulsory labor if need be (that is, if there aren't enough volunteers) - each Bolo supplying a certain number of compulsory labor hours every year. Hold on a minute. Can't we do better than this? I certainly hope so.

There is also the flaw that, in p.m.'s view, our current misery is caused not by capitalism, but by the Planetary Work Machine. This is a novel way of saying it, I guess, and is refreshing for a while. But ultimately, it is unacceptable. It reduces our understanding and causes us to misidentify the enemy. It's foolish to jettison the knowledge gained from centuries of scholarly analysis of, and militant resistance to, the historical social order known as capitalism, for the sake of a few poetic phrases. Let's face it. We live under capitalism, and there is no getting around it.

4. *Realistic Utopias - Ralph Miliband, Daniel Singer.* Here are two brilliant, committed radicals, both highly educated and deeply knowledgeable, but who nevertheless suffer a failure of imagination when it comes to getting out of capitalism and getting free. They can't seem to shake loose from the nation-state. Their cases illustrate the profound tragedy we suffered when marxists drove anarchists out of the revolution, and succeeded in keeping them out for so very long, for over a century. Both men come from strong marxist backgrounds, although certainly neither of them could be considered an orthodox marxist; indeed, they each have done a lot to create a radical politics relevant to our own times. Even though marxists themselves believe that communism is a stateless society, that idea has receded so far into the background that it has no current relevance for them in their anti-capitalist struggles. As a consequence, the best they can picture is a 'realistic utopia' (a phrase used by Singer), by which they mean a utopia that can actually be achieved given present conditions. And for them that means working through the state. Which is what these two radicals propose.

Ralph Miliband, in *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* (Verso, London, 1994, 221 pages), presents an admirable summary of the case against capitalism (ch. 1), and an equally admirable summary of socialist aspirations in general (ch. 2) - the struggle for democracy, equality, and social control over the economy - ideas which most radicals can agree with. But then the problems begin, the most important of which is that Miliband still believes that these ideals can be achieved in a state. He thinks completely within the nation-state framework. He is well aware of course of the historical failure of social democracy in Europe. In fact he analyzes for us one of the most striking recent examples of such failure, the government of Mitterand in France. Mitterand came to power with widespread public support, respectably radical intentions, and a majority in the government. He got nowhere. His program of reforms was

blocked, by capitalists, by the ruling class. He was thwarted. So Miliband is aware of the intense resistance that capitalists can throw up against any serious attempt to change the system, and of the many weapons they are able to deploy. But he doesn't give up on the strategy. He still thinks it is possible for socialists to win control of a government through elections and then use the state to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism. He devotes one long chapter, "The Politics of Survival" (ch. 6), to discussing various things that a socialist government might do to ward off attacks by the ruling class, stay in power, and get to socialism. (Communism, in the original sense, as a stateless society, seems to have disappeared from his vision.)

Daniel Singer's recent book, *Whose Millennium? Theirs or Ours?* (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1999, 295 pages), follows similar themes. But for him it is not merely possible to use the state, but necessary (although he does keep the traditional, ultimate goal of dissolving the state, eventually). A state is needed to fend off the capitalists' "terrible attack, including flight of capital, trade restrictions, boycotts, and possibly, more violent means," which is sure to come. A state, controlled by radicals (communists, socialists) is essential to defeat this counter-revolution and engineer the transition from capitalism to socialism.

These are completely unrealistic strategies. They are not realistic utopias, but pipe dreams. It has long puzzled me how radicals can continue hanging on to the two stage strategy - first capture the state, and then establish communism by abolishing the state (and capitalism) - in the face of the overwhelming failure of this strategy, through nearly a century of experience now, first in Russia and Eastern Europe with Leninism, then in Western Europe with Social Democracy, and finally all over the colonial world in National Liberation Struggles. These long historical struggles have proved beyond any doubt that it is impossible to get to true communism, that is to a stateless society, that is, to anarchism, by getting control of a state. What does it take to discredit a strategy? Why don't we be really realistic, and admit that we have no choice but to try another approach?

5. *Utopistics - Immanuel Wallerstein.* In this new book, *Utopistics: Or, Historical Choices of the Twenty-first Century* (The New Press, New York,

1998, 93 pages), Wallerstein offers some modest proposals for a different social world. Wallerstein coined the word utopistics because he wants us to remember that he is not proposing utopia. "Utopistics is the serious assessment of historical alternatives, the exer-

cise of our judgment as to the substantive rationality of alternative possible historical systems. It is the sober, rational, and realistic evaluation of human social systems, the constraints on what they can be, and the zones open to human creativity. Not the face of the perfect (and inevitable) future, but the face of an alternative, credibly better, and historically possible (but far from certain) future." In this light, Wallerstein proposes several things: (1) "...the erection of nonprofit decentralized units as the underlying mode of producing within the system." These are non state controlled nonprofits, like nonprofit hospitals have traditionally been. (2) With regard to equal access to education, health care, and a guaranteed lifetime income, Wallerstein says that "It should not be difficult to place all three of these needs outside commodification, to be provided by nonprofit institutions and paid for collectively. We do this now for such things as water supply, and in some countries, libraries." (3) As for preserving the environment: "We must require all production organizations to internalize all costs, including all costs necessary to ensure that their productive activity neither pollutes nor uses up the resources of the biosphere." There are a couple of vaguer ideas, like "a truly democratic set of political institutions," and like keeping money out of politics so that there will not be "financial imbalances between competing points of view".

Are these proposals really historically possible? Wallerstein has done as much as anyone to analyze the two stage strategy and to show why it failed, and how it could not have succeeded. He is also aware that we face a terrible enemy. "The privileged are inevitably better informed and thereby socially

smarter than they have been. They are also far wealthier, and they have far stronger and more effective means of destruction and repression than they ever did before." So aren't they going to try to block these proposals from being adopted? And how will that be countered?

Elsewhere in this small book, he records his observation that a deep-seated rejection of state structures is now a world wide phenomenon. Some years ago, in an essay on strategy, he recommended placing unmeetable demands on the state and "overloading the system", and ceasing "to be terrified at the political breakdown of the system." Here in these utopistic proposals he doesn't actually say that a state would be needed for them, but he doesn't say it wouldn't be. But wouldn't the capitalist nation-state have to be abolished before you could internalize production costs or have a guaranteed lifetime income arranged through a nonprofit organization and paid for collectively, or have production done mostly in nonprofit enterprises? Isn't the very distinction between a profit and a non-profit corporation a legal artifact of capitalism itself?

And "a truly democratic set of political institutions" can mean almost anything. It describes my proposed social arrangements, as well as many others. Are we going to try to keep bourgeois democracy but cleanse it of capitalists? If it's true that the world's peoples are in the process of rejecting state structures, like he claims, then isn't the proposal for a world of autonomous communities actually more realistic, more historically possible, than his utopistic ones? Isn't anarchism implied in his call for "the erection of nonprofit decentralized units as the underlying mode of production"?

6. *A Cooperative Commonwealth - Frank Lindenfeld.* ("The Cooperative Commonwealth: An Alternative to Corporate Capitalism and State Socialism," *Humanity and Society*, Volume 21, Number 1, February 1997, pages 3-16). This is a short essay, but it nevertheless manages to capture, in refreshingly concrete terms, the main themes of the cooperative movement. Lindenfeld believes that the seeds of a cooperative commonwealth are already present in the existing worker and consumer co-ops, community development financial institutions, and barter networks. These need to be increased in number. Then they should "forge linkages ... to form second

order co-ops and federations." "As networks of cooperatives and democratically managed organizations proliferate, they may reach enough of a critical mass to transform the entire society into the cooperative commonwealth" But this will not happen without "a broadscale coalition of anti-corporate people's political organizations. Such a political thrust is needed to challenge the entrenched power of the transnational corporations and open them up to democratic control by their employees, as well as to modify the legal and tax framework to make it more friendly to cooperatives." In other words, we are going to legislate capitalism away! But at least Lindenfeld hates capitalism and wants

to get rid of it, and is somewhat aware that there is an enemy out there, with entrenched interests. But he grossly underestimates the power and resources of that enemy. This becomes clear a little later as he begins to enumerate the standard social democratic wish list: "a constitutional amendment to keep corporations from claiming rights guaranteed to material persons"; "an absolute ban on corporate contributions to political parties, political action committees, and candidates"; "the provision of government social welfare benefits such as regional or national health insurance and a guaranteed minimum income combined with a progressive tax system that transfers income from wealthy families and corporations to those less fortunate"; "tax incentives to promote employee ownership and control"; "the charter or continuation of corporations only if they provided for substantial employee ownership and control"; and so forth. Sure, why not? Let's just keep the congress, the courts, the federal and state bureaucracies, and elections, but get control of them through a new populist movement outside the two parties, as is happening already "in the Green Party, the Alliance, the New Party and the Labor party." Then we can change the laws to make a cooperative commonwealth possible, all the while keeping the capitalists at bay with other new laws. Wonderful plan. Except that it will never work!

7. Participatory Economics - Michael Albert. (*Looking Forward: Participatory Economics for the Twenty First Century*, with co-author Robin Hahnel, South End Press, Boston, 1991, 153 pages.) I suppose we shouldn't expect too much from someone with such bad taste as to label himself a *Pareconist* (from participatory economics). Albert doesn't disappoint us. The most glaring, godawful mistake in this scheme is that Albert keeps the capitalist categories of economy, production, worker, and consumer, and proceeds to outline a social order based on these bad notions. For all his talk about vision, not much of it is in evidence here. You would think, following Albert, that the main purpose of life is to produce and consume. This is a highly materialistic Vision he has conjured. It is also individualistic (in spite of councils galore). To his credit, he did try at least to imagine a way out of capitalism, out of commodity markets, out of profit-taking. It's just that he is so far off the mark.

He has each of us making out an annual list of all the goods we think we are going to need in the coming year. We then submit the list to a 'neighborhood consumers council', where the list gets meshed with everyone else's, and then added to similar lists drawn up by the ward council, the city council, the county council, and so forth, on up through state and region to the national consumer council. Similar lists are generated from the production side, from workers councils and regional and industry council federations. (He presumes federation throughout, no questions asked.) All the lists are then crunched through the computers of the Iteration Facilitation Board, where everything is ironed out, resulting in a planned economy, but without planners, according to Albert.

This has got to be the sorriest proposal in the history of utopian literature. Albert uses all the right words -- councils, self-management, participation -- good ideas taken from the radical movement. But in Albert they get morphed into a world-class monstrosity. It's as if he has embraced capitalist society in toto, but then tried to make it participatory. He keeps money, but it is not regular capitalist money, but "accounting money", and works differently. He keeps prices, but they are not regular capitalist prices, but "indicative prices",

and work differently. He keeps jobs, but they are now "balanced and complexed". He keeps labor time as a measure of value, but now it's okay because with balanced job complexes, "accounting money income thus equates to *real* socially average labor hours." He keeps wages, now called remuneration, and bases them on effort. He has an Employment Facilitation Board to help workers find jobs. He has a Household Facilitation Board to help workers find homes. There are also Production Facilitation Boards, Consumption Facilitation Boards, and Updating Facilitation Boards, as well as the above mentioned Iteration Facilitation Boards.

Albert perverted a good radical concept, participatory democracy, which had been refurbished and relaunched by the New Left, by fusing it with the capitalist concept of economics. It is only under capitalism that certain human activities come to be labeled economic and are forcibly separated out from the rest of life, through the practices of wage-slavery and commodity markets. Humans do many things: make

love, have babies, grow food, build shelters, make music, make clothes, make beautiful objects and useful things, play games, fashion tools, dream, draw, sleep, talk, write, argue, investigate. Is a symphony orchestra economic? What about a research center, a day-care center, a health clinic, a baseball team? Are these economic? Only in a world of commodified labor, where you have to have a job in order to have an income. Outside such a world, it is completely false to label some activities or projects as economic, to label some of them as production and others not, or to think of anything as consumption. Even worse is to try to build a whole social order on these distinctions and then to think of this as radical. On the contrary, the reason a revolution is needed in the first place is to get rid of this false separation of work from life, art, fun, dreaming. All in all, Albert's Parecon is nothing short of shameful.

Among the many things missing from Albert's Utopia (or perhaps I should

say Dystopia) is any feeling that this is a new civilization, a new social world, with free association, revived neighborhoods, restored communities, local control, deliberative peoples in assemblies in control of their social lives, joyful living, reintegration of life's many activities, liberation, sanity, cooperation, direct democracy, generosity, mutual aid, discussion, fun, dancing. Instead what we get is the same old tired civilization, except in an even more tedious version. It is still an Acquisitive Society. It is still a world of Products. We are still Actors in an Economy. We work; we get paid; we buy goods; we calculate, measure, bargain, produce, consume. If this is a new world, how come we are still being called Workers? There is a horrible graphic in *Looking Forward* (page 85). There is a big computer in the center of the picture. Scattered around it, at widely spaced intervals, are individual desks, each with a monitor linked by a cable to the central computer. Behind each monitor sits a person, busily typing in their consumption requests for the coming year. Who the hell wants to live in a society of producers and consumers?

8. *Globalization from Below* - Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, Brendan Smith. (South End Press, Boston, 2000, 164 pages.) Astonishingly, considering that Jeremy Brecher wrote *Strike!* as a young man, this book is not anti-capitalist. *Strike!* was thoroughly anti-capitalist, and was written in the tradition of the mass strike theory of Rosa Luxemburg and the Spartacists, and the workers councils theory of anarcho-syndicalists and council communists. In contrast, *Globalization from Below* does not contemplate the destruction of capitalism, let alone the abolition of the state, not even in the long run. In this book, Brecher and his co-authors have regressed to the mainstream sociological cant of social change, social conflict, and social movements and to the old liberal theory of countervailing power. Sadly, I believe this book nevertheless expresses the prevailing conceptual framework among so-called anti-globalization protesters of recent years.

The following paragraph expresses in a nutshell what Brecher, Costello, and Smith think is going on:

"In response to globalization from above, movements are emerging all over

the world in social locations that are marginal to the dominant power centers. These are linking up by means of networks that cut across national borders. They are beginning to develop a sense of solidarity, a common belief system, and a common program. They are utilizing these networks to impose new norms on corporations, governments, and international institutions." (page 26)

These movements are "composed of relatively autonomous groupings", typically, but not exclusively, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but also, on occasion, unions, churches, local social movements, intellectuals, and so forth. The authors adopt a phrase from an article in *The Economist* to describe this phenomenon. They call it an *NGO Swarm*.

The picture here then is one of masses of people organized into special purpose organizations and single issue campaigns, who network on a global scale, and thus supposedly acquire the power to impose changes on the existing ruling class institutions. "The movement's unifying goal," the authors claim, "is to bring about sufficient democratic control over states, markets, and corporations to permit people and the planet to survive and begin to shape a viable future." "The principal strategy of the movement for globalization from below has been to identify the violation of generally held norms, demand that power actors

conform to those norms, and threaten the bases of consent on which they depend if they fail to do so." To think that the State Department, General Electric, or the World Bank can be democratized is too foolish for words. What is not part of this picture is any thought of dismantling states, markets, or corporations and replacing them with authentically democratic social arrangements. (Thankfully, dismantling states, markets, and corporations *is*, however, in the picture for a significant minority of today's protesters against corporate globalization, although this doesn't seem to have been noticed by these authors.)

This is a startlingly reformist book, and, as with most reformism, is deeply naive. The authors do not fully perceive or understand the true nature of the enemy we face. Having failed to take into consideration the imperatives of a system based on profit-taking, they fail to realize that many of the reforms they seek to impose are incompatible with that system, or that the system, in its current phase, is incapable of accommodating these reforms, without self-destructing, and that consequently, contemporary capitalists will fight these reforms, fanatically, because it is a matter of survival for them.

These theorists of globalization from below however do not perceive this. They think these reforms can be imposed, through protests and the withdrawal of consent. This is where their use of mainstream sociological categories has gotten in the way. Although they use the term global capital occasionally, they are not really aware of capitalism as an historical system, but are rather merely talking abstractly about "established institutions" and "the power of the powerful". They claim that such power "is based on the active cooperation of some people and the consent and/or acquiescence of others." They believe that this power can be challenged by the withdrawal of consent. "Social movements can be understood as the collective withdrawal of consent to established institutions." This may be true on a very abstract level. But in the here and now, since they lack any concrete knowledge of what the actual imperatives of contemporary capitalists are (for their continued survival as capitalists), our theorists are led to make wildly romantic demands.

Long lists of these demands are presented in Chapter 6: Draft of a Global Program. They want to "end global debt slavery", "invest in sustainable development", "reestablish national full employment policies", "end the despoiling of natural resources for export", "make corporations locally accountable", "end the domination of politics by big money", "democratize international trade and financial institutions", "establish local control of local environments", "make speculators pay for their losses", "establish a 'hot money' tax", "encourage development, not austerity", "make international environmental agreements enforceable", "make global markets work for developing economies", "transform the production and consumption patterns of wrongly developed countries", "establish a Global Economy Truth

Commission", and on and on. All this is going to be accomplished by a global network of autonomous groupings and NGOs, working through existing governments, corporations, markets, and international financial institutions. I don't think so. An NGO Swarm cannot reconstitute society. Nor can it nix capitalism, or even fix capitalism, which is really all it seems to be aiming for. Globalization from Below, as described by Brecher, Costello, and Smith, is a very badly flawed conceptualization of the struggle for liberation.

9. *The New Populism - Ralph Nader.* (*The Ralph Nader Reader*, Seven Stories Press, New York, 2000, 441 pages.) Ralph Nader, a nationally known figure for the past several decades, has recently become the most well known advocate of the New Populism, especially since his presidential campaign in 2000. But there are other prominent voices: Jim Hightower, Molly Ivins, Kevin Danaher and Media Benjamin (of Global Exchange), Lori Wallach (of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch), Gore Vidal, and many others. There is now also a twice monthly newspaper, out of Iowa, *The Progressive Populist*, which publishes columns by many of these activists. There are of course many other publications and writers. But I will take Nader as representative.

There is hardly anything sweeter than listening to Ralph Nader bash corporations. It is so good to be hearing this again, after the long, stifling counter-revolution which settled like an ozone-alert smog over the country for a quarter of a century after 1968. (Jim Hightower's daily commentaries are a special delight too.) Nader has an exhaustive knowledge of American law, the Washington DC scene, and civil, labor, and consumer rights, as well as of the dirty tricks of American Corporations. He is also consumed with an

inspiring moral passion. But sooner or later, in almost every speech, he will move on from listing the many crimes of corporate America to praising small farmers, mom and pop corner stores, and the small businesses of main street America. And then you realize of course that Nader is not against capitalism

per se, but only against giant corporations and the control they have come to exercise over American life, including the Congress. That's why he keeps insisting that we have to build a new citizen's movement to recover our democracy, to get back to the democracy we used to have.

Nader sees no problem with the US constitution or with the American Republic as it was originally founded. He just thinks that this has been stolen from us, and he wants us to seize it back from its usurpers. And so he ran for president, and joined the effort to build a new progressive party, to recapture control of Congress, and thereafter get money out of politics, reign in corporations and their lobbyists, protect labor and consumer rights, and in general enact the progressive agenda. And that is why he has recently launched, in August 2001 in Portland, Oregon, a Democracy Rising grassroots citizen initiative which he hopes will be able to accomplish all these things.

But there are some fallacious beliefs at work here, among these new populists, including Nader. The most serious false idea is the belief that we can go back to small scale capitalism. We can never go back to small scale capitalism, and this populist desire to do so shows that populists don't understand how capitalism works. The ever increasing concentration of capital is an inherent feature of the system. The big fish eat the little fish. This dynamic stems from the endless, fierce competition among capitalists for markets and profits. It is not accidental, nor merely the result of bad judgement or corruption, that small scale capitalism gave way to monopoly capitalism. Capitalists had to move in that direction in order to survive, and for a system based on profit-taking to continue functioning. So this central plank of the New Populism is based on an illusion.

A second fallacious idea is that we used to have a democracy but that it has been stolen from us, mainly by giant corporations. There was never a real democracy in the United States. It has been a capitalist society from day one. There has always been a ruling class here, starting with rich merchants in the north and the plantation owners in the south, who were later joined in mid nineteenth century by industrialists. Their control has never been seriously threatened, except for a few years during the American Revolution, when the

lower classes surged into the arena briefly. The appearance of average people on the stage of history was quickly contained however, and ruling class control was solidified and stabilized in the US Constitution of 1787. So all this talk among populists about recovering our democracy is just another illusion.

A third fallacious idea is that we can fix things by capturing control of Congress. But as I have argued elsewhere in this work, we can never get to a real democracy, that is to direct democracy, by capturing the government. A bourgeois, representative democracy, like the one existing in the United States, will never be able to transform itself into local, autonomous, direct democracies. In fact, the US Constitution was written precisely to prevent such direct democracies from emerging. So if our objective is to establish a real democracy, it makes no sense to build a progressive party to try to capture control of Congress. This is a third illusion afflicting New Populists. A fourth fallacious idea is that we can restore the welfare state. The vicious, worldwide, sustained, capitalist attack on public welfare, on everything public in fact, is not just because capitalists are evil and greedy (they are that it's true), but because this offensive has been necessitated by the need to maintain profit levels in order to keep the system of capital accumulation intact and functioning. Capitalists had no choice if they wanted to continue living off profit. (They do have a choice of course: they could stop living off profit, ditch free enterprise, and help change the world.) The populist belief that we can somehow restore public welfare, within a capitalist system, is another grand illusion. The Welfare State phase of capitalism is long gone. The only way we can achieve general well-being at this point is to get rid of capitalism completely and build a truly democratic world, one not based on wage-slavery and commodification.

This is why, although I enjoy listening to Nader's rants as much as anyone, they are, for me, ultimately disappointing. I know that the reforms he wants are based on a serious misdiagnosis of what ails us.

Appendix: A Draft General Agreement for "An Association of Democratic, Autonomous Neighborhoods"

We, as free peoples, have arranged ourselves socially into democratic, autonomous neighborhoods. We are self-governing, through our Home Assemblies. We recognize no authority over us other than our own self-legislation and treaties that we have negotiated with other neighborhoods and voluntarily bound ourselves to. We have negotiated many such treaties covering trade and particular projects like regional hospitals, telephone networks, research facilities, community parks, and large factories, which by their very nature are trans-neighborhood undertakings. In this more general treaty, this General Agreement, we seek to establish a larger *Association of Democratic, Autonomous Neighborhoods* to stabilize a world composed of free communal peoples and to promote the democratic, autonomous way of life. Neighborhoods which have not founded assemblies for self-governance obviously cannot join the association since only such assemblies can sign the pact.

As signers of this General Agreement, we agree to abide by the following principles and practices:

1. *Voluntary Agreement.* Signing the General Agreement, by our Home Assembly, is entirely voluntary, but once agreed to, binds us to abide by the principles and practices indicated.

2. *The Right to Withdraw.* As self-governing neighborhoods, we reserve the right to withdraw from this association, and thus void our promise to abide by its principles and practices, if we come to the conclusion that it no longer serves our interests. This also means of course that we forfeit any advantages that our membership in the association might have brought us.

3. *Non-Aggression Pact.* We agree never to organize a military force to

invade other neighborhoods.

4. *Non-Territorial Basis for Neighborhoods.* We agree that land is not a commodity that can be bought or sold, and therefore cannot be owned either. That is, we reject the concept of ownership as applied to land (and other resources; see next point). This means that our neighborhoods actually have no territorial boundaries. They are socially defined, through membership in Home Assemblies.

5. *Resources Shared.* Similarly we reject the idea that natural resources can be owned, bought, or sold. They can only be shared. Thus a neighborhood that is sitting on top of a rare mineral, for example, which is needed by many other communities, cannot be said to own that mineral, or sell it to its own advantage. It can only be shared, through equitable and reciprocal treaties regarding its development and use.

6. *Cooperative Labor.* Human labor is not a commodity and cannot be bought or sold. We agree therefore that all neighborhood projects and trans-neighborhood projects will be cooperatively and democratically conducted.

7. *Treaties.* We agree that final decision-making power rests with Home Assemblies. Therefore all trans-neighborhood needs and projects must be met by negotiating treaties with other neighborhoods and not by setting up regional congresses staffed by representatives (or what amounts to the same thing, by sending delegates to regional councils), with the power to make laws that can be imposed on neighborhoods. That is, there is no power higher than a Home Assembly.

8. *Treaty Negotiating Facilities.* To the extent that expensive communication networks and regional assembly halls become necessary for efficient treaty negotiation, we agree to pay our fair share of the cost of building and maintaining such facilities.

9. *Direct Democracy.* We agree that our assemblies, in the neighborhood, in

our projects, in our households, and in all special interest associations, shall be governed by direct democracy, that is by the face-to-face discussion and voting by all members, without representatives. If, rarely, a project is thought to be necessarily directed by one person or a few, this change, for this particular project and for a prescribed time period, can only be made by the Home Assembly itself.

10. Social Arrangements within the Neighborhood. The commitment to direct democracy and cooperative labor implies at a minimum, besides the establishment of a neighborhood assembly for self-governance, democratically and cooperatively

conducted projects, and democratically and cooperatively conducted households. Naturally, there will be considerable variation, from culture to culture, in the actual shape and workings of such social entities. But it's hard to see how a neighborhood could eliminate them altogether and still remain free. In any case, this is the standard to which this Association is committed.

11. Membership in the Neighborhood. We agree, as neighborhood assemblies, to try to strike a balance between the right of others to select their place of residence (to choose where they will live), and our own right to choose whom we will associate with. We agree that, as a general rule, our neighborhoods will be as completely open as possible, while still reserving the right to exclude and expel persons from our assemblies. Naturally, with the disappearance of the buying and selling of land and residential properties, and of universal money, and of the world market, no one could just move into our neighborhoods without first gaining admission to a household, and hence to project- and home-assemblies. They would have no way to feed, clothe, or shelter themselves. We agree to establish traditions of hospitality and admission which are civilized, fair, and equitable.

12. *Voting Procedures within Our Assemblies.* We agree to invent voting procedures for our assemblies that enhance direct democracy and self-rule in our neighborhood. There is no hard and fast rule, no easy resolution of the majority rule versus consensus quandary, nor any magic formula for majority/minority relations. We will aim for a good mix of consensus and majority rule, and other procedures, all the while realizing that a minority cannot be forced, ultimately, to abide by a majority decision that it strongly opposes. Neighborhood assemblies are therefore obliged in practice to always strive to win a minority's willingness to go along with a decision, at the very minimum. Otherwise there can be no cooperatively undertaken projects. But minorities must also realize that it is a rare occasion when they can simply pack up and leave (or force the majority to leave). The number of instances where we can each go our own way are few in comparison to those in which we must reach collective decisions in order to survive (or to do most anything). So minorities too are under pressure to compromise and reach mutually acceptable decisions. No one ever said that democracy was easy, only that it is the only way we can be autonomous, free social beings, in control of our own destinies, to the extent that this is possible at all in a universe without certainties.

13. *The Products of Our Labor.* We agree that the products of our cooperative labor are not commodities and cannot be owned, bought, or sold, but will be equitably shared among all members of the neighborhood. Every member has a right to a fair share of this wealth, in return for a fair share of the labor needed to produce it, as defined by the Home Assembly. We recognize the problem of freeloaders and will deal with it through a variety of social constraints, including ostracism if need be, or as a last resort, expulsion. In instances where we produce more than we need we will negotiate trade agreements with other neighborhoods for the fair and equitable exchange of these products.

14. *Relations with Neighborhoods that Haven't Joined this Association.* Our Association is incompatible with a world organized into nation-states.

We seek therefore to dismantle and destroy nation-states. The more neighborhoods there are that have joined our Association, the more likely we are to win this struggle. But obviously, this will not happen all at once. There may even be neighborhoods that never join. Naturally, we seek to spread our way of life and protect it from attack. Hierarchy and anarchy are natural enemies. But unlike hierarchy, there is room within anarchy for great diversity. Tribal peoples, for example, may prefer to keep their customary governing arrangements, based mostly on kinship and other traditional forms of authority, rather than change over to deliberative assemblies based on direct democracy. There is no reason these peoples couldn't exist side by side with anarchic communities. Neighborhoods that have not converted over to cooperative labor and self-governance, but which are still embedded in the (hopefully rapidly disappearing) capitalist labor market and commodity culture, also may not want to join. As the world of free communal peoples gains in strength, however, and the world of atomized, commodified individuals weakens, these neighborhoods will be in something of a bind. It will be harder and harder for them to hang on to their profit-oriented culture and practices in a world of increasingly decentralized, democratic, and cooperative anarchic communities. Nevertheless,

unlike capitalism, anarchy (face-to-face democracy) is not something that can be imposed. But it is something that can be defended from those who seek to destroy it.

A Footnote on Terminology

What follows is a discussion of the terminology I have chosen to use in outlining a notion of how we might want to live. That is, I faced a naming

problem. What are we to call our social creations? It has become something of a dilemma as to what to call the overall social order as well as the specific social bodies within it. I have made the following choices:

(a) *Household* is a pretty good term, although in contemporary American usage it refers to a much smaller unit, namely the nuclear family. But historically, households have been larger. My usage, for a residential complex housing 100-200 people, is a reversion to and an expansion of the historical meaning.

(b) *Home Assembly* is new, but I like it. Other possibilities were town meeting, community assembly, general assembly, core assembly, base assembly, neighborhood assembly, parliament, plenum, congregation, conference, senate, convention - none of which seem to fit the bill, except perhaps neighborhood assembly. One problem with the term is that 'home' tends to be associated with household rather than neighborhood. But perhaps this confusion will decline as we get used to it. I like the term Home Assembly because it gives us an identity linked to the Assembly (and Meeting Hall) where we participate in community decisions to govern our social lives. Everyone will be a member of an assembly somewhere. Where we participate in decision making is where our home is. Thus the neighborhood assembly is elevated over kinship or work relations (reproduction or production relations). The primacy of decision-making relations will characterize the new civilization and set it apart from all previous forms of social organization.

(c) *Peer Circle* is strange, but I don't like any of the alternatives I've come across. The traditional term among radicals is councils, but this term has no general usage elsewhere in our culture and actually has other connotations in popular language. The other possibilities are caucus, bee, peer group, meeting (as in a Friends meeting), or peer meeting.

(d) *Project* is a good name for the activities we undertake together to accomplish something. We certainly can't call them businesses, enterprises,

organizations, or institutions. I'm quite happy with the term Project.

(e) In the original draft of this essay, I had inadvertently used the term community to refer to the 2000 people constituting a Home Assembly. Community is a very good term, but it obviously cannot be restricted to mean just one 2000 member body. So I had to switch to the term neighborhood, which sounds limited but is more accurate. At least it makes clear that our basic social unit is a small neighborhood face-to-face decision-making assembly. All larger associations are based on this core social entity.

(f) As for what to call the overall social order, none of the usual terms any longer has any clear meaning - democracy, socialism, anarchism, communism. Until a new name emerges I've simply been describing it as "An Association of Democratic Autonomous Neighborhoods." I should add though that I mean direct democracy, not representative democracy, and by direct democracy I do not mean tele-polling or referendums, but face-to-face assemblies. I should also add that the association is based on treaty negotiation among equals, not federation (assuming federated structures to be hierarchical). I must add further that autonomous merely means self-governing and not complete self-sufficiency in the material sense (there will still be trade). In other words, the phrase is meaningless without further definition. Better to focus then on the concrete social relations themselves, and get them shaped the way we want them, than to waste time defining abstract concepts.

(g) There is also the problem of what to call the strategy itself. I'm sorry to say that I have not been able to invent a good name for it.

While we're on the question of terminology, I must warn the reader not to be turned off too quickly by the words I use. I choose words with care. It is not by accident or through carelessness that I say "ruling

class", for example. I do it deliberately. I believe this is the clearest way to talk about our situation. If you do not believe there is a ruling class perhaps you have been watching too much television or have taken too many sociology courses. Similarly with other words I use - murderers, thieves, invasion, oppression, exploitation, working class, wage-slavery, empire, lackeys, capitalists. These are not the concepts of a fanatic, although they might sound that way to some who are steeped in the language of the owners of the world. They are powerful and accurate terms which illuminate our situation. It has taken years to rid myself of the mystifying language of the exploiting class.

page 61

Supplementary Essays

page 62

Breaking Out of The Cage And Destroying Our Jailers

by Jared James, June 1999

"Some of the rural workers in Brazil have an interesting slogan. They say their immediate task is 'expanding the floor of the cage.' They understand that they're trapped inside a cage, but realize that protecting it when it's

under attack from even worse predators on the outside, and extending the limits of what the cage will allow, are both essential preliminaries to dismantling it. If they attack the cage directly when they're so vulnerable, they'll get murdered." (from Noam Chomsky, *The Common Good* (Interviews with David Barsamian), Odonian Press, 1998, p.85)

There is a terrible assumption buried here, namely that the cage protects the workers from murder. This is glaringly false. Workers are being murdered by the millions all over the world, *inside the cage*. The anecdote throws up a false image in other ways as well. The predators are not outside the cage, they, and their practices, *are* the cage. The cage itself is lethal. And when we realize that the cage is as large as the world, and that there is no longer any outside to escape to, then we can see that the only way to keep ourselves from being murdered, or otherwise brutalized and oppressed, is to destroy the cage itself. The cage is not made with metal bars, however, but with people. It consists of real live people who use various means to constrain others. Destroying the cage does not necessarily mean killing these people, but only destroying their ability to function as jailors. Picture a community of people, and intermingling among them are businessmen who say they own everything but that they will offer money to anyone who wants to work for them, armed guards who beat or shoot anyone who actively rejects this arrangement, schoolmasters who instill debilitating ideas, usurers who induce workers to borrow money, priests who preach a fatalistic acceptance of things as they are, entertainers who seduce workers to buy fun, counselors who try to adjust workers to their suffering, and politicians who persuade workers to depend on them to fix things. This is the cage. It should not be protected, but attacked, at every conceivable point and at every conceivable opportunity. In the same interview cited above Chomsky also said:

"When you eliminate the one institutional structure in which people can participate to some extent -- namely the government -- you're simply handing over power to unaccountable private tyrannies that are much worse. So you have to make use of the state, all the time recognizing that you ultimately want to eliminate it." (from Noam Chomsky, *The Common Good*,

Odonian Press, 1998, p. 85)

Marx also thought that workers should use the government to improve their lives, to win bans on child labor, to get shorter work weeks, and so forth. He argued that proletarians would be foolish not to organize themselves into a political party to capture the state and then use it to overthrow the bourgeoisie. Bakunin and other anarchists disagreed. They wanted to bypass the government and strike directly for what they wanted. This is the dispute that split the First International. The Marxists won, and the anti-capitalist struggle veered off into social democracy and then Leninism: the two main versions of the two-stage strategy -- first capture the state, and then

page 63

destroy capitalism and establish communism. It is now 130 years later and we should be able to evaluate the strategy. Did it work?

Take the OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) regulations which Chomsky discusses (in the interview published in the last issue of *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review*, to which this article is a response). He admits right off that the government didn't want to set up OSHA but was forced to [in this case by the New Left and the labor and civil rights movements in the sixties], and that "It doesn't enforce them [OSHA regulations] very much, but sometimes it's forced to enforce them." He argues that activists and workers have no moral choice but to use these regulations to save lives. But this sort of misses the point. Think of all the lives that were *lost* because workers have depended on the government to protect them. Think of all the strikes, to force the government to enforce the laws, that did *not* happen. Think of all the time and energy thousands of workers and militants had to spend to get the laws in the first place, and then of all the time and energy it takes to get the government to enforce the laws, to stop them from packing OSHA with pro-business administrators who have no intention of enforcing the laws, and to keep politicians from getting elected who want to abolish OSHA outright.

And then think of what might have been accomplished if a different strategy altogether had been followed, especially if we look at this historically. In the nearly 130 years since the split in the First International in 1872, all we have to show for our struggles, the struggles of millions of radicals over many generations (to stick to the one case of occupational safety, but the same could be said of dozens of other issues, like the need for an unpolluted environment, safe food, help for endangered species, healthy children, civil rights, shorter work weeks) are a few weak government regulations, in a few rich countries, about safety in the workplace, which are almost never enforced and are usually erased from the books as soon as pressure eases up a bit. We are nowhere close to real workers control over the workplace, nowhere close to abolishing wage-slavery altogether, nowhere close to destroying capitalism, nowhere close to dismantling the state, nowhere close to establishing communism (anarchism, freedom, democracy).

So it is not nearly enough to ask, as Chomsky does, "Shall we refuse to use the mechanisms that are available to save people's lives?" Nor is it enough to realize that the mechanisms are available in the first place because workers forced the government to set them up. We have to realize that they are there also because radicals were committed to the particular strategy of trying to use the state to achieve radical aims. The 'mechanisms' existing at present resulted from that strategy. They didn't just happen, by themselves.

Has this strategy really worked? As far as I am concerned, the answer has to be a resounding NO! Both versions of the statist strategy failed miserably to overthrow capitalism, Leninism spectacularly so. Even the minimal welfare and protections that have been gained by means of the statist strategy, in the core capitalist countries (and precious few protections or gains were *ever* achieved in the rest of the world), were only possible because of the transfer of great quantities of wealth from the rest of the world to the rich countries. Without this subsidy, it is doubtful that European and American workers could ever have imposed even weak occupational safety laws on their governments. Considered worldwide therefore, even the successes of the so-called welfare state (social democracy) are an illusion. Moreover, opposition movements in

core countries have had virtually no effect on the foreign policies of the those countries. For the most part they have not even tried, focusing instead on getting welfare laws passed within their own nations, ignoring capitalism's inter-nation initiatives. These laws are now (for the past twenty years) being stripped off the books, under conditions of greater concentration of capital, of increased global competition among bigger corporations, increased global organization of the ruling class, weakened labor movements, and weakened national governments (that is, under the global capitalist offensive known as 'neoliberalism').

If instead of trying to use the state for the past 130 years (or 150 if we date the strategy from the failed revolutions of 1848, which is probably more accurate), workers, anti-capitalists, and radicals had been striking directly for control over the workplace through workplace assemblies, striking directly to replace the decision-making apparatuses of the bourgeois state with community control through neighborhood assemblies, striking directly to overcome wage-slavery by organizing cooperative labor (which is not bought or sold), striking directly to destroy the isolation of individuals through household assemblies (expanded households of 100-200 people), and striking directly to curtail world trade by defending local markets, then I think that by now we could have destroyed capitalism and created a free society. Instead, we are watching the world, and humanity along with it, being destroyed before our very eyes.

Thus the wrong turn taken by radicals in the middle of the nineteenth century holds great significance for me. I will not attempt to account for or explain the wrong turn, but merely to note it. It does mean though, at least to me, that *now*, for radicals coming up to the year 2000, questions of strategy are of utmost importance and should be at the center of our discussions, and should be studied seriously.

Apparently though, Chomsky does not think that there is anything much to

study with regard to strategy. He has sometimes replied, when asked about strategy, with a three word formula: educate, organize, act. He assumes, wrongly, that this is unproblematic, that there is general agreement as to the substance of these three magic words. We might note that the slogan could apply equally as well to the Klu Klux Klan, corporate executives, born-again Christians, right-wing Muslims, or Liberals, all of whom educate, organize, and act. Obviously, what counts is the *program*, which is what we need to be debating (and the program of course cannot be separated from the means to achieve it). Chomsky's audiences however usually consist of an amalgam of "progressives" -- anarchists, social democrats, left liberals, and probably a few leninists and trotskyists -- who do share, broadly speaking, a certain program, but disagree about how to achieve it. Just to mention two of the historical debates that have split these groups: (1) the debate between social democrats and leninists over whether to capture the state through elections or through armed struggle (in fact, it is the disagreement about strategy which separates these tendencies in the first place), and (2) the debate among anarchists over whether to focus on workplace or community organizing (the anarcho-syndicalists vs. the anarcho-communists). There are many more such issues.

Chomsky sort of bypasses all these disagreements. He takes, shall we say, a pluralist stance toward strategy. "You've got to do all these things at once," he says. "They're not really alternatives." He does not think they are mutually exclusive. Thus we don't really have to study

very seriously whether one strategy is better than another, or whether one strategy fails whereas another succeeds. Let's just do everything at once. So let's endorse the 'living wage campaigns' and the wobblies too.

The trouble with this is that most of the energy of radicals at present is being spent on projects that don't threaten capitalism in the least, and the living wage campaign is a perfect example. The ruling class works round the clock,

against projects that do threaten it, to water them down and co-op them (or else destroy them in some other way, financially or physically, for example). The capitalist ruling class has vast resources available for co-opting its enemies, and it is very good at doing so. What usually happens therefore is that harmless projects survive and spread and effective projects (i.e., ones that are dangerous to capitalists) are crushed and disappear. For anti-capitalists to ease up on the critique of reformism, that is, on the criticism of projects and campaigns that shore up rather than undermine the established order, would be suicidal. Even if we were millions stronger than we are, with vastly more abundant resources, we should not follow Chomsky's advice "to do all these things at once" because some things do not work, and do not lead to victory. This is why we need ongoing, serious debates in the anti-capitalist movement about where best to put our energies, especially since our vision of the world we want is intimately linked to strategies that we need to invent to win it. The answer will not be the same for everyone of course, but neither will it be that we will "do all these things at once".

To me the most distressing, indeed stunning, passage in this interview is Chomsky's remarks on wage-slavery. After commenting that all anarchists would like to see wage-slavery overcome, Chomsky says: "But do we really know how to run a society without wage slavery? Maybe we'll discover that it's impossible. I don't think so. But anyone who's not open to that possibility isn't being very serious. We don't know enough about how to run societies. Can a complex social structure -- anything that human beings are going to exist with today, with billions of them around, so it's rather complicated -- can it exist and function on the principles that anarchists are committed to?" This is simply too close for comfort to remarks a mainstream sociologist might have made. I thought for a second there he was even going to use that abominable mainstream phrase "complex industrial society", but he used instead a slightly modified version. Whoever says that anarchism absolutely will work, by the way? And are "we", or is anyone, going to "run" a free society, an anarchist society?

Worst of all, however, his remark seems to indicate a rather ambivalent attitude toward the goal, neglects a vast literature devoted to precisely these questions, and ignores the efforts of anarchist social experimentors who have

struggled courageously to work these problems out, over many decades, even centuries -- thinking, struggles, and experiments that are still going on today, in many places throughout the world. We certainly do know enough, right now, to live free, if it weren't for our oppressors. If he's not convinced that wage-slavery can be overcome (which is synonymous with destroying capitalism), or that anarchy is a feasible arrangement of social life, then what is he fighting for?

We should be thankful to have on our side a world class intellectual who bashes the ruling class every chance he gets, shredding its credibility piece by piece. We are fortunate to have in our corner an indefatigable genius who analyzes every move the ruling class makes, deciphers its every machination, exposes its every lie, reads between every line it publishes, and keeps us informed about what our oppressors are up to. This is what he likes to do and what he does well. He has done this on a worldwide scale in studying US foreign policy, for several decades now, but also with regard to the media, and more recently with regard to domestic policies as well. This is already a tremendous contribution to the revolutionary struggle.

On the other hand, this does not mean we have to agree with everything he says, obviously. One man cannot do everything. It is wrong of us to turn to him for opinions on matters that he has not really studied, because his priorities have been elsewhere, matters relating to anarchist theory, revolutionary strategy, visions of a free life, and numerous other social questions. And if he does make ill-considered remarks about some of these topics, almost always, we might remind ourselves, in off-the-cuff interviews, and not in his more carefully written formal essays, then obviously we have to take issue with him in a serious way, especially if he is broadcasting such ideas all over the world in numerous interviews, speeches, and cheap Odonian pocketbooks.

Fortunately, things are looking up for anarchism. There are many indications that we are in the midst of a worldwide rejection of the statist strategy among opposition movements. Since there is no possibility of organizing globally or even nationally to defeat global corporations and global institutions like the World Trade Organization, militants are inventing ways to defeat them locally, and are thus opening up, for the first time in ages, the possibility of creating anarchy on a world scale.

The Weakness of a Politics of Protest

Jared James, June, 2000

"Unfortunately, with the growing popularity of these struggles [against the WTO, IMF, and WB] amongst broad sections of the left, we can already begin to see this developing movement shifting further in the direction of polite reform rather than open resistance. Even among many anarchists, we can see an abandonment of explicitly radical opposition in favor of embracing a predominantly reformist agenda put forward by the left-liberals and NGO-types. With this in mind, we feel that revolutionary anarchists have a major role to play within this social movement... For us, these institutions are beyond reform, since they play key roles within a global capitalist system that must be abolished outright. Not only must we reject and resist this system at every possible level, we must also put forward a clear anarchist alternative that has the ability to capture the imagination of the oppressed on a large-scale and point towards the direction of true social liberation."

Statement from a contemporary militant anarchist.

This 'major role' that anarchists are expected to play in the movement, to 'radicalize' it, will be a disappointing one, because it will not succeed. In a Politics of Protest, with its invariable split between reformists and revolutionaries, the reformists almost always win, because the ruling class sides with them, in order to take the steam out of the movement and

neutralize it, knowing that they can always renege on the reforms later after all the commotion has died down. This defeat is rooted in the Politics of Protest itself, and does not simply indicate that revolutionaries didn't try hard enough to 'radicalize' the movement. As long as we are merely fighting against what we *don't* want, instead of fighting for what we *do* want, we will always lose.

Fighting for what we want involves a lot more than putting forward "a clear anarchist alternative", especially if such a 'putting forward' is limited to verbal descriptions. The only way that we could really put forward an anarchist alternative would be to try to bring it into being in the real social world, to try to actually create, the new social arrangements which we think should replace those of capitalism. And to do this we would have to shift the focus of our attention, from protesting what they are doing to us to defending what we are doing to them. We would have to go on the offensive. We would have to pick new battlefields, new strategic sites upon which to wage our struggle. I believe that there are three such strategic sites -- neighborhood assemblies, workplace assemblies, and household assemblies. If we were trying to set up these new social arrangements, and then fighting to defend our creations, we would be building the world we want while simultaneously undermining and defeating capitalists.

What does it really mean to "reject and resist this system at every possible level"? Doesn't real rejection mean putting something else in its place? This is the real rejection -- to gut and abandon what we don't want by instead putting our energies into creating what we do want. Is bulldozing a Macdonald's enough? Does stopping a meeting or two of the world trade ministers do the trick? Do spring and fall demonstrations in the nation's capital accomplish much? Will disrupting the democratic and republican conventions change anything?

A Politics of Protest is a doomed strategy. It does not lead anywhere. It will exhaust itself in arguments over non-violence, civil disobedience, reform (and in getting the protesters out of jail).

And all this while, the ruling class will be using the time thus gained to update, retool, regroup, devise new counter tactics, and refurbish its ideology. Plus it now has the windfall of having pictures of all the protesters, the names and addresses of all the organizations that planned the protest, and copies of all the speeches delivered to be analyzed and studied with an eye to rebutting and discrediting them. Even if there are 30,000 or 100,000 such protesters, and 1000 or 10,000 such organizations, they can easily be identified, investigated, targeted, infiltrated, disrupted, studied, neutralized, intimidated, co-opted, or destroyed, by the vast bureaucracy, military, and secret police of the world's ruling classes.

The left's usual response to this point is to say that therefore we have to have 'massive' protests, and then they wouldn't be able to stop us. Wrong! They could, and have, like with the destruction of Vietnam, the mass murder of several hundred thousand people in Indonesia in 1965, the thoroughgoing destruction of the New Left, the death squads in Central America in the eighties, the extermination of a quarter of the population of East Timor, the invasions of Grenada and Panama, the seventy-eight days of bombings in Yugoslavia in 1999, the ongoing sanctions and bombings in Iraq, the assassinations and massacres taking place right now in Colombia. But what if we changed direction entirely, and stopped spending all our time trying to stop the crimes of capitalists, and started fighting instead for what we really want? What if the 15,000 towns in the United States with 2,500 inhabitants or less started switching to direct democracy, through neighborhood assemblies, scuttling their hierarchical mayoral governments, something they could easily do if they wanted to? What if peasant villages started converting to cooperative labor? What if workers in stores, offices, and factories forgot about unions and started setting up workplace assemblies to get control over their lives there? What if neighbors on a block started combining resources to create households of 100 to 200 persons? This could become a large movement, but not a mass movement, that is, not one made up of isolated individuals (even if they are in temporary affinity groups) coalescing for a few hours in the streets of the capitals of the world. Rather, it

would be a movement made up of communities of people, and thus would be a cooperative movement, at its very roots. A new social order cannot be built in the streets, but only in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and households. Capitalism cannot be defeated in the streets, but only in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and households.

The trouble is, "we" do not know what "we" want. That is, there is no objective, given, fixed definition of what 'radical' means. There is no consensus of opinion even about what it means. There are as many versions (vague ones) of what we want as there are tendencies in the movement. Every group participating in a demonstration probably hopes to further its own version of 'radical', and thus 'radicalize' the movement. The question always is: Radicalized to what? The Living Wage campaign? The Fair Trade campaign? The Leninist vanguard party? The overthrow of capitalism? Social Democracy? Anarchism? Market socialism? Or what?

Moreover, the deeply entrenched ban on utopian thinking, on figuring out concretely what we want to replace capitalism with, continues in effect, hardly being challenged at all from any quarter. Thus instead of powerfully concentrating our mental and physical energies on solving this problem, to eliminate this obstacle to defeating capitalism, we are "taking to the streets" once again, merely protesting, merely engaging in what is basically 'mindless activism'. It's true that the level of analysis this time is considerably higher than in the sixties, and that the targets -- sweatshops, the wto/wb/imf, genetically modified organisms, and so forth -- are better (as opposed to the civil rights, anti-war, and identity movements of the sixties), and lead almost immediately to the questioning of property and trade and hence to a critique of capitalism. But it

is still just protesting, essentially just petitioning the ruling class to change its policies. Even though the protesters say that "we're going there to arrest those criminals" everyone knows that it's just a joke, and that they can't. Even

though they tell the cops that they're "not welcome in our streets", it's quite clear that in the end the streets belong to the cops. When they shout that "this is what democracy sounds like" I suppose they mean that in a democracy people can assemble where they will and express their opinions, and also perhaps that democracy is noisy and chaotic. But shouting in the streets by powerless people is not democracy; deliberating in assemblies and having the power to make real decisions is democracy.

We are running out of time. As capitalism continues to disintegrate over the next half century, we will lose the opportunity to replace it with a new egalitarian, democratic social order, unless we can figure out what we want, in down-to-earth concrete terms, and get down to setting it up. We have to know how we want to arrange things and how our new social order will work. In the absence of such a concrete vision, and a strategy to achieve it, the capitalist ruling classes will use the next half century to invent a new social order that enables them to stay in power and stay rich, even if not as capitalists. After all, the ruling classes of feudalism, by transforming themselves into capitalists, did just that.

Imagining anarchism, in very concrete terms, is thus not something secondary, something that can be put off until capitalism is defeated, something that will evolve automatically out of protesting and street activism, something that no one can really know much about now. Rather it is something that is absolutely central to defeating capitalism in the first place, and something that should be given top priority by all oppositionists. It cannot be put off until later. It must be dealt with right now, or else we will lose our chance for liberation.

It's easy to agree on what to protest against. The list of things that need to be stopped under capitalism is long, so long in fact that we don't even need to agree; there is plenty to choose from, so just pick something that suits you. Perhaps this is why so many activists get involved in protesting. It's not so easy though to figure out what we want to replace capitalism with, to work out convincing arguments about how it will plausibly work, and to set about creating such a social world, especially since so little energy is being devoted to the task. The general principles of a free society are known in outline of

course, but not in concrete detail (but there are still plenty of disagreements even about principles, for example, whether to keep or abolish the state, the market, jobs). Perhaps this is why so few people get involved in building a new world, but content themselves with protesting against the old.

The Politics of Protest is a weak politics, the politics of weakness, the politics of weak people, with weak imaginations -- powerless people. Powerless persons must use whatever tactics they can of course. But that is the point. Why remain powerless, when by adopting a different strategy -- building strategic associations -- we could become powerful and not be reduced to impotent acts like civil disobedience and demonstrations in the streets against policies we had no say in making?

I have spelled all this out in greater detail in my short book, *Getting Free: A Sketch of an Association of Democratic, Autonomous Neighborhoods and How to Create It*. (a) A short sketch of the new social arrangements which I want is included there. I hope within a year or two or three to post or publish a longer study, *Imagining Anarchism*, which will compare in detail the few schemes that have been put forward to date.

Further Discussion

A. I got a letter of response, and disagreement mostly, from a friend about the above essay. Relevant parts (edited) of my answer follow:

When I first read Derek's response, I thought, "Well, of course he's right." But after mulling it over for a day or two I came to my senses. His letter actually illustrates some of the points I was trying to make. For example, Derek writes: "Do you think that it is sheer coincidence that after Seattle countless anarchist publications, book fairs, collectives, infoshops and activities have sprung up throughout the country?" My point is this: publications, book fairs, collectives, and infoshops cannot defeat capitalism

or establish anarchism. How come the people who went to Seattle to protest came away with a desire to do those things, and not to start setting up neighborhood, workplace, and household assemblies? Because book fairs and infoshops are in the air, while assemblies are not. Very few radicals are agitating that this other direction is the way we ought to be going. Is this what radicalization means in practical terms -- publications, book fairs, collectives, and infoshops?

Derek also argued that most of these protesters are already involved in "grassroots initiatives, collective endeavors, institutional alternatives, workplace organizations, neighborhood associations, etc." but claimed that there is nothing "implicitly revolutionary" about these efforts. The assumed meaning of "revolutionary" here, I feel sure, is "anti-capitalist, anti-statist, anarchist," and on this we agree. I also agree that most of the organizing now going on around neighborhoods, workplaces, and households is reformist (i.e., not necessarily anti-capitalist, and certainly not necessarily anarchist), and I said as much in the pamphlet (*Getting Free*). So the struggle against reformism is present in my projected strategy too, but at least there, if it is overcome, you've got something, whereas overcoming reformism in protest movements still leaves to be settled what to do next, that is, what does anti-capitalism really look like, and what does anarchism really mean in concrete terms. In fact I would argue that you can't overcome reformism in the abstract, but only in the concrete, in concrete programs. Maybe overcoming reformism means to actually try to set up functioning neighborhood assemblies, with real power to make decisions that will stick, and the same for workplaces, and households, and thereby to establish the core social arrangements for an anarchist society, the successful defense of which will also destroy capitalism.

Derek then writes the following two very interesting sentences: "Most people become radicalized through struggle, whether it is protesting, labor strikes, or full fledged uprisings. I fail to see how anything that you put forward as a viable alternative to "protest politics" could possibly take place without this radicalization process." Here we see this treacherous abstraction -- radicalization -- at work again, together with an auxiliary abstraction -- struggle. To say that people are "radicalized through struggle" is a

meaningless claim. Most of the millions of people who "struggled" for ten years against the Vietnam war never became anti-capitalist. Most of the millions of blacks who "struggled" for civil rights in the sixties never became anti-capitalist, let alone anarchist. Most of the millions of people who "struggled" for women's rights, gay and lesbian rights, old people's rights, children's rights, native american rights, young people's rights, latino rights, welfare mother rights, student rights, GI rights -- never became anti-capitalist, let alone anarchist. Toward the end of the sixties, there was a tiny fringe of people in the "movement" who became radical, in the sense of wanting to destroy capitalism and change

the whole system, but by far the majority of these "revolutionaries" became Leninists, or in a few cases, even Stalinists! There was also a minority who were traditional socialists of one kind or another, but there was only a tiny, tiny, tiny minority of New Leftists who became anarchists, or anarcho-syndicalists (or anti-bolshevik communists, or Third Road Radicals, as I used to say), although I believe anarchist themes were a prominent part of the New Left experience.

The protesters of the sixties, the New Left, kept at it for quite a long time, nearly ten years, from the early sixties to the early seventies. But they failed utterly to put forward a coherent program, a believable vision of what they wanted, and consequently could never generate a strategy to achieve that. Instead they focused mainly on reforms, and were considerably successful on that front. Unfortunately, most of those reforms started to be reversed already under Reagan in the eighties, until by now only a few of them remain. Wallerstein may be correct in claiming that the revolts of the sixties were one of only two systemic, world revolutions against capitalism, the other being in 1848, both of which went down to defeat. (b) And that is the point: the revolts of the sixties failed, although they scared the hell out of capitalists and forced them to make adjustments, and to retool, which of course they did,

having vast manpower and financial resources to do so. "Lockdown America" (c) was only one of their responses. The draconian anti-terrorist bill of 1996 was another (they're still retooling after 25 years). They started retooling immediately after Seattle, exhibiting what has got to be a rapid learning curve for police. Already by April 16 in Washington DC they had learned to cordon off the area surrounding the targeted building. And then on to Windsor, and Calgary. In Calgary they simply erected high fences, sealing off blocks around the meeting place of the world's oil ministers, preventing protesters from getting anywhere near it.

It's all too possible that the same thing could happen again now that happened in the sixties. Contemporary anarchist collectives could spend the next ten years protesting, and at the end of that time be no closer to destroying capitalism and establishing anarchism than we "revolutionaries" were at the end of the "movements" of the sixties (it was all pretty much all over by 1972).

In truth, there is no such thing as a "radicalization process". There are only concrete persons struggling for some program or other, lobbying with others, trying to drum up support, trying to achieve the program and turn it into reality. If they are not struggling for a concrete program, but only for a vague program, for some philosophical principles, or if they are only struggling against something they don't like, rather than for something they do like, then their cause is pretty hopeless, and there is not much chance that they will accomplish any significant changes at all.

A few months ago I heard a riveting speech by Kevin Danaher on Alternative Radio. He was a dynamite speaker, and very radical (or so I thought), and delivered a blistering attack on corporations. The other day I bought a book he has recently edited (with coeditor Roger Burbach), published by Common Courage Press, called *Globalize This: The Battle Against the World Trade Organization and Corporate Rule*. The last section of this book, eight articles, is devoted to what to do about it all, and is called "Ways to Restructure the Global Economy". There I find that naive reformist, William Greider, presenting his wish list of national legislation that "we" should push through Congress, many arguments for "fair trade, not free trade", a proposal to tax foreign exchange transactions as a remedy for out-of-control

international financial speculation, proposals to make corporations socially responsible, and a whole bunch of other reformist programs. There is certainly nothing here about destroying capitalism, let alone creating anarchism. (Actually, I had been alerted to this situation, about Danaher, by an anarchist

e-mail dispatch, probably from Chuck O, in which he mentioned a lively exchange that had taken place between Danaher and a black block anarchist -- I wish I had a copy of it, if it was recorded or written up. I surely could have been informed about this anyway if I had examined Global Exchange's web site more carefully).

I suppose this is what was meant in the quote reproduced at the start of this essay. It argued: "We can already begin to see this developing movement shifting further in the direction of polite reform rather than open resistance." But of course Global Exchange is not shifting. It has always been reformist. Jim Hightower and Ralph Nader are not shifting. Lori Wallach and Medea Benjamin are not shifting. They have always been populists who merely want to restore American democracy to what they think it once was. They may rail against large corporations, but they have no problem with capitalism itself, or with small corporations, or with American democracy as traditionally defined. What is evidently happening then is that Danaher, Nader, Hightower, Wallach, and Benjamin are winning more of the new activists over to their side than the anarchists are. This is not surprising since that kind of populism is closer to what most people in America believe anyway and therefore doesn't require as big a break with their pasts.

The opening quote contrasts 'open resistance' to 'polite reform' as if 'open resistance' is somehow automatically going to 'radicalize' activists. There was massive 'open resistance' ten years ago in Eastern Europe which only resulted in the installation of a really barbarous, mafia capitalism (although I recently acquired a book [\(d\)](#) which argues that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a

top down thing, that it was engineered by the Soviet ruling class itself, and was not the outcome of a disintegrating economy combined with massive uprisings).

Derek says that he believes strongly in a culture of resistance. I believe equally strongly that a culture of resistance is not enough, although naturally I'm very glad that one seems to be emerging once again. A culture of resistance though is only *against* something, oppression, not *for* something, liberation. I believe that we have to start with what we want, with what anarchism is, defined in very concrete terms, and then devise a strategy for achieving it. I am well aware that this goes against the anti-utopian grain of much revolutionary thinking, but it's true nevertheless. It's simply not enough to attack capitalism. Attacking capitalism, through a culture of resistance, does not necessarily lead anywhere.

The organization of my pamphlet, *Getting Free*, reflects these beliefs. I begin with a brief condemnation of capitalism, by describing what I hate most about it. Then I sketch out briefly, but in concrete detail, the kind of social arrangements which I would like and which I believe constitute anarchism (true communism). Next I consider some of the obstacles in the way of achieving such social arrangements, and some of the strategies that have already been tried but have failed. Then I map out, both in the abstract and in concrete detail, a strategy which I believe would succeed in destroying capitalism and establishing anarchism. This strategy is intimately linked to, and flows out of, the goal, the program, that is, the concrete description of the social arrangements which I believe would make up an anarchistic society. The strategy which prevailed throughout most of this century, Leninism, was also linked to a particular definition of communism, one involving nationalization of resources, for example, and so it focused on capturing the state. Sometimes I feel that all the marches on Washington DC are in reality vestiges of leninism, because the protesters go to the capital, and focus on the centers of power, and the rulers residing there, rather than fighting their battles in small towns, neighborhoods, or local communities. Some radicals have been arguing recently that if we don't

have the political forces to stop ruling class projects on the local level we probably can't muster them anywhere else.

If Wallerstein is correct in claiming that capitalism can only last at most another fifty years, because of structural limitations to its expansion (which expansion is essential for the system to keep operating as a means of capital accumulation for the ruling class) (e), then the foundations of a new social order have to be laid now, in the next twenty-five years -- in other words by the present generation of activists -- a challenge unprecedented in the long history of anti-capitalist struggle. The ruling class will be working all this time to transplant themselves into a new social order of their own making. If we wait, if another twenty-five years goes by without significant progress and clarification on the kind of society we want, then it will be all that much harder, perhaps even impossible, to counter the plans of the ruling class. The fact that I am having to talk like this now, about "clarification on the kind of society we want", points up a glaring failure on the part of my generation. I should be able to point to a whole shelf full of books by now, detailed studies which spell things out and examine concretely the many problems. We didn't do the work however, except now we do have a few books coming out (e.g.. Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards an Inclusive Democracy*). Instead, and for the most part, and tragically, my generation's energies went into Identity Politics.

Perhaps I should throw the issue back in the laps my critics. If they are not happy with the strategy I have outlined for getting out of capitalism and into anarchism, can they come up with a better one? How are they going to defeat capitalists? What will anarchism look like, in concrete social terms, and how do they expect to set it up? And if they give me the pat reply that it is too early to say in concrete terms what anarchism will be and that that is something that will have to be decided when the time comes by those actually making the revolution, then I have another question for them? Aren't they actually making the revolution now? If they can't picture anarchism

concretely now, what makes them think they will be able to do so ten or twenty years down the road? After all, my generation hid behind this excuse thirty years ago, but now, a generation later, we have no clearer idea of what we want than we did then. Many militants are busy protesting. How are they going to get from protesting to what they really want? Some are busy setting up anarchist organizations of various kinds. In other words, they are organizing other radicals, instead of setting up anarchist social arrangements directly. How do they expect to get from these organizations, which are one step removed from anarchism, to anarchism itself?

B. Excerpts from a letter to another friend in November, 2000, continuing the discussion.

I have been intending to revise "The Weakness of a Politics of Protest" to soften or qualify my criticisms somehow. I have felt like a real heel criticizing these new movements, because, as I have expressed several times in letters to friends, they have been fantastic and inspiring, and have accomplished a lot. They took me completely by surprise, although I guess they have been building for half-a-decade at least, and if I had been more in touch or more alert I would have picked up on this. I was even fairly close in the mid-nineties to a group of young militant anarchists, but somehow I missed the scope and strength of their activities.

Nevertheless, it seems that we are deeply wedded to a particular tactic. Whenever we get upset and agitated and want to do something, all we can think of is pouring into the streets, in demonstrations, rallies, and marches. I was reminded recently, in the process of preparing a bibliographical guide to anarchist writings, and in looking up references to anarchist uprisings

from the German peasant war of 1525 on down, that this is no new thing. The peasants of early modern times poured into the streets and roads, and marched. Thomas Munzer participated in one such march, on Mulhausen, in

1525, where they took over the town council, and where Munzer was later captured, and beheaded (while Martin Luther sat comfortably with his Princes). There were marches and demonstrations in the English revolution of 1640. The sans-culottes, in the French Revolution, poured into the streets, and set up barricades, to defend their working class neighborhoods, where they had established self-government. There were demonstrations and marches all over Europe in the insurrections of 1848. And so on down through all the great revolutions of modern times. I saw once the eight hour BBC documentary of the Spanish Revolution, and was simply amazed by the marches they had, involving hundreds of thousands of people at a time. One march they filmed in Madrid toward the end of the war must have had half-a-million people.

In almost all cases, though, in these historical events, it was not just marches and demonstrations, but also the setting up of local assemblies, and agricultural and/or industrial councils. This was true in the peasant wars, in the French Revolution, the American Revolution, the Paris Commune, 1905 in Russia, 1917 in Russia, 1918-19 in Germany, 1936-39 in Spain, 1956 in Hungary, 1980-82 in Poland, and so forth. (This -- the setting up of assemblies -- does not seem to have happened in the great popular uprisings in Eastern Europe in 1989.)

So the pattern we have seen in our country, say in the 1960s, with the incessant spring and fall marches on Washington, D.C., or during this past year in Seattle, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles, is no new thing, but has deep historical roots. I'm convinced even so that it is a badly flawed strategy, a regretful way of resisting. In the early seventies I wrote a paper against the tactic of mass demonstrations, especially those which focused on capital cities. I argued that they drained energy and resources away from local initiatives. Although they brought 'highs' to the participants, they also brought 'lows', after everyone had returned home. (f) "Taking to the streets" is not a strategy; it is a bad habit.

The first full length history of *The Russian Revolution* I read, in 1971, by Marcel Liebman, impressed me by how much of the action took place in streets. They also set up councils of course. But most of the action, by the

great majority, was in the streets. I thought at the time that this showed that they were simply not ready to take power for themselves and keep it. They didn't know how. They could only act as a "mass", not as participants in a direct, deliberative democracy, for which they didn't have the social arrangements, and probably not even, for the most part, the social skills. And so they ended up with Lenin.

The striking thing to note of course is the pattern of defeat evident in this long history of revolt. Nowhere, not once, did the most radical militants win (at least not for very long). Those who were fighting for egalitarian, directly democratic, local, self-rule have always lost. Everywhere they were defeated by ruling classes, with their states and armies. And this of course is where we still are. Shouldn't we be pondering this? Shouldn't we be questioning this, this pattern of insurrection, whereby we pour into the streets in marches and demonstrations, patching together as best we can from the depths of a crisis, sort of spontaneously, institutions of self-governance, only to find ourselves scattered, disbanded, arrested, smashed, or murdered by superior forces? Shouldn't we be rearranging ourselves socially on a permanent basis in order to accumulate the power and resources needed to defeat our oppressors? The street demonstrations in Eastern Europe in 1989, while toppling governments, did not result in democracy, but only in the coming to power of a mafia capitalism. The tremendous

demonstrations last month in Yugoslavia, wherein thousands poured into Belgrade from all over the country, did not bring into being a more direct democracy, but only resulted in the victory of neoliberalism. (Apparently, although the marches were genuine, the actual seizing of the parliament building and the radio station was done by 2000 trained protesters organized and funded by the US.) The seizure of workplaces following the downfall of Milosevic is also complicated. Workers were throwing out their former managers and taking over plants for themselves, but this apparently was done

in order to weaken the public, socialist elements (these plants were already worker-managed, but had become bureaucratized and top down), and to ready the plants for entry into the free market and for sale to foreign capital. Somehow, 'workers control' got transformed into a force for neo-liberalism.

Postscript (January, 2001)

This week (Jan. 25-30) in Davos, Switzerland, radicals are demonstrating against the World Economic Forum. In addition, an anti-Davos counter-conference has been organized in Porto Alegre, Brazil, called the World Social Forum, attended by thousands of activists. I can't deny that I find these events very exciting and encouraging, just as I did the demonstrations and 'shadow conferences' in Seattle, Washington DC, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Windsor, Melbourne, Prague, and elsewhere. They are throwing light on the heretofore secret, unnoticed meetings of the leaders of the world's ruling classes. They are breaking the intellectual monopoly that the ruling classes have enjoyed on many topics, such as 'development' and 'world organization', and are even advocating 'localism' at times. They are giving notice to these elites that they are not going to be allowed to continue imposing their self-profiting policies on the world, in obscurity, and with impunity. They are raising awareness worldwide about what these elites are up to.

So what's my beef? Well, it's one thing to raise consciousness about something bad, but it's quite another to actually get rid of it. The WTO still exists, doesn't it? It is still working, and planning another meeting (this time in Qatar!). The World Bank still exists, and the World Economic Forum, and G7, NAFTA, GATT, and so forth. And the national governments which support these global organizations still exist too, don't they? What happens after the protesters go home? How will they acquire the power to actually dismantle these national and global ruling institutions? Even if a 'sea change' is achieved in world consciousness, about what's wrong, what will happen then? In the absence of concrete positive programs for local self-rule, what will replace global capitalism, if not some more-or-less equally bad system? Won't reforms most likely lean in the direction of Social Democracy, at best, or at worst, some new world governing elite, even if comprised of NGOs

(which would undoubtedly be rapidly co-opted by a reconstituted ruling class)? A few articles have already appeared, by members of the new generation of protesters themselves, questioning the effectiveness of 'summit-hopping' on a world scale. (g)

The kind of organizing and actions we need to be involved in to actually get rid of these oppressive institutions is considerably different than this pattern of mass mobilizations at the centers of power. It's undeniable that it's fantastic that radicals are once again confronting their rulers, and building a culture of resistance. It's equally undeniable that this is not enough. In order to do more than merely confront them, and instead to actually defeat them, we need a rather different strategy, one focused on the creation of strategic free associations (assemblies) in our

neighborhoods, workplaces, and households. This would get us involved in creating the world we want, and simultaneously put us in a position to gut capitalism, by draining power, wealth, and meaning out of its institutions, until there is nothing left of them but shells.

Notes

(a). *Getting Free* is available on the web at:

http://site.www.umb.edu/faculty/salzman_g/Strategy/GettingFree.

(b) For 1968, see Immanuel Wallerstein, "1968, revolution in the world-system," pp. 65-83, in his *Geopolitics and Geoculture* (Cambridge, 1991).

(c) *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis*, by Christian Parenti, Verso, 1999.

(d) *Revolution from Above: The Demise of the Soviet System*, by David Kotz with Fred Weir, Routledge, 1997.

(e) See Immanuel Wallerstein, "Globalization or the Age of Transition? A Long-Term View of the Trajectory of the World-System", available on the web at <http://fbc.binghamton.edu/iwtrajws.htm>.

(f) The last few pages of ch. 5 in my booklet, *How Do We Get There: A Critique of the Question 'What Do You Do?'*, 1973 (unpublished).

(g) See for example, Chris Dixon (a founding member of Direct Action Network), "Finding Hope After Seattle: Rethinking Radical Activism and Building a Movement". On the web at www.zmag.org/dixonseattle.htm.

Seeing the Inadequacies of ACF's Strategy Statement*

By Jared James, February, 1999

Despite its claims and intentions, this short statement on anarchist strategy is still very much a leninist document, and remains trapped within most of the major concepts of that tradition. I would like to point out some of the inadequacies of the statement and show why it does not suit as a strategy for achieving a free society.

1. Everyone in one organization. On page seven of the pamphlet version the authors state that all anti-capitalist forces "will be united inside the organization." What geographical unit are we talking about here? A neighborhood, small town, city, state, region, nation, continent, the world? The absurdity of the statement is obvious if you take the world as the unit. All anti-capitalists *in the world* united within one organization? Please! But it

is also a faulty notion even if we take a small unit, the neighborhood. There is no need, and it's unlikely to happen anyway, and also undesirable, for all activists to be in one organization. Better to have dozens of organizations, if we even have organizations of activists at all.

2. "A libertarian organization is necessary." Are organizations of activists even needed? I think not, or at least that they are not the primary need. These strategists do not want just a propaganda group, but "an assembly of activists." Why? Why assemble as activists when we could be assembling as workers, neighbors, or housemates? Revolutionaries should not be wasting time building organizations of revolutionaries, which can never defeat the ruling class anyway, but fighting directly to establish associations of self-government in their neighborhoods and communities -- worker owned and democratically managed workplaces, neighborhood assemblies based on direct democracy, and expanded and cooperative households. With assemblies like these we could overpower our rulers. But no, we continue to postpone striking directly for what we want, and instead pour our lives into secondary, peripheral activities. This is one reason we continue to flounder.

3. "Coordination of all anti-capitalist struggles". (page 2) Once again, in what unit? The world? The neighborhood? World-wide coordination of all anti-capitalist struggles? Is this what we want, one coordinated world? You can bet your life that if the struggle is coordinated, then the victory, and life after the victory, will be coordinated too, and more so. I prefer a world in turmoil, splitting apart at the seams with differences, a world of contrasts, variety, disagreements, and novelties. Even on the neighborhood level coordination is a misguided notion. We do not need one coordinated struggle. We need a war on many fronts, a decentralized, diverse, chaotic (from the enemy's point of view) struggle. A single, coordinated struggle is easier for them to defeat. All they have to do is destroy the coordinators, or if by some miracle the coordination has been achieved through decentralized networking, they can destroy the means of networking, or disrupt the coordination in some other way. But how do they defeat an uncoordinated fight, a fight going on everywhere, in unexpected places, at unexpected times, in unexpected ways, by unexpected people? Real democracy is noisy, chaotic, unpredictable, and so must be the struggle to achieve it. The idea that

we need "an organization that fights for the co-ordination of all anti-capitalist struggles" is ridiculous. It is an idea left over from the vanguard tradition of Lenin.

4. The call for unity and solidarity. The authors bemoan "the fragmentation of working class solidarity" by the ruling class. What they want is "a solid and united class, conscious of itself and its power." This call for 'solidarity' is an integral part of the vanguard tradition. What they ignore is the *innateness of disagreement*, among humans. Or to the extent that they recognize disagreement, they think that it is bad, rather than wonderful (being the very essence of freedom). They seek to remove disagreement, rather than embrace it. Rather than building a world which recognizes the inevitableness of disagreement, and therefore the necessity of creating directly democratic decision making arrangements, they want a world based on agreement and solidarity. This is altogether the wrong focus.

5. The infiltration of other organizations. "The organization seeks to work inside the women's groups and sexual politics groups to help radicalize them ..."; "...it must actively work in all the grass roots organizations..."; "The revolutionary organization will fight in the newly created workplace and neighbourhood structures on an ideological level against authoritarian groups." This is a really horrible, arrogant, elitist plan. I have been in radical organizations which were infiltrated by members of other groups, with the intent to "radicalize" us, and it is not a pleasant experience. They are not there to share and help accomplish the goals of the group they have joined, as equal participants, but as outsiders, with goals of their own, with ulterior motives. They are often deceitful about all this. Any group with an ounce of sense will expel such people promptly once their identities and intentions are discovered. This is vanguardism, pure and simple. Vanguardists always seek to use, manipulate, recruit, convert, and otherwise abuse other radicals.

6. Revolutionaries as the organizers, welders, coordinators, assistants.

"Revolutionary anarchist militants seek a regroupment..."; "... a 'libertarian front' of all these movements and groups..." must be built; "To assist in the building of such a mass movement, ..." Nowhere in this short document is there even a hint that revolutionaries are persons who are fighting to overcome *their own oppression*. No, according to these authors, the role of revolutionaries is to help others achieve liberation, especially the working class, but also women, blacks, gays, unemployed, squatters, tenants. The stance of these authors is outside the movement for liberation, as directors, guiders, influencers, molders, not inside the movement, as equal participants. They are vanguardists, whether they believe it or not. If they were busy fighting to overcome their own oppression, they would be looking for allies, arguing about strategy, countering their opponents, and so forth. They would not be trying to 'radicalize' anyone.

This outside stance they take is the root of the problem. They are radicals who want to destroy capitalism, make a revolution, and build a new society. But they are a tiny minority. Most workers don't want to do this, not to mention small shopkeepers. But the militants have misconceived their problem, which accounts for all their agonizing about their relationship to the working class. They don't have to "radicalize" the working class, let alone establish a world-wide coordination of all anti-capitalist struggles. How could we ever get anywhere if this were a prerequisite for revolutionary work? It only takes one person to call a meeting at a workplace, in a neighborhood, or in a household. It only takes two people to have a meeting. It's because most radicals continue to think that they have to do something to workers to get them to make a revolution that they (the militants) are paralyzed and reduced to propaganda work. What activists have to do is start fights with their bosses, especially at their places of work, but also with the authorities who control neighborhoods and households. They will gain a few allies and many opponents, but at least the war is under way, the battle has been joined. This puts them *inside the revolution*, as participants, actively making history and building a new world. They abandon their fruitless and frustrating role as mere proselytizers of revolution, as mere

protagonists of the proletariat, and instead become direct threats to the ruling class, by directly trying to wrest power away from it in those social contexts where it really counts. They will try to link up with other militants engaged in similar fights and to publicize their struggles, but this is completely different from trying to proselytize or radicalize the working class.

7. Trapped within the 'mass-elite' framework. The authors use the term 'mass' again and again in this short statement: mass action, mass movement, revolutionary masses, mass organizations, and even mass decision making (what ever can that mean?). The companion concept of course is 'elite'. Elite-mass go together; they cannot be separated. The concepts in fact describe the structure of the world as created by the bourgeoisie -- a ruling class on the one hand and a mass of isolated, atomized, individuals on the other. The whole point of the revolution is to overcome the condition of being a mass, and to reestablish 'community', to reestablish a rich texture of egalitarian social ties among ourselves, and destroy the hierarchical ties that bind us to our rulers. The authors don't seem to perceive this. They spurn the idea of an elite, of course, but it is present nevertheless throughout their statement, in the way they see revolutionaries acting, as the "driving force", in the "leadership of ideas", "to defend the advanced ideas of the working class", "...to ensure that these structures function with the full participation of all...", and so forth. Revolutionaries are seen as the defenders and protectors of the working class, not as workers themselves who are fighting to end their exploitation.

The idea of 'masses' and the idea of 'solidarity' are closely related. The image is one of millions of people welded together by common beliefs. It is a religious idea, based on the idea of a body of given truths. This is how the 'leadership of ideas' fits in. The 'revolutionaries' know what these truths are. Thus they are essentially priests, tending their flocks, trying to keep them from straying from the correct path. This is Lenin all over again, who was not

an advanced thinker on the cutting edge of liberatory ideas in Europe at the turn of the last century, but basically a religious thinker from a backward country on the periphery of capitalism. The authors state that "...different sections of the working class reach different degrees of consciousness." See the idea of 'given truths' again? In their minds, there is this preconceived definition of 'radical consciousness'; the activists have it, workers (or most workers) don't. The task of radicals, in this view, is to bring workers along, to raise their consciousnesses. Excuse me! I left the priesthood once; I have no intention of joining it again as a leninist. Yet this is what these strategists are asking me to do. (And how is this different, really, from Lenin's claim that workers can't reach a revolutionary consciousness by themselves without outside intervention?)

8. Romanticizing the working class. In light of all these leninist ideas which they are regurgitating the authors are obviously uneasy, and struggle gallantly to qualify, hem and haw, back away from, and otherwise indicate that they don't mean this like it sounds. One way they do this is actually old hat -- they romanticize the working class. Revolutionaries, they say, are really only the depositories of advances made previously by the working class itself, through 'mass spontaneity'. They are saving these advances, preserving them until the working class becomes revolutionary again, at which time they can be fed back to workers, since workers themselves have no memory and have lost awareness of what they did earlier. But as soon as the working class, through 'mass spontaneity', does something new, revolutionaries have to update their theories. It's very much a "from the people, to the people" idea (a la Mao, who even wrote an essay or two about this). Once again we see the mass-elite framework; once again a thoroughly vanguardist idea. By using a concept like "mass spontaneity" the authors show that they have not yet broken out of the dualism - voluntarism vs. determinism - so characteristic of bourgeois thought (and

of Lenin too, which shows that he was a bourgeois thinker at heart). They have not yet arrived at a dialectical understanding of humans. Ideas like 'spontaneous' and 'determined' simply do not apply to humans. All humans make their own histories, but not under conditions of their own choosing. All humans are creative, but not in a vacuum, but within a given cultural context. Humans are both spontaneous and determined, simultaneously; that is, they are neither spontaneous nor determined - the concepts are inappropriate, and do not apply. A strategy which is based on false concepts like this is not going to get us anywhere.

9. Combatting leninists "on a physical level." (page 7) That is, armed struggle against leninists if they "try to use force to destroy the gains of the working class....". Well of course, in a real democracy, direct democracy, that is, in communism, the community would defend its democratic procedures and social arrangements from anyone attempting to destroy them in order to reestablish tyranny by one or a few, and it would defend these institutions by force if need be, although this would probably not be necessary in most cases. But our anarchist strategists are preparing "to combat them [leninists] on a physical level" during the revolutionary struggle. That is, they are going to fight other radicals. Where is this going to take place? In meetings? Outside bookstores? At lectures, demonstrations, rallies, parties? In offices? Who decides who is a leninist and who is not? Are leninists going to be wearing labels, tattooed by the finger of God, so that there is no mistaking a leninist from an anarchist?

It seems that these anarchist strategists have merely turned the tables on Lenin. Lenin defined anarchists, social democrats, and in fact everyone except Bolsheviks, as counter-revolutionaries, and combatted them physically, sometimes with a bullet to the head. Is this what we're going to do again? And why stop at leninists? Why not include also liberals (especially these), mainstream feminists, right-wing gays, corporate-oriented environmentalists, fanatic individualists (who are probably the single greatest threat to revolution in the rich core countries and far more dangerous and disruptive than leninists), black nationalists, social democrats, trees-before-people earth firsters, new age spiritualists, and goddess worshippers? What

about god-fearing, country-loving, gay-bashing, president-adoring workers? Are we going to combat them on the physical level? If not, why not? If we are ever going to establish direct democracy and communities based on peace, cooperation, and deliberative self-government, we have to get out of the mind-set that the way to resolve disagreements is to physically eliminate (murder, assassinate, liquidate, exterminate, imprison, transport) our opponents. This is what the ruling class does to us. We should not imitate them. There may of course be exceptions to this general guideline, and naturally it's not always wise to try to co-exist in the same organization with our opponents, but workplaces, neighborhoods, and households are not 'organizations'. Is the tactic of expelling opponents from these social forms even conceivable? Ostracism is probably the worst that could be done.

10. Workers militias under the control of the mass organisations. This is a weird notion. I always thought militias should be under the control of the people making them up, or of the communities from which they come. And why only workers? What about homemakers, the unemployed, or students? They're not going to help defend their anarchy? And what is this "mass organization" that controls these militias? Is it the "assembly of activists"? Is it some other command structure activists have set up? Is it an organization workers have created, like a party or union? This way of talking gets us absolutely nowhere.

11. All the usual abstractions. This essay is replete with all the usual abstractions, about which the authors presume universal agreement. They write as if we all agree about who is in the working class, what communism is, what federalism is, what libertarianism means, and so

forth. Whereas in fact there are intense debates about all these things, and they offer no advice about how to resolve these debates. They believe there are such people as 'intellectuals', and they agonize about the role of such people in the revolution and their relationship to the working class (an

historical obsession among leftists). They fall back on the chimera of 'mandated delegates' as their only clue about working democratically in large territories. And so forth and so on.

* * * * *

An Anarchist Revolutionary Strategy Sketched Briefly

Here is a sketch of a proposed revolutionary anarchist strategy, in story form.

Some persons become convinced that they are oppressed. They study and ponder the situation to discover the sources of that oppression; who is doing it and how they are doing it. They also imagine a situation in which they would not be oppressed; what it would be like, and how it would differ from the way things are now.

Let's assume that they decide that the key thing, the essential factor, in their oppression is that they are not free and that they have no control over their lives or communities. That is, they realize that they are slaves, wage-slaves, being controlled and exploited for the profit of someone else, and therefore that it is very far from a democratic society they are living in. They decide that they would prefer having some control over their own lives and communities, and prefer not to slave away for someone else's benefit, or have some government somewhere making all the rules. They would prefer to get together with their neighbors to decide things in common, and similarly at home and at work, they would prefer to assemble together with their work mates and household mates to decide how to do things, what to do with the things they make, how to divide up the work, and so forth.

So this is what they start doing. They start assembling together to try to govern their own lives, at work, in their households, and in their neighborhoods. It turns out that the ruling class is not too happy about their meetings, and in fact gets very angry that they are meeting like this. So the ruling class tries to bust them up. Naturally, these persons take steps to defend themselves and to get the ruling class off their backs. They learn how

to defend the social arrangements they have created. They invent social weapons to neutralize the military might of their oppressors.

They are also aware of course that friends and neighbors of theirs don't all agree that they are oppressed, or that they are slaves, or that the society is not democratic. So they argue with these friends and neighbors, trying to convince them of the validity of their perception of the situation.

In the meantime they go on trying to establish these new decision-making arrangements they have dreamed up. But disagreements emerge about how to proceed. Some have been frightened and intimidated by the attacks of the rulers. They want to back off a bit, and to settle for what they think is realistic, for what they think they can get. So they start pushing for this, and laying out their arguments. But the arguments don't fly too well. Everyone has been through this so many times before. They have watched as the world has slowly disintegrated, as the social situation has degenerated toward collapse, with the environment spinning toward irreversible life-threatening decay. They have seen again and again that compromises gain nothing, except defeat. And time is short. So for once the faint-hearted lose out. Those who want to settle for less are out politicked by those who want it all. They are aware however that they have to rally wider support, outside the neighborhood, in

order to win. So they publicize what they have been doing. They try to inform as many people as possible about their struggles, dreams, defenses. They especially shout to the far ends of the earth all the details about every attack the ruling class makes against them. They take their case to the court of world public opinion, trying to gain the upper hand morally, in the hearts and minds of people everywhere.

They also begin to withdraw from and to stop participating in (as this becomes possible) all the hierarchical, ruling class institutions that they now see as onerous. They especially try hard to stop being wage-slaves and to

embed themselves instead in cooperative communal labor. More and more workplaces become cooperatively owned and operated. Fewer and fewer of the necessities of life are being produced by wage-slaves.

They also increase their efforts to persuade more people locally that the course they have chosen is the road to freedom and greater happiness and well-being. They establish contacts with other neighborhoods and try to work out agreements with them regarding common interests and problems. They work out trade agreements.

Slowly, more and more people begin to perceive the situation in a new light, by seeing the examples before them and the direct action that others are taking to gain control over their communities and to set up new social arrangements. More and more wealth and power begins to be taken away from the ruling class and returned to the communities from which it had been stolen. The attacks of the ruling class become more intense and frantic, and this of course has the effect of clarifying the situation even more, although at a terrible price.

As more wealth and power become available, these neighborhoods, now rapidly becoming autonomous, cooperative, and democratic, can publicize their experiences even more, and begin to make a dent in the cultural hegemony so long held by the masters, and can promote more intensely the democratic, autonomous, self-governing, decentralized, communal (that is, anarchist) way of life. This way of life becomes a concrete reality in more and more neighborhoods, and then in millions and millions of neighborhoods, villages, and small towns throughout the world.

At long last, the institutions of the ruling class, all those weapons of oppression, all those corporations, governments, schools, churches, cinemas, newspapers, armies, hospitals, museums, universities, courts, malls, police stations, television networks, and law firms, are nothing but empty shells, with no power to hurt anyone. They are relegated to the dustbins of history, buried and forgotten, by the wondrous new world full of free communal peoples. New statues are erected to honor the martyrs. New holidays are chosen to celebrate the victories, commemorate key battles of the war, and highlight the achievements and dreams of free communities. People dance and sing and play and love. Ten hundred thousand traditions bloom. And a

Jubilee begins, which lasts until the end of time.

Postscript (January, 2001)

The above criticisms of the Anarchist Communist Federation in Britain were based on the short pamphlet, "The Role of Revolutionary Organization," cited below. I regret now that the overall tone of the piece is so harsh. I have recently had a chance to read most of the documents(a) posted on their web site (which I didn't know about when I wrote the above critique), and it turns out that I am in broad agreement with their anarchist politics. I think that we

page 83

are basically in the same camp, and are more political comrades than political opponents. There are many things that I like about the views they expressed in these documents. It's encouraging to see a group actually writing about strategy, which is a strangely and badly neglected topic among radicals. I'm glad they are strongly anti-capitalist. I like their uncompromising opposition to reformism. I am in basic agreement with their critique of anarcho-syndicalism. I like the structure of their pamphlet *Beyond Resistance*. They start out with a critique of capitalism, and then outline an alternative to it, and then discuss how to defeat the first and build the second. This is basically what I did in my pamphlet *Getting Free*. I began with what I didn't like about the present order, and then outlined a social arrangement that I would like, and then described a strategy for gutting the first and bring into being the second. I don't have much trouble with the first and second parts of their program, their critique of capitalism and their vision of the future. It is the strategy part that I have trouble with. I'm still convinced, even though they explicitly reject the goal of seizing state power and repeatedly stress that the working class has to liberate itself (and that no Party can do this for it), that, overall, their discussion of strategy is still leninist, or at least has strong leninist overtones. This is unsettling, dismaying, and unfortunate, coming as it does from anarchists, which is why I have devoted time to criticizing their

position. In this Postscript, therefore, I will continue the discussion, clearing up some misunderstandings, making some corrections, and adding some further points.

A friend of mine, who had met a couple of the members of this group in England, forwarded my essay to Mike, at ACF, and got a short response, as follows:

"Okay, I do think James' response to "The Role of Revolutionary Organisation" misjudges our approach to other organisations. In fact we do not think it is necessary to have one big revolutionary organisation, though if there's not one big one, they'd better be enough smaller ones that can agree on a basic level! Maybe a confederation. I think the pamphlet is clear on this earlier but in the last section maybe we should have used 'organisations' rather than 'the organisation'. If we are unclear, that could be our problem and I'll put it to the ACF. Leninists believe it is the 'duty' of the party to take over the whole of the economy and state apparatus to prevent counter revolution. This is very different.

I think our newer pamphlet, *Beyond Resistance*, is much clearer We are fully into an idea of communities and workplaces forming a culture of resistance by building antagonistic grouping in those areas. However we do not agree with the idea of forming a dual economic power against the system. Personally I cannot see this essentially mutualist strategy progressing much without being subsumed into the existing capitalism, or if it is seen as a threat, being attacked either militarily or 'legally' by state or capitalist legislation (as happened in Chile at the turn of the century). Even now, with the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, it is even getting difficult for even nation states to oppose multinationals, e.g. India and GM crops. However, this is still an important question, because leninists always criticise anarchists for not having the will to take over the entire economy in 30s Spain, and for allowing inequalities in pay between collectives and between men and women in the collectives. Of course we in the ACF would argue that it was a problem of syndicalism that they did not have the theoretical strength to abolish money and the state at the crucial time. On the accusation of entryism, again, maybe [the pamphlet] is not clear enough. We are in fact

much more council communist than the pamphlet might appear. My understanding of the leadership of ideas is about influencing what sort of workers councils will arise in a revolutionary situation. We must make sure our politics are seen as the right ones, so they really are revolutionary anarchist councils."

My friend also wrote to me that it had not been his impression that ACF promoted infiltration. Another friend of mine also took issue with the essay, especially with point five (on infiltration). He wrote:

"I'm glad you plan to rework your critique somewhat, as you indicated in the handwritten note accompanying the text. My sense is that Derek is probably right in how he sizes up the people in the ACF that he met when he was in England You do in fact come down very heavily, and it could make some people defensive. For example, the line between trying to raise the consciousness of people in a group that you join and trying to infiltrate the group is pretty clear. It's a matter of whether you act up-front or covertly. Each of us has his own ideas of what ought to be done -- i.e., our private agenda, and we would like our activities to be in groups that share our ideas. To me it's quite legitimate to try to influence the other members, but not to be manipulative. Even though the ACF statement is pretty faulty (I think they're not careful enough in thinking about the language they use), clearly any group that puts out a public statement about working in "women's groups ... etc." can't be thinking about infiltrating such groups. So it seems to me your point five, undeservedly puts their head on the anvil. It's not that they're conniving, obviously. You got carried away with the infiltration theme and gave them the business more than was called for."

I think Mike and my friends were right about this, as regards point five, about infiltration, although I do think that the language used in the pamphlet warranted, at least partially, my interpretation. But I'm persuaded that I was off the mark in reality. This language has been pretty much eliminated from

the third edition of their expanded pamphlet *Beyond Resistance: A Revolutionary Manifesto for the New Millennium* (spring, 2000).

There was also some confusion, some thought, in my essay, about "spontaneity". I had not intended to leave the impression that I believe in a "spontaneous" revolution. In fact my position is just the opposite. I believe that a spontaneous revolution can never succeed. Only if the new social arrangements of anarchism are already largely in place, and only if people have already created the capacity to live without capitalism and are using it to meet most of their needs, could there be any hope of gutting and dismantling that system. I was mostly arguing for a change in sites for struggle, and for concentrating on starting fights on those sites, rather than putting energy into building a "revolutionary organization" of anarchists. In section eight of the above critique, I explicitly criticized the idea of "mass spontaneity". The reader may want to reread that paragraph.

Other than these few qualifications, I think that my criticisms of ACF's strategy are pretty much on the mark, and I'll stick to them. Throughout these papers they call for 'unity and solidarity' so my point four above is confirmed. They very definitely take a stance 'outside the working class' even though they may be members of the working class themselves. So my points six, seven, and eight are confirmed. As for point nine, it holds too. They say in *Beyond Resistance*: "The working class must be prepared from the outset to use force against counter-revolutionary groupings, when they attempt to hijack the revolution and attack libertarians, as readily as we would against capital or the state." They have qualified their belief that we should all be in one organization (point one above), but they still insist on "a united and global revolutionary movement."

But having read the rest of their papers there are several additional points I'd like to discuss: (1) the concept of 'working class' (mentioned only in passing in paragraph eleven above); (2) the time span of 'the revolution'; (3)

armed struggle; and (4) the notion of the 'leadership of ideas'. Then I'll return to further comments on 'the role of the revolutionary organization' (discussed also in point two above), a topic which seems to best capture our differing approaches to destroying capitalism and building anarchism.

12. The Concept of the Working Class: Throughout these papers the concept of 'working class' is used in a wooden, mechanical way. The authors never define it. For them it is a monolithic category, a given. They seem unaware of the great divisions within the working class, along many lines -- education, income, lifestyle, gender, race, ethnicity, sex, nationality. They never talk about that other, neglected, class (the petty bourgeoisie, or small businesses), which is of course rapidly disappearing (but is still a powerful player), and the role that this class might or might not play in 'the revolution'. They do not discuss large categories of persons whose class status is ambiguous, for example, highly paid middle level managers, cops, professors, professionals (who are salaried, not self-employed), or semi-proletarianized peasants who have one leg in wage-slavery and the other still in the cooperative village and household economy. Nor do they explore complicating factors such as, for example, stock ownership by an increasing number of workers (but still a tiny percentage), or that many working class families have managed to acquire a second house, which they rent out, thus becoming petty rentiers, which income supplements their wages. The militants at ACF consistently use a simple two class analysis -- workers versus capitalists -- which is basically true of course. But their usage is not nuanced, and therefore sounds rigid, sectarian, doctrinaire. And it leads to strategy mistakes, for example, to the tendency to think that the working class is homogeneous, and can therefore be 'unified' (a constantly reiterated goal of acf radicals). They often talk as if 'the working class' were a single subject, and capable of acting as such (and on a world scale!). I believe that this wooden, mechanical, abstract image of 'the working class' plays into their ideas about the role of 'radicals' and 'the revolutionary organization'. Rather than seeing a complex, highly diverse class struggling to liberate itself, they see a monolithic block of workers which must be 'radicalized' by revolutionaries. They tend to think of radicalism and revolution as a matter of

consciousness, rather than as a matter of concrete social arrangements for decision making, at work, at home, and in the neighborhood, just as they tend to see the fight between reformists and revolutionaries as a struggle over a correct set of ideas, rather than as a struggle for social autonomy.(b)

13. The Time Span of "The Revolution": The ACF anarchists believe that "the revolution must be global and virtually simultaneous". Throughout these papers they talk like this, like 'the revolution' will be sudden, happen all at once, and be worldwide. Of course there will be a pre-revolutionary build up, but these are struggles "before the revolution". The revolution is seen as a distinct event, as something separate from the pre-revolutionary preparations. They say things like: "We cannot say when or where the revolutionary outburst of class anger will first appear...." or "The culmination of all the hopes and fears expressed in this manifesto will come when our class directly challenges the bosses and states for control of our world -- the Revolution itself." and "Many different types of workers' councils, communes, community networks, affinity and other groupings may emerge spontaneously in the first days of the revolu-

tion, ..."

I believe that this is a false picture. Isn't working class anger already being expressed right now, daily, on a thousand fronts. Aren't we already challenging bosses and states in numerous ways? Could we ever hope to prevail if we have to rely on councils which "emerge spontaneously in the first days of the revolution"? Wouldn't our assemblies need to have been in existence for some time, and wouldn't we need to have acquired experience in working with and through them? I believe that this picture of a sudden revolution is a carry over from all the elitist, Jacobin, Blanquist, Leninist images of revolution, that is, from the idea of capturing the state, and of replacing one government with another. This can be sudden, and can happen

overnight, as it often has. But gutting capitalism, as a world social order, could not happen like that. Gutting capitalism can only happen through a protracted struggle, covering decades, wherein capitalist institutions are drained of power, wealth, and meaning, and replaced with anarchist arrangements. This protracted struggle is in fact going on right now, in numerous places.

It's true that capitalism can only be destroyed on a world scale, because it is a world system, but this does not mean that it will be replaced by a world government or be done in by a "unified global revolution". It can only be done in by hundreds of millions of autonomous communities who have rearranged their social relations along cooperative lines, gotten out of the labor market and out of the commodity market in general, and who have learned to form municipal and regional associations. This will happen sooner in some places and later in others. It will be an uneven development. It will be a process of gutting and weakening capitalist institutions until they are no longer able to repress the emergence of self-governing communities anywhere. To recover self-sufficiency is the key thing, that is, the ability to survive outside of the capitalist market. This can only be done on the local level, which local levels could then be coalesced into associations covering larger territories. But the acf papers disparage "localism" and advocate instead organization on the national and then the global levels.

To picture how capitalism, a global system, can be destroyed and replaced by anarchism, we need to begin with a picture of how an anarchistically organized world would function on the global level. It would do so through negotiated treaties among millions of autonomous communities or neighborhoods, just as now nation-states negotiate numerous treaties about global warming, ozone depletion, the oceans, the antarctic, whales, fishing. There is no global world government regulating any of these things. Nor is there a world authority operating the world postal system. Yet anyone in the world can mail a letter to anywhere else in the world and it will get there, because of treaties that have been negotiated by numerous governments. So to destroy capitalism we have to start building up, first the autonomous communities, and second the negotiated social arrangements, based on free association, among communities. This is obviously not something that can

happen suddenly, all over the world, all at once.

14. Armed Struggle: This is one of the weakest, least developed, arguments in these papers. They believe in armed struggle. They put this forward as a principle. They believe that the capitalist ruling class can only be defeated through armed struggle. They are clear that the ruling class will use its military might to try to crush 'the revolution'. But they believe that this war is winnable, through 'workers militias'. The revolutionary organization will help with this. They write: "A strong anarchist communist organisation can help facilitate the working class itself producing coordinated armed self-defence forces, to counter the police and armies of states

world-wide." They don't get into the details however. How are these militias going to organize themselves, especially on a global level, which the authors seem to think will be needed? More crucially, where are the militias going to get weapons, weapons that will counter tanks, helicopters, riot gear, pepper spray, automatic rifles, stun guns, rubber bullets, gas? There is no discussion of how this will be done or whether or not it is even possible. I believe they haven't really faced up yet to the obstacle to revolution that the overwhelming firepower that today's governments have amassed represents. Instead, they rely (in one of their other two or three passages on armed struggle) on that old standby, rebellion within the state's military forces. They write: "The majority of military personnel are working class and, however indoctrinated they are, we doubt that they will be prepared, on the whole, to shoot down their friends, neighbors and relatives." They believe that: "...the army will desert the state when it becomes clear that the people will no longer tolerate their government and are prepared to take to the streets to prove it." This is a completely unrealistic view. The shock troops of the ruling class are utterly dependable. Desertion is a very feeble hope to build a revolution on. "Taking to the streets" is not a strategy; it is a bad habit. And even where successful, it cannot result in anarchism, but only in a change of government, like

happened in Eastern Europe a decade ago. If armed struggle is needed, they haven't shown how it is possible or how it could win. Nor have they considered the possibility that capitalism might be defeated without armed struggle. In fact, this just might be the only way that it can be defeated, given the near impossibility, I would say, of revolutionary forces ever matching the arsenal of the ruling class. But they haven't examined this. Yet, isn't this one of the most agonizing questions facing anarchists today -- how do we defeat the stupendous military might of the world's capitalist ruling classes? It will obviously take more than a few scattered passages of cliches to come to terms with this issue.

15. The Notion of the 'Leadership of Ideas': Now we come to the heart of the matter. But first a brief comment on the phrase itself, and the two words in it. *Leadership*. Aren't anarchists against leadership? Doesn't leadership imply followership? Don't anarchists believe in direct democracy, self-government, and cooperative projects? So why are we talking about 'leadership'? *Ideas*. Can ideas be separated from practice? Have our authors fallen here into the notorious separation of ideas and action so characteristic of vulgar marxism and the dominant bourgeois culture in general? Can you have a correct (read: revolutionary) body of ideas abstracted from any concrete practice? Our militants at the acf seem to think so. Here is a quote from point seven in their list on the role of the revolutionary organization. "Defending the independence and self-organisation of mass movements does not mean that the revolutionary organisation does not seek to spread its ideas in these movements. In this sense we recognise and fight for 'the leadership of ideas' within the working class through example and suggestion. In a non-revolutionary period the potentially revolutionary masses by and large hold conservative ideas and values. In this period there needs to be an organization that holds on to revolutionary ideas. This leadership of ideas means a clearer understanding of hierarchical society, the concept of self-organised society, and of the problem of Leninism."

In this statement we see several of the problems already discussed above: (1) use of the concept of 'masses' and 'mass movements'. (2) An image of the revolution as happening suddenly, thus creating a separation between

revolutionary and non-revolutionary periods; there is no notion here of protracted struggle, or any sense that the revolution might be already under way, might be going on now. (3) Why is it only the workingclass that needs to be won over? What

about the petty bourgeoisie? Wouldn't it help tremendously if a lot of small business families could be persuaded to convert to cooperatively owned workplaces?

There is another belief however that undergirds the notion of 'the leadership of ideas', namely that the distinction between conservative and revolutionary ideas is unambiguous, fixed, given, perhaps even objective; that is, revolutionary ideas are something that one can know, for sure. For acf militants, 'revolutionary' is defined as uncompromisingly anti-capitalist, anti-elections, anti-unions (with qualifications), anarchist, and so forth. This sounds straightforward enough, but whenever we have to examine concrete cases, things get a little murkier. Is the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas revolutionary or reformist? Were the massive demonstrations in Belgrade in the fall of 1999, which brought on the resignation of Milosevic, revolutionary or counter-revolutionary? Were the workplace seizures that took place in Yugoslavia shortly thereafter a step toward workers control or did they usher in neoliberalism?

You see, there is no 'objective', fixed definition of what 'radical' is. It has to be worked out anew as events happen. This is why it's pretty ridiculous to think that there can be a 'revolutionary organisation' that preserves, defends, and propagates such radical ideas, because the meaning of radical is constantly changing, constantly being reforged. In the same way, we cannot protect ourselves against splits in our organizations by making sure that incoming members agree to a set of 'revolutionary' beliefs before they are allowed to join, because new situations are going to emerge, and the 'revolutionary' position with regard to them will have to be thrashed out all

over again. Similarly, even if we had anarchy, and direct democracy, the correct course on any given dispute would have to be debated and worked out in our assemblies, on a case by case basis.

I myself have a fairly well defined set of beliefs which I believe are revolutionary (which have nevertheless changed over the years), and I have at various times belonged to groups which were agitating for those beliefs, but we didn't see ourselves as a 'revolutionary organization', loaded down with a ton of leninist baggage, like the ACF does. We were just a small group of people agitating for the kind of world we wanted. I would be a lot more comfortable with the ACF if they would just drop all the stuff about being a repository for the past revolutionary achievements of the working class, about assisting the working class to establish worldwide unity, about making sure that reformist tendencies in the working class are defeated, about advising the working class on establishing militias with which to win the class war.

Couldn't they simply admit that they are just a tiny group of people in England who are agitating for anarchism, and that they are not even involved themselves directly in attacking ruling class power, for the most part, but are, as it were, content to play the role of *protagonists* of the proletariat? Wouldn't this be a happier stance? Propaganda after all is important. Sometimes it is about all that we can do. We should not lose sight though of the truth that it is always better to be actually revolting rather than only advocating revolt. I have read the founding documents of the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists in the United States. I believe they have a clearer, more realistic, and less leninist self-conception, as being primarily that of a propaganda and agitational organization.

Lest I be misunderstood, I want to stress that I think it is important for people to define what they think is revolutionary and to fight for it. I'm glad that the ACF has taken an uncompromisingly anti-capitalist stand, glad that they oppose electoral politics and business unions, and glad that they are agitating for anarchism. What I object to is the still basically Leninism framework within which they are doing this. A nice little critique of Lenin was published by Ron Taber in

1988 called simply *A Look at Leninism*. Chapters five and six of this short work are devoted to "Lenin's Theory of Knowledge". It is rare in radical writings for this kind of connection to have been made, between epistemology and vanguard politics, although it has been done before (see for example Anton Pannekoek's 1937 work, *Lenin as Philosopher*, and more generally, hegelian marxism). I myself spelled out this connection in a 1974 pamphlet entitled *Four Way Criticism: A Critique of the Notion of 'Criticism/Self-Criticism'*. It is worthwhile to study these texts, and radical theories of knowledge in general; otherwise we will get bogged down again in that old mechanical marxist quagmire of the 'false consciousness of the working class.'

16. The Role of the Revolutionary Organization: A strong theme in the polemics of these papers focuses on the need for a revolutionary organization. They complain, in "ACF -- The First Ten Years" that: "Many libertarian revolutionaries are as yet unconvinced of the need to create a specific libertarian communist organisation. They remain tied to the ideas of local groups, or at best regional federations loosely linked, being adequate for the very difficult tasks of introducing libertarian revolutionary ideas and practices to the mass of the population." Apparently, this has been a contentious issue (whether or not to build a 'revolutionary organization'), and has re-emerged periodically in England and elsewhere in the anarchist movement (according to their brief history of "Anarchist Communism in Britain").

I encountered this debate myself recently at a small gathering of twenty-five anarchists in Chicago who had met to discuss the desirability and feasibility of establishing a Midwest Anarchist Federation. The dilemma, I think, when it comes to organizing among ourselves, is that the more time we spend doing this the less time we have to try to actually establish anarchist social relations and defend them. We need to be better organized among ourselves in order to more effectively agitate for what we believe to be a revolutionary program.

But organizing among ourselves is still one step removed from actually participating directly in revolution. If this is all we ever do, the revolutionary movement will continue to be sluggish. Wouldn't it be better to actually be trying to set up neighborhood assemblies, household assemblies, and workplace assemblies, and thus start taking the first steps toward gutting capitalism and establishing a free society, than to be spending the bulk of our time maintaining what is essentially only a propaganda organization.

Propaganda work is better than nothing of course. Many people are not really in a position to directly take on ruling class power at home, at work, in the neighborhood, or anywhere else (although it's hard to believe that most people couldn't find some way to confront our rulers). So proselytizing for revolution is a useful thing. But that can be done in many ways, by writers, publishers, film makers, musicians, journalists, booksellers, broadcasters, and so forth. Is a 'revolutionary organization', with a 'unified theory and practice', actually even the best way to agitate for anarchism? In just a little over a year, Indymedia has become a fantastic propaganda force for democracy and revolution, and it is not a 'revolutionary organization' (as pictured by the acf). Since the Zapatistas have burst on the world scene, we have an historical event which we could usefully study for clues about how to proceed, strategically. Several small communities of people in Chiapas actually attacked their rulers. They then succeeded in getting their messages out, rallied international support, formed alliances with other progressive forces in Mexico, established networks of communication, and so forth. Perhaps the same pattern could be followed elsewhere, in factories, farms, or neighborhoods, wherever revolts are taking place. Is a

'revolutionary organization' really needed to coordinate all this? Wouldn't this be a step backwards? I think so.

Notes

* *The Role of Revolutionary Organization*, by the Anarchist Communist Federation, London, 1991, 9 pages (including "Aims and Principles").

** I have spelled this out in greater detail in my pamphlet *Getting Free: A Sketch of An Association of Democratic, Autonomous Neighborhoods and How To Create It*, the latest version of which is available at:

http://site.www.umb.edu/faculty/salzman_g/Strategy/GettingFree

(a). (1) ACF--The First Ten Years; (2) As We See It; (3) Text of a talk, by Mike of ACF Nottingham, given at an open meeting at the Anarchist Bookfair, 18th October 1997, at Conway Hall, London, England; (4) The Union Makes us Strong? Syndicalism: A Critical Analysis; (5) Anarchist Communism in Britain; (6) Beyond Resistance: A Revolutionary Manifesto for the Millennium (Third Edition, Spring 2000); (7) The Future Society (a talk presented by Claire and Mike of ACF, Nottingham, at the Sheffield Red and Black Centre on July 6, 1997).

(b). I have discussed the issues of radicalization and reform versus revolution at greater length in my essay on 'The Weakness of a Politics of Protest'.

A Stake not a Mistake: *On Not Seeing the Enemy*

By Jared James, October, 2001

I spent several years in the early sixties studying Underdevelopment. It was

frustrating, in that none of the theories I examined really seemed to explain the phenomenon. That is, the Theories of Development that were prevalent then (only in mainstream discourse, I later learned) didn't really answer the question: Why are some countries poor? I would look at US Aid programs, only to conclude that they didn't work, that they didn't help countries develop, and often got in the way. My response at that time was to argue, and to try to call to the attention of US Aid administrators, that the programs weren't working, and were not achieving the results they were suppose to. The programs were not facilitating development and economic growth in the countries they were suppose to be benefiting. Fortunately for me, with the explosion and re-emergence of radical consciousness in late sixties, I was able to overcome this naiveté.

Unfortunately though, for much of the American Left (especially for its so-called progressive wing), this naiveté, this bad habit of not seeing the enemy, this tendency to think that the US government's policies and actions are just mistakes, this seemingly ineradicable belief that the US government means well, is the most common outlook. It was certainly the majoritarian belief among those who opposed the Vietnam War. I helped write a broad sheet once, which we distributed at a big anti-war demonstration in Washington DC in November 1969, and which was titled "Vietnam is a Stake not a Mistake". In this document we spelled out the imperial reasons which explained why the government was waging war, quite deliberately and rationally, against Vietnam.

In subsequent decades there has been no end to the commentators who take the 'this is a mistake' line. Throughout the low intensity (i.e., terrorist) wars against Nicaragua and El Salvador in the 1980s we heard this complaint again and again. It is currently seen in the constant stream of commentaries on the US assault on Colombia. It has been heard repeatedly during the past two years in the demonstrations against the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. Protesters complain that the WTO's policies of structural adjustment are having the opposite effect of what they're suppose to. That is, they are hindering, not facilitating, development, and causing poverty, not alleviating it.

Two years ago, in 1999, throughout the 78 day bombing attack on

Yugoslavia, much of the outpouring of progressive commentary on the event (that which didn't actually endorse the bombing that is) argued that "this is a mistake".[1] My favorite quote from that episode, was from Robert Hayden, Director of the Center for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, being interviewed by Amy Goodman on *Democracy Now*, April 19, 1999. He said: "But we have the Clinton administration that developed a diplomacy that seems to have been intended to have produced this war, and now the Clinton administration's actions seem determined to produce a wider war." Amy Goodman: "Why would the Clinton Administration want to produce a war?" Hayden: "Boy, you know what? You've got me there. And as I say, you have to go back to the simple principles of incompetence. Never assume

competence on the part of these guys." This was surely the bottom of the pit for the 'this is a mistake' crowd. I could cite quotes like this by the dozen, but instead let me turn to our current "war".

So what has been the response of the 'progressive community' to the bombing of Afghanistan? As usual, they just don't get it. They just can't seem to grasp the simple fact that the government does this stuff on purpose. Endlessly, progressives talk as if the government is just making a mistake, does not see the real consequences of its actions, or is acting irrationally, and they hope to correct the government's course by pointing out the errors of its ways. Progressives assume that their goals -- peace, justice, well-being -- are also the government's goals. So when they look at what the government is doing, they get alarmed and puzzled, because it is obvious that the government's actions are not achieving these goals. So they cry out: "Hey, this policy doesn't lead to peace!" or "Hey, this policy doesn't achieve justice (or democracy, or development)!" By pointing this out, they hope to educate the government, to help it to see its mistakes, to convince it that its policies are not having the desired results.[2]

How can they not see that the US government acts deliberately, and that it knows what it is doing? How can they not see that the government's goals are not peace and justice, but empire and profit. It *wants* these wars, this repression. These policies are not mistakes; they are not irrational; they are not based on a failure of moral insight (since morality is not even a factor in their considerations); they are not aberrations; they are not based on a failure to analyze the situation correctly; they are not based on ignorance. This repression, these bombings, wars, massacres, assassinations, and covert actions are the coldly calculated, rational, consistent, intelligent, and informed actions of a ruling class determined at all costs to keep its power and wealth and preserve its way of life (capitalism). It has demonstrated great historical presence, persistence, and continuity in pursuing this objective. This ruling class *knows* that it is committing atrocities, *knows* that it is destroying democracy, hope, welfare, peace, and justice, *knows* that it is murdering, massacring, slaughtering, poisoning, torturing, lying, stealing, and *it doesn't care*. Yet most progressives seem to believe that if only they point out often enough and loud enough that the ruling class is murdering people, that it will wake up, take notice, apologize, and stop doing it.

Here is a typical expression of this naiveté (written by an author, Brian Willson, who was in the process of introducing a list of US interventions abroad!):

"Many of us are continually disturbed and grief stricken because it seems that our U.S. government does not yet understand: (a) the historical social, cultural, and economic issues that underlay most of the political and ecological problems of the world; (b) the need to comply with, as legally agreed to, rather than continually defy, international law and international institutions established for addressing conflict; and (c) that military solutions, including production, sale, and use of the latest in technological weapons, are simply ill-equipped and wrong-headed for solving fundamental social and economic problems." [3] He is wrong on all three counts. (a) The US government has an intimate, detailed knowledge of the social, cultural, and economic characteristics of every country it intervenes in. It is especially familiar with the ethnic, linguistic, political, and religious divisions within the country. It is not

interested in how these issues "underlay most of the political and ecological problems of the world", since it is not interested in those problems, certainly not in solving them, since it is the main creator of those problems. Rather, it uses its expert knowledge to manipulate events within the country in order to advance its own goals, profit and empire. (b) The US government understands perfectly that it expressly needs *not* to comply with international law in order to maintain its ability to act unilaterally, unfettered by any constraints, to advance its imperial aims. The claim that the US defies international law because of a misunderstanding is absurd. (c) Who says that the US government is trying to solve "fundamental social and economic problems"? These are not its aims at all. The objectives that it does pursue, consciously and relentlessly, namely profit and empire, are in fact the *causes* of these very "social and economic problems". Furthermore, for its true aims, military solutions, far from being "ill-equipped and wrong-headed", work exceptionally well. Military might sustains the empire. Arming every little client regime of the international ruling class with 'the latest in technological weapons' is necessary, and quite effective, in maintaining the repressive apparatus needed to defend empire, in addition to raking in lots of profit for the arms manufacturers. But evidently Mr. Willson "does not yet understand" any of these things.

Let's take another example. Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman, otherwise very sensible writers, complain that "bombing a desperately poor country under the yoke of a repressive regime is a wrongheaded response [to the "unspeakable acts of violence" committed on Sept. 11]. "The U.S. bombing of Afghanistan should cease immediately," they say. They discuss three reasons: "1. The policy of bombing increases the risk of further terrorism against the United States. 2. The bombing is intensifying a humanitarian nightmare in Afghanistan. 3. There are better ways to seek justice." All three statements are true of course, but irrelevant, because seeking justice, avoiding humanitarian nightmares, and reducing the risk of terrorism do not enter into the calculations of US policy makers. Quite the contrary, US policy makers *create* injustice, humanitarian nightmares, and

terrorism, throughout the world, in pursuit of the imperial objective of making profit, and this has been thoroughly documented in thousands of scholarly studies. So for Mokhiber and Weissman to talk in this way, and phrase the problem in this way, exposes their failure to really comprehend the enemy we face, which in turn prevents them from looking for effective strategies to defeat that enemy, like so many other opponents of the "war". Hence all the moralizing, the bulk of which is definitely directed at the rulers, not at the ruled. That is, it is not an attempt to win over the ruled, but an attempt to win over the rulers. [4]

It's what I call the "we should" crowd -- all those people who hope to have a voice in the formation of policy, people whose stances are basically that of consultants to the ruling class. "We" should do this, "we" shouldn't do that, as if they had anything at all to say about what our rulers do. This is the normal stance among the bootlicking intelligentsia of course. But what is it doing among progressives and radicals? Even if their stance is seen to be not exactly that of consultants, but that of citizens making demands upon their government, what makes them think that the government ever listens? I think this attitude -- the "we should" attitude -- is rooted in part at least in the fact that most progressives still believe in nations and governments. They believe that this is "our" country, and that this is "our" government, or at least should be. So Kevin Danaher says that "we should get control of the government." They identify themselves as Americans, or Germans, or Mexicans, or Swedes. So they are constantly advising and making

demands that 'their' government should do this and that. If they would reject nationalism altogether, and states and governments, they could begin to see another way.

A variation of the 'this is a mistake' theme has appeared in commentaries on the present "war", on Afghanistan. Progressives argue that the US is "falling into a trap". They argue that Osama bin Laden had hoped to provoke the US

into doing just what it is doing, attacking Afghanistan. In their view, the US government is being stupid, acting blindly, responding irrationally, and showing incompetence. That is, it is "making a mistake". It never seems to occur to these analysts that the government may actually be awake, even alert, or that it jumped at the opportunity offered it by the attacks of September Eleven to do what it had wanted to do anyway -- seize Afghanistan, build a big new base in Uzbekistan, declare unending war on the enemies of Empire everywhere, and initiate draconian repression against internal dissent in order to achieve "domestic tranquility".

I saw yet another variation on the theme just recently. John Tirman writes about "Unintended Consequences".[5] He thinks that "No matter how cautious generals and political leaders are ... unseen and unintended [results] occur, at times as a bitter riptide which overwhelms the original rationales for engaging in armed combat. This unpredictable cycle of action and reaction has thwarted U.S. policy in southwest Asia for 50 years." It's the usual mistake: Tirman imputes policies to the US government which it does not have. US policy has not been thwarted, it has been highly successful. The US has succeeded in keeping control of Middle Eastern oil for the past half century. This is what it wanted to do, and this is what it did. Tirman however reviews the history of US intervention in the Middle East, beginning with the overthrow of Mossedegh in Iran in 1953, and sees it as one long blunder, nothing but bumbling incompetence, complicated further by 'unintended consequences' which thwart the goals of American foreign policy. He seems to think that the US was (or "should be") trying to reduce US dependence on Middle Eastern oil, fighting Islamic fundamentalism, reducing human suffering, assisting in economic development, promoting democracy, and so on -- anything and everything except what it is actually doing, keeping control of Middle Eastern oil, and using any means necessary to do so. Tirman is aware of course that this (oil) is the true aim of US policy, because he quotes directly from US officials who state this objective explicitly, but somehow this doesn't sink in. Instead, he finally asks in exasperation: "What will be next in this series of haunting mistakes?"

Ariel Dorfman, author of a creative critique of US imperialism, in the form of *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*, was

being interviewed on *Democracy Now* by Amy Goodman, on October 25, 2001, about the assassination of Digna Ochoa, the leading civil rights lawyer in Mexico. When asked by Goodman to put the murder in the larger context of what was happening in the world, like in Afghanistan, Dorfman replied: "Because the US is in Afghanistan and it needs all its allies behind it, they are going to turn a blind eye to all the abuses of authority that are happening." Pardon me? A blind eye? Isn't the US government in the business, with both eyes open, of murdering labor leaders, leftists, progressives, and civil rights activists all over the world? Dorfman went on to say that now would be "a good moment that President Bush could call his friend Vicente Fox and say: 'I want the murderers of Digna Ochoa put on trial'." Excuse me! Is he kidding? It's quite probable that Bush did call Fox, but

with a rather different message, namely, to tell him that while the world's attention was focused on Afghanistan, now would be a good time to kill Digna Ochoa y Placido.

An Afghani man from Kabul escaped into Pakistan carrying a packet of letters addressed to the world's leaders, "handwritten messages from his panic-stricken community."

"The world must know what is happening in Afghanistan," said Mohammed Sardar, 46, his voice ragged with anxiety and anger. "The terrorists and the leaders are still free, but the people are dying and there is no one to listen to us. I must get to President Bush and the others and tell them they are making a terrible mistake." [6]

The widespread belief that the US government has good intentions, a belief held onto tenaciously in spite of decades of overwhelming empirical evidence refuting it, has got to be one of the greatest phenomena of mass delusion in history. It would take a twenty-first century Freud to unravel this one. Here is a government that has already bombed two other countries to smithereens just in the past ten years, first Iraq and then Yugoslavia (not to mention endless interventions abroad since its inception [7]). Now it is bombing Afghanistan

to smithereens -- hospitals, fuel supplies, food depots, electrical systems, water systems, radio stations, telephone exchanges, remote villages, mosques, old folks homes, UN offices, Red Cross warehouses, clinics, schools, neighborhoods, roads, dams, airports -- and a victim of the assault escapes to plead for help from the very people who are attacking him. To have created such an illusion as this is surely one of the greatest feats of propaganda ever seen.[8]

So although it is important to try to shatter this illusion, it is ultimately not enough, and of very limited effectiveness, simply to list all the atrocities committed by our rulers, carefully expose all their double standards, accuse them of being the real terrorists, morally condemn what they are doing, or call for peace. All these arguments are useful of course in the battle for the hearts and minds of average people, *if average people ever heard them*, which they do not, for the most part. And if they do hear them, it's like they (most of them) are tuning in to madness, they're so brainwashed. It takes a lot more than mere arguments to break through the mind set of a thoroughly indoctrinated people.

Of all the dozens of comments that I read on the government's response to the attacks of September Eleven, precious few raised the key question: How do we stop them (the government, from attacking Afghanistan)? For the most part, progressive commentators don't even raise questions of strategy.[9] They are too busy analyzing ruling class ideology, in order to highlight its hypocrisies. Proving that the ruling class is hypocritical doesn't get us very far. It's useful of course. Doing this work is an important task. Noam Chomsky, for example, devotes himself almost exclusively to this task, and we should be thankful that we have his research. He usually does mention also, somewhere in almost every speech, article, or interview, that 'it doesn't have to be this way', that this situation we are in is not inevitable, and that we can change it. But when asked "How?", he replies, "Organize, agitate, educate." Well, sure. But the Christian Coalition organizes, agitates, and educates. So did the Nazis and the Klu Klux Klan. The Taliban organizes, agitates, and educates. So does the ruling class, and it does so in a massive and highly successful way, which results in overwhelming hegemony for its point of view.

In spite of more than three decades of blistering exposés of US foreign policy, and in spite of the fact that he is an anarchist, and is thus supposedly against all government, at least in the long run, Chomsky still regularly uses the 'universal we'. Much of the time Chomsky says "The US government does this, or does that," but some of the time he says "We do this, or we do that," thus including himself, and us, as agents in the formation and execution of US foreign policy. This is an instance of what I call the 'universal we'. It presumes a democracy that does not exist. The average American has no say whatsoever in the formation and execution of US foreign policy. Nor do we even have any influence in picking the people who are making it, since we have no say over who gets to run for office or what they do after they are elected. So to say something like "we shouldn't be bombing Afghanistan", as so many progressives do, is highly misleading, and expresses a misperception and misdiagnosis of the situation we are in.

In the question period following Chomsky's major address on "The New War Against Terror" (delivered at MIT on October 18) [10], Chomsky was challenged by a man in the audience who accused Chomsky of blaming America for the tragedy of September 11. Chomsky correctly said that the term America is an abstraction and cannot do anything. But then he said that he blamed himself, and his questioner, and others present, for this event (implying that 'we' are responsible for what 'our' government does). This is a half-truth at best. The blame for September Eleven rests squarely on those who did it. Next, to the extent that a connection can be proved between their actions and US foreign policy, the US government is to blame, and the ruling class that controls the government. Average Americans are to blame for what the US government does only in the sense that they have not managed to change or block its policies, either because they haven't tried or because they have tried but have failed.

Of course, the category of Average American is an abstraction as well. Many average Americans vigorously support US foreign policy. Others oppose it, but have failed to change it. Those of us who want a real democracy, and want to put an end to Empire, have so far failed to do so, and only in this sense are we in anyway responsible for September Eleven. But even this failure must be judged in light of the relative strengths that the parties bring to the fight. We cannot fault ourselves for being defeated by an opponent with overwhelmingly superior forces, as long as we fought as bravely and as hard as we could. Our task is to find ways to enhance our strengths and weaken theirs. To fail to make a distinction between the ruling class and the rest of us hinders this task, causes us to presume a democracy that does not exist, to misunderstand exactly what we are up against, and to misidentify the enemy. It thus prevents us from devising a successful strategy for defeating this enemy.

In this same speech, which was over an hour long, Chomsky didn't once mention oil. When questioned about this during the discussion that followed, he said that of course oil was always there in the background, for anything happening in the Middle East, but he didn't see oil as an immediate factor in the current crisis. He is surely wrong about this. There is plenty of evidence that securing Afghanistan, in order to get a pipeline through to the Arabian Sea, is a key consideration for US policy makers. They are already in the process of building a huge new military base in Uzbekistan (just as they are building one in Kosovo), and have concluded a long-term agreement with the Uzbekistan government to do so, similar to ones they have made in Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, Philippines, and elsewhere. These bases will be used to secure the

Central Asian oil and gas reserves for the West. They will also be thrown into service to accomplish another aim, beyond oil, namely, to facilitate the recolonization of the Balkans and Russia, and to ensure that they do not

return to Communism or try to escape the New World Order. This is the larger geopolitical objective that drives the Empire builders.

Howard Zinn seems to think it is all a struggle between an 'old way of thinking', based on war and violence, and a 'new way of thinking' based on peace and nonviolence. Hardly a hint here of Empire, and no hint at all of Profit and Capital. As moving and inspiring as his remarks were on the September Eleven crisis,[11] they just didn't cut it, as concerns getting ourselves out of the horrible situation we are in. Zinn of course is very aware (but most so-called progressives aren't) of ruling classes, empire, capital, and profit, and has labored long and hard to write their histories and people's opposition to them. But somehow this doesn't get reflected in his thinking about what to do about it all now. When it comes to strategy, moral condemnation is where he rested his case, in his response to these events at least.

In a speech on October 21, in Burlington, Vermont, Zinn said that we must change from being a military superpower to being a moral superpower.[12] During the speech he had vividly described the many foreign invasions undertaken by the US government and their devastating consequences, claimed that America was not a peaceful nation, reminded us that governments lie, pointed out that oil is the key to American foreign policy in the Middle East, and described the vast deployment of military bases and armament all over the world in order to extend American power. He may even have mentioned profit once or twice. But he never once mentioned 'capitalism' (let alone "colonialism", "imperialism", or "ruling class"), nor did he in any way indicate an awareness that the projection of American power all over the world is for a reason, that it is being used in defense of a particular social order, and that this social order benefits, and is therefore being defended by, a particular class.

It's almost as if Zinn thinks that the US government could simply pack up and go home, if it only wanted to -- dismantle its bases, pull its armies, fleets, and planes out, and leave the world alone. If the US ruling class did that, it, and the system upon which it feeds, capitalism, would collapse. So we know that it is not going to dismantle its forward bases and leave the world alone, no

matter how hard we try to shame it with our moralizing. Zinn did not seem to grasp this fact or to recognize that there is an enemy that has to be defeated, before the \$350 billion could be taken away from the Pentagon and used to help people (another one of his recommendations). And when it came time to talk about what to do about it all, he recommended organizing demonstrations and writing letters to our congressional representatives! The 'peace now' protesters strike a similar stance. Of course, it was heartening to see an anti-war movement blossom almost immediately. But it was also disheartening. It meant that radicals were letting the war-mongers set the agenda. Instead of continuing the fight against neoliberalism and its institutions, and against capitalism, oppositionists suddenly dropped all this to launch an anti-war campaign. The candlelight vigils, especially, seemed to me a pathetic response to a war-mongering, repressive government. This happens again and again. The government launches a war of aggression, and the peaceniks take to the streets, with their candles, crying "peace now" and "no more war". Do they ever win? Have they ever stopped even one war? Do they ever even

think about how they could win? Doesn't the inefficacy of their response prove that they are not really serious about peace? Do they ever think about ways of actually stopping the murderers rather than just pleading with them not to kill? They keep saying that peace cannot be achieved by going to war. Who says the US government wants peace!? They quote A.J. Muste as saying that war is not the way to peace; peace is the way. Is this relevant? Does it make sense to quote such thoughts to a government that has always engaged, from its inception two hundred years ago, in systematic mass murder?

Similarly with the bulk of the other progressive commentators. They are just trying to change the government's policy, not stop them and deprive them of power. Here is a typical sentence. Rahul Mahajan and Robert Jensen write: "The next step is for us to build a movement that can change our

government's barbaric and self-destructive policy." [13] You see, from the government's point of view, its policy is not barbaric or self-destructive. It is intelligent, self-serving, and self-preserving. Mahajan and Jensen actually pretty much admit this in their piece, by reasoning that "This war is about the extension of U.S. power. It has little to do with bringing the terrorists to justice, or with vengeance." (Such a view is rather rare among progressives actually.) They argue that there are three other motives for the war, from the government's point of view: the desire to defend "imperial credibility", to control "oil and natural gas of Central Asia," and "to push a right-wing domestic agenda." Nevertheless, in spite of these insights, they still stop short of realizing that they therefore have to fight, stop, and neutralize the government, rather than just change its policy. Given who the government is, who it serves (capital, the rich), and what its interests and priorities are, it can't change its policies into those favored by progressives, not and survive as an imperial power that is.

It is not only as regards foreign policy that the 'this is a mistake' line makes an appearance. Progressive commentators suffer from this affliction with regards to domestic policy too. If the government passes a tax cut to benefit the richest corporations and superrich individuals, but calls it a package to stimulate the economy, progressives complain loudly that the bill doesn't accomplish what it's suppose to, that it doesn't stimulate the economy. Why can't they simply admit that the government (the Administration *and* Congress) *intended* and *wanted* to give more money to the rich ruling class, because it is from, and represents the interests of, this class, and that it called its bill an economic stimulus package only in order to sell it and to deceive the American public?

The 'this is a mistake' crowd was out in full force in the discussion surrounding the new anti-terrorist legislation which the Bush Administration submitted to Congress immediately after the September Eleven attacks. Attorney General Ashcroft said that the government had taken pains not to abridge any of our precious civil rights in its efforts to deal with the terrorist threat, and had tried to strike a balance between security and liberty. So progressives took him at his word and started pointing out that this wasn't true, that the bill did step on our civil rights and did not strike a good balance

between security and liberty. Then they started coming up with a bunch of excuses. They said the bill was 'rammed through Congress'. Well, why did Congress permit this? They said the leaders of Congress bypassed the usual rules and procedures, and dealt with the bill basically in secret? Well, if Congress is committed to democracy, why can't it practice democracy in its own halls? And why weren't there attempts to stop this secret handling of the

bill? They said that Congress didn't even have a chance to read the bill. Well, why didn't it take the time to do so, and delay the vote until it had?

This bill, the so-called USA Patriot Act of 2001, which shreds the fourth amendment (protection against unwarranted search and seizure), gives the government the right to spy on everyone, bypasses criminal law, the courts, and due process in numerous instances, plus dozens more horrors, was passed in the Senate by a vote of 98-1. So this flaming liberal senator, Edward Kennedy, didn't realize what he was voting for? Please. He knew. They knew. *And they wanted it.* The Administration and Congress (minus 66 representatives in the House and 1 senator in the Senate) were united in their desire to further strengthen the Police State that they have been building for some time. They are not committed to democracy. They are committed to preserving capitalism, which is their lifeblood. You think they haven't noticed the growing protest movement that has erupted onto the world scene in the last two years? You think they're not worried about that movement and determined to stop it?

A friendly, tolerant, enlightened, pseudo-democratic capitalism is no longer historically feasible (not that it was ever really much of any of these things). We are living in the age of Zero Tolerance Capitalism, with its Global War Machine, its Mammoth Intelligence Agencies, its Secret Police, its Echelons and Carnivores, its Covert Operations, its humungous Police Departments, its ubiquitous Security Guards, its Death Squads, its National Security States, its Swat Teams and Special Forces, its State Terrorism and Torture, its High-

Tech Surveillance, its Non-Lethal Weapons, its Low-Intensity Warfare, its Para-Militaries, its Mercenaries, its Smart Bombs, its Prison-Industrial Complex, its Chemical, Biological, and Nuclear weapons, and its World Bank and World Trade Organization. Now, with the US Congress's aptly-named USA Patriot Act of 2001, it has finally managed to shred the Bill of Rights. The US ruling class never wanted the Bill of Rights to begin with; it was forced on them.

So the Hitlers and Mussolinis of the world have won after all (almost). All the while we were thinking that we had rid the world of fascism in the Second World War, fascism was sneaking in the back door, and turning America into a World Fascist Empire. Zero Tolerance fascist-like regimes, supported and often installed by the United States, have long existed throughout most of the world -- Mobuto in Zaire, Pinochet in Chile, Somoza in Nicaragua, Armas in Guatemala, Franco in Spain, Papadopoulos in Greece, Pahlavi in Iran, Marcos in the Philippines, Sharon in Israel. Now the repressive, Zero Tolerance, National Security State, has come home to America. They will probably start torturing and killing in Europe and America the way they have been doing everywhere else. (They are already torturing and killing, but they have managed so far to keep it under wraps). Will they get away with it?

How many centuries of mass murder does it take to prove that ruling classes dependent on and devoted to a system based on profit are impervious to moral appeal, and are beyond redemption, certainly as long as they have any power left to continue killing? Moral appeals are useless against such people. Were moral appeals enough to defeat the Nazis, and German and Italian Fascism? Didn't we have to fight them? Similarly with our current war-mongers and empire builders, with American Fascism, if you will. They must be faced with real opposition, although not necessarily military opposition, which actually is not even an option for us, given that it is so

impossible for poor people to acquire the weapons. It is thus ineffective to even think about fighting a war in traditional terms, as this is not a possible, nor a winning, strategy. All the same, the rulers' power to exploit, oppress, murder, and wage war must be destroyed. We need to come up with a strategy for doing this. It certainly cannot be done merely by taking to the streets, holding candlelight vigils, or exposing their hypocrisy. The war must be fought, to be sure, but fought in new ways, ways that are within our means and that can lead to victory.

The urgent need to reassemble ourselves to take power away from criminals.

I believe that there is a way to defeat this global ruling class, but it means that we have to reassemble ourselves socially on a massive scale. We have to gather ourselves together in directly democratic, face-to-face deliberative assemblies at work, at home, and in our neighborhoods. This would give us a foundation from which to begin draining power and wealth away from the ruling class. Without these social forms, we are necessarily restricted to all the various forms of reformism, restricted to trying to work through NGOs or state and national governments, to changing ruling class behavior, to making moral appeals, or to seeking to get or reverse certain legislation. But by reorganizing ourselves into a multitude of small, decentralized, directly democratic, face-to-face, local assemblies, coalesced together into inter-regional associations by means of voluntary treaties, we can begin to take back control of our lives and communities, and get the ruling class off our backs.

I have sketched out this strategy in my essay *Getting Free* [14], and have discussed there in some detail its various implications. As long as the world is organized on the basis of governments and corporations, nations and profit, there will never be peace, justice, freedom, or democracy. Our task is nothing less than to get rid of the social order we live in, and to create another one to take its place. If we fail to do this now, we will shortly find ourselves living in a full-fledged world fascist empire a thousand times more powerful and sophisticated than the Nazis ever could have been, and from which it will be

next to impossible to escape.

Footnotes

Note: This essay is taken from a longer work, "The Declaration of War on Terrorists". Several of the topics I only allude to here, like the question of fascism, US interventions abroad, the repression of domestic dissent (and the USA Patriot Act of 2001), fundamentalism, the hidden agenda of oil and empire, are discussed in more detail there, rather than cryptically as here, and thus make somewhat more sense.

For now however, for those interested, you might want to examine the following: William Blum, *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions since World War II* (Common Courage, 1995, 457 pages); Edward S. Herman, *The Real Terror Network: Terrorism in Fact and Propaganda* (South End Press, 1982, 252 pages); David McGowan, *Understanding the F-Word: American Fascism and the Politics of Illusion* (iUniverse, 2001, 276 pages).

Analyses of the USA Patriot Act of 2001 can be found on the web sites of the American Civil Liberties Union (www.aclu.org) and the Electronic Frontier Foundation (www.eff.org).

On fundamentalism, see Fotis Terzakis, "Irrationalism, Fundamentalism, and Religious Revival: The Colors of the Chess-Board," *Democracy and Nature*, Vol 4, Nos. 2/3 (Issue 11/12, no date, but c.1998), also available on the Internet at: (www.democracynature.org/dn/vol4/terzakis_irrationalism.htm); Colin Ward, "Fundamentalism", *The Raven*, No. 27 (Freedom Press) on the Net at (www.ecn.org/freedom/Raven/fund.html); and Frederick Clarkson, *Eternal Hostility: The Struggle between Theocracy and Democracy* (Common Courage, 1996, 277 pages).

On Empire, see Michael Parenti, *Against Empire* (City Lights, 1995, 216

pages), Peter Gowan, *The Global Gamble: Washington's Faustian Bid for World Dominance* (Verso, 1999, 230 pages), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Harvard University Press, 2001, 478 pages), and Joseph Gerson and Bruce Birchard, editors, *The Sun Never Sets: Confronting the Network of Foreign U.S. Military Bases* (South End Press, 1991, 389 pages). A few of the better essays on the attack on Afghanistan, which for the most part don't make the mistake of thinking that the US government doesn't know what it's doing, are (all dates are from 2001): Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St Clair, "Bush's Wars", *Counterpunch*, Sept 21 (plus many more fine essays on this crisis by these authors posted on *Counterpunch* web site: www.counterpunch.org); John Pilger, "Hidden Agenda Behind War on Terror," *Mirror /uk*, October 29 (plus many other excellent essays, at <http://pilger.carlton.com/print>); Michel Chossudovsky, "Osamagate," (posted October 9, at www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO110A.print.html); Francis A. Boyle, "No War Against Afghanistan!," Oct 18 (msanews.nynet.net/Scholars/Boyle/nolwar.html); Edward Said, "The Clash of Ignorance," the *Nation*, October 22; Sitaram Yechury, "America, Oil, and Afghanistan," *The Hindu*, October 13; Edward S. Herman, "Antiterrorism as a Cover for Terrorism," (www.zmag.org/hermancover.htm); Arundhati Roy, "War Is Peace," *Outlook*, Oct. 18 (later published in the *Guardian*, Oct 23); Sunera Thobani, "War Frenzy," (www.neravt.com/left/thobani.html); Michael Parenti, "Terrorism Meets Reactionism," (www.michaelparenti.org/Terrorism.html); George Monbiot, "America's Pipe Dream," *Guardian /uk*, Oct 23); Jared Israel, Rick Rozoff & Nico Varkevisser, "Why Washington Wants Afghanistan," (posted Sept 18, on www.emperors-clothes.com/analysis/afghan.htm); Sean Healy, "The Empire wants war, not justice," (no date, www.zmag.org/healywar.htm); Noam Chomsky, "The New War Against Terror," Oct 18 (www.zmag.org/GlobalWatch/chomskymit.htm); Patrick Martin, "US-Uzbekistan pact sheds light on Washington's war aims in Central Asia," *World Socialist Web Site* (www.wsws.org/articles/2001/oct2001/uzbe-o18_pm.shtml); Nick Beams, "Behind the 'anti-terrorism' mask: imperialist powers prepare new forms of colonialism," *World Socialist Web Site*, Oct 18 (www.wsws.org/articles/2001/oct2001/imp-o18_pm.shtml); Vijay Prashad,

"War against the Planet," (no date, www.zmag.org/prashcalam.htm); Stan Goff, "The So-Called Evidence is a Farce," October 10, *Narco News* (www.narconews.com/goff1.html); Al Giordano, "Washington's 'Terrorist' List: Road through Afghanistan leads to Colombia," Oct 1, *Narco News* (www.narconews.com/war2.html); Chicago Area Anarchists, "Anarchists against the expansion of capitalism and the war," *A-Info News Service* (www.infoshop.org/inews/stories.php?story=01/10/25/7453849); Jared Israel, "Washington Plots, Moscow Crawls, Kabul Burns," (www.emperors-clothes.com/misc/burns); Hani Shukrallah, "Capital Strikes Back," *Al-Ahram*, 18-24 October

(www.ahram.org/eg/weekly/2001/556/op9); Renfrey Clarke, "War on terrorism or war on the Third World?", *Green Left*, Oct 17 (www.greenleft.org.au/current/467p16.htm); Robin Blackburn, "Road to Armageddon," *Counterpunch*, Oct 3. All web site addresses valid as of October, 2001.

The following web sites have extensive links covering September Eleven, Afghanistan, and the so-called war on terrorism: *Common Dreams News Center* (www.commondreams.org), *Znet* (www.zmag.org/znet.htm), *Jay's Leftist and Progressive Internet Directory* (www.neravt.com/left), *Alternet* (www.alternet.org), *Counterpunch* (www.counterpunch.org), *Mid-Atlantic Info Shop* (www.infoshop.org/news); *Global Circle Net News* (www.globalcircle.net).

[1] An excellent book on Yugoslavia which does not suffer from this naiveté, the best book so far, that I am aware of, on the bombing, is Michael Parenti, *To Kill a Nation: The Attack on Yugoslavia* (Verso, 2000, 246 pages).

[2] Web sites such as *Common Dreams News Center* (www.commondreams.org), *Znet* (www.zmag.org/znet), and *Alternet*

(www.alternet.org), are loaded with "this is a mistake" pieces, as are magazines like the *Nation*, the *Progressive*, *In These Times*, and the *Progressive Populist*.

[3] S. Brian Willson, "Who are the Real Terrorists? Why some veterans oppose counter- "terrorist" exercises", March 1999, Veterans for Peace, at: (www.mbay.net/~jenvic/vfp/mar22.htm).

[4] Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman, "Three Arguments Against the War," posted on the *Common Dreams News Center* web site for October 18, 2001 (www.commondreams.org).

[5] John Tirman, "Unintended Consequences", posted on *Alternet*, Oct 24, 2001 (at www.alternet.org).

[6] Reported by Pamela Constable, *Washington Post*, Oct 24, 2001, "Plaintive Afghan's Plea from Community: Stop the Bombing".

[7] The best brief introduction to this history that I have seen so far is "A Concise History of United States Global Interventions, 1945 to Present," by William Blum, in his *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower* (Common Courage, 2000, 308 pages), pp. 125-162. References to longer lists of interventions covering the whole history of the U.S. government can be found in Zoltan Grossman's "One Hundred Years of Intervention," on *Jay's Leftist and Progressive Internet Resource Directory* (www.neravt.com/left/invade.htm). See also, Steve Kangas, "A Timeline of CIA Atrocities," available on the *Liberalism Resurgent* web site at (<http://home.att.net/~Resurgence/CIAtimeline.html>).

[8] The only other essay from this deluge of writing about the so-called war on terrorism that I have seen which challenges the 'this is a mistake' line (although many people have pointed out

that the US government is itself a terrorist state), is a really excellent piece by Edward Herman and David Peterson, "Who Terrorizes Whom?", posted on *Zmag* web site, dated October 18, 2001 (www.zmag.org/whoterrorizes.htm). In discussing Richard Falk's claim that the attack on Afghanistan is "the first truly just war since World War II", for example, they write: "it never occurs to Falk that the right-wing Republican regime of Bush and Cheney, so close to the oil industry and military-industrial complex, might have an agenda incompatible with a just war." They call this Left Accommodationism, cite several examples, and give a good analysis of the phenomenon.

[9] A rare exception is Naomi Klein, who frequently focuses on questions of strategy. See for example, "Signs of the Times," the *Nation*, October 22, 2001.

[10] The transcript of this speech has been posted on *Znet* (www.zmag.org/znet/GlobalWatch/chomskymit.htm). Streaming audio is also available on *Znet*. The speech was broadcast on *Democracy Now* (www.webactive.com/pacifica/exile) on October 23 and 24, 2001. A tape recording of the speech is also available for purchase from *Alternative Radio* (www.alternativeradio.org).

[11] Howard Zinn's initial remarks on the September Eleven tragedy were aired on *Democracy Now* on September 13, 2001 in an interview with Amy Goodman (www.webactive.com/pacifica/exile). Zinn made similar remarks in an interview with Noelle Hanrahan on *Flashpoints Radio* on September 13, 2001 (www.flashpoints.net). A short essay along the same lines was published in *The Progressive*, for November, 2001, "The Old Way of Thinking", pp. 8-9.

[12] Howard Zinn's speech in Burlington, Vermont on October 21, 2001 was broadcast on *Democracy Now* on Oct 22, 2001 (www.webactive.com/pacifica/exile). A tape recording of the speech is also

available for purchase from *Alternative Radio* (www.alternativeradio.org)

[13] Rahul Mahajan and Robert Jensen, "A War of Lies", posted on the *Common Dreams News Center* web site for October 8, 2001 (www.commondreams.org).

[14] *Getting Free: A Sketch of an Association of Democratic, Autonomous Neighborhoods and How to Create It*, is available on the Internet at: http://site.umb.edu/faculty/salzman_g/Strategy/GettingFree. The version posted there, however, is now nearly two years old. The essay has subsequently been considerably revised and expanded. I will be happy to send a photocopy of this revised and expanded version to anyone interested. My e-mail address is on the title page of the Internet version.

Is Greed All That's Wrong With Capitalism?

By Jared James, August, 1999

Is greed all that's wrong with capitalism? No. It is not enough to attack capitalists for being greedy, although this is a common tactic. I hope to explain why in this short essay.

Consider a small business family who work longer hours than do their employees, who live frugally, keeping just enough of the income from the business to support their modest lifestyle, paying the rest out in wages to their employees. If greed were all that is wrong with capitalism then these capitalists would be considered exemplary and above criticism, because in no

way are they greedy. But they are still in charge! As bosses or managers. And this is the crux of the matter. They still own the properties, the means of production. Their employees don't. They are buyers of waged-labor; their employees are sellers of waged-labor. Thus their employees are slaves, wage-slaves. They are not. There is an inequality here, of power, status, class, and wealth, which is built into the system, and based on the private ownership of properties. So even if the annual financial return from the business is roughly the same for employers and employees, it is still an unjust social arrangement and must be morally condemned.

This hypothetical case has not been all that common in history, but then neither has it been exactly rare. There have been some proprietors like this. It's true of course that most proprietors have tried to get richer, but it's also true that many have failed to do so. There have always been millions of small business families and self-employed tradesmen who were barely surviving, and cannot be said to have had a significantly higher standard of living than many wage-earners.

Although there were a few large joint stock companies even in the early days of capitalism (the East India Company was established in Britain in 1600), giant corporations did not become prominent until late in the 19th century, and then mostly in heavy industry. Throughout most of the five-century history of capitalism small proprietors have been the mainstay of the system (although not the greatest profit takers; those have been the large monopolies which have always existed). It is only now, at the end of the twentieth century, with the phenomenal concentration of capital that has taken place in the past half century in all sectors, including farming, banking, retail, trade, services, publishing, medicine, law, transport, media, and so on, that the petty bourgeoisie is really disappearing from the scene, especially in the more thoroughly capitalist countries.

I have recalled this brief history as a prelude to getting at the question of greed. I believe that for the small proprietor the driving motive has not been greed, but simply survival. Business has been a way of making a living, getting along, and providing for oneself and one's family. For parents, the protective instinct, the desire to provide for the children and ensure their survival, safety, and well-being, is surely much stronger than mere greed. It is

a desire for security that undergirds capitalism, as much as anything. People like to feel safe and unthreatened and to have the resources to meet life's emergencies -- a sick child, a damaging accident, a dying mate, economic depressions, floods and droughts, earthquakes and tornadoes. At what point can it be said that anyone has enough to be really secure? This is a fuzzy line. It takes quite a lot of money before anyone feels that they never have to worry again. And even after the immediate family is provided for, there are always relatives, and grandchildren, and numerous projects that need to be done. Also, there is always the chance, given the incredible turmoil and chaos that

characterize capitalism as a system, that a family might lose everything, in a crash, bankruptcy, or revolution. So when is anyone ever going to feel that they have too much?

Take a small town capitalist family whose business is successful, and who are thus able to send their children to a good college, build a big new home in a nice part of town, drive a new car, and take vacations to the West Indies. Is this all based on greed? No, it is just a normal desire to live well and be happy, which everyone has. Practically everyone, except for ascetics, would like to be free from poverty and toil, and to enjoy the good things of life. So their motivation is not the problem. The problem is that under capitalism their well-being is gained by the impoverishment of others. And this is for structural reasons, not motivational ones. That is, it is because the world has become divided into people who buy labor power and people who sell labor power. There are only these two choices: you are either in business for yourself or you are a hired hand. But our small town capitalist family can't blame themselves for this. They did not make things this way. They were born into an already existing social order. It's all they know. They may consider it unfortunate that some people are poor, but they do not see it as any fault of theirs. On the contrary, they probably see it as the fault of the

poor themselves, because they have not succeeded, whereas they themselves (our entrepreneurs) have. They most likely even feel that they deserve what they have, because they have worked hard for it (and most small proprietors do work hard).

Let's go back a ways, to the beginnings of capitalism, and take a look at the situation then. It used to be thought that capitalism was established by the bourgeoisie overthrowing the landed aristocracy, so that one class replaced another, as rulers, over a period of time. Now however we know that this is only partially true. There was considerable carry over among ruling class families from feudalism to capitalism. That is, many aristocrats managed to turn themselves into capitalists, and thus to stay in the ruling class. This was done mostly through capitalist agriculture, but also by members of the landed aristocracy going into trade, and becoming merchants themselves. As feudalism was collapsing, a new way of extracting the surplus wealth from the direct producers had to be found. The invention of capitalism was the answer to this need. The old rulers were active in this process as well as the new burgers. To speak of this historical process as being motivated by greed is to considerably oversimplify. The burgers of course were mostly small scale entrepreneurs trying to make a living, but doing it in a new way (by living off profit). As for the aristocrats, they were rulers seeking to preserve themselves and their families and stay in power, and not be done in, abolished, or overthrown. This involved the desire for power too, as well as money, the desire to survive, the desire to maintain a traditional way of life, the desire to maintain control, in order to go on living well, and so forth. What would happen to them if the existing order were changed or destroyed? Would heads roll? Would they lose everything? It is fear, more than greed, that drives them. They are afraid for their lives. If the existing social order collapses, they may end up not only poor, but dead.

Similarly with the creation of the class of landless wage-earners. The traditional image is that of landowners forcing peasants off the commons and off their peasant holdings, so that this land could be enclosed by the lords in order to grow sheep for wool for sale to the textile industry. Recent research has established however that the proletariat was created in part from below. A peasant family would somehow acquire an extra field or two, and would

eventually need help working this extra land, so they would hire help. And so emerged a class of more well-to-do peasants and a larger class of peasants who had less land than before and who hired out as wage-earners to supplement their incomes. These wealthier peasant families were in the same

situation as the small business family discussed above. They were simply trying to live a little better and to have a little more security.

I have no problem with anyone's wanting to be rich. I would like to be rich myself. I want more, of everything. I want to be able to enjoy the good things of life. I think everyone should be rich. And there's the rub. Under capitalism, just as under all previous social orders based on hierarchy and class, everyone does not get rich. A few get rich, while most remain poor. In fact, the few are rich precisely because the many are poor, because the wealth of the few is stolen wealth, taken from the labors of the many. If we were all getting rich together, and if this were accomplished without destroying the earth, it would be another thing entirely. It would be paradise on earth.

One problem with the focus on greed as the main problem of capitalism is that it contributes to an impulse toward austerity. It leads some people to argue that we should give up what we have and live frugally, and to cut back and consume less. This tendency was quite pronounced in the New Left of the sixties in the United States. It's true that this impulse was also based on the belief that the high standard of living in the United States was made possible only by ripping off the rest of the world, and also on the belief that such a high standard of living could not be maintained, certainly not for the whole world, without destroying the earth. But these two beliefs need not have led anyone to embrace austerity. They might have led instead to struggles to equalize the wealth, so that everyone could be better off, and to the search for ways of creating wealth which do not destroy the earth. But this has not happened, at least not on a very big scale. Instead, we have 'voluntary poverty' -- large numbers of radicals voluntarily embracing a

reduced life -- restricted travel, inadequate shelter, fewer clothes, fewer tools, less entertainment, fewer vacations, no money to undertake projects, less education, less security against accidents and sickness, a hand to mouth existence, and so forth. (I am not talking of course about radicals who live frugally in order to have time and resources for the struggle.)

This has been a big mistake, I think, and is certainly not the way to destroy capitalism. You cannot convince people to oppose capitalism by asking them to give up what they already have. You have to convince them that they could be even richer, and have a higher standard of living, and a better quality of life, under another social arrangement, and that this could be true for everyone, and be done without destroying the earth. The desire to be secure and well off is a very powerful human motivation that should not be confused with greed.

Another problem with the idea of greed as a critique of capitalism is that it shifts the focus to individuals and away from relations between individuals, that is, away from the structure of the system (patterned relationships among people). Greed is a characteristic of an individual. It is a personality trait, a character flaw, a moral failing. The remedy for greed is to get individuals to be better, to improve themselves spiritually. This leads to preaching, to moralizing, to the effort to change individuals into less greedy people. It is a religious task, a job for priests and evangelists. It lacks a social dimension. This sermonizing completely bypasses, therefore, or even derails, the struggle between classes over power and the ownership and distribution of wealth. Far more powerful and accurate, than the notion of greed, is the idea of exploitation. This was the original moral condemnation of capitalism that emerged in the early nineteenth century. This is a social idea; exploitation takes at least two persons. It characterizes a relationship. It is not a name for an individual moral failure. Capitalism is condemned because it is based on the exploitation of one class by another, so that the exploiting class can enrich itself, or simply

remain in power. Even earlier, say in the English revolution of the seventeenth century, the class system of rich and poor, of lords and peasants, was also condemned in moral terms, for being unjust. The radical critique of capitalism (and before that, peasant critiques of feudalism) has always been based on an ethical condemnation of the system, and not just the moral failings of individuals within the ruling class. It is not just that someone is getting rich, it is their getting rich at the expense of others that is the problem.

By the mid-nineteenth century, capitalism had come to be understood as a system of theft. (Marx was largely responsible for this, by proving that profit came from unpaid wages rather than from the sale of the product.) Stealing of course is a lot bigger crime than mere greed. (Is greed a crime at all, or only a sin?) If this theft is backed up with murder, not to mention all kinds of lesser abuses, then the moral condemnation of capitalism begins to take on some bite. There are plenty of greedy people who are nevertheless unwilling to resort to theft and murder to satisfy their cravings. It is the willingness of someone to back up their greed with stealing (and worse) that turns them into criminals, not just their desire to get rich. Since capitalism is inherently a system of theft, and since capitalists, as a class, do regularly and systematically resort to lying, brutality, torture, oppression, murder, and war to defend their scam, capitalists are not merely greedy, they are outright criminals. It is by portraying and exposing capitalists as the criminals they are that we can begin to break through their ideological defenses and destroy their credibility.

It is true however that this ethical aspect of the radical rejection of capitalism was muted, or sometimes lost all together, during the many decades when "scientific marxism" held sway over anti-capitalist movements. During these decades many activists believed that the collapse of capitalism was inevitable, because of the laws of history and the internal dynamics of the system itself. These beliefs tended to mute or negate the moral dimension of their struggles, and caused them to lose sight of the fact that they were fighting against injustice. Beginning with the New Left in the sixties an effort has been made by many radicals to recover the moral high ground (which has

largely been captured by the far right) and to reinstate the ethical dimension of anti-capitalist struggles.

The stress on greed is perhaps part of this. Greed is mentioned as a counter to the idea of 'economic determinism' so characteristic of vulgar, mechanical marxism. This is a way of saying that it is not the laws of history that are askew, but the concrete moral failings of real people. It is a way of rejecting the idea that economics determines everything, and of reinstating a role for human agency. Unfortunately, as I have been explaining, 'greed' is not exactly the right tool for the job. Other weapons in the radical arsenal are more powerful, like 'exploitation', or even 'alienation' (another concept that stresses the social aspects of a relationship -- the alienation of workers, by property owners, from the products of their labor, and from the process of labor itself, so that they become mere tools in someone else's hands).

'Criminality' is an even more powerful accusation. In most countries there are laws against things that capitalists do regularly. Rather than criticizing capitalists for being greedy, we should be arresting them for being criminals. The stress on greed as the main problem of capitalism leads to other misguided campaigns, like the 'living wage campaign' or the demand for 'socially responsible corporations'. The living wage campaign is not a fight against capitalism, but only against low wages. Wages have once again dropped so low for millions of workers, even in the rich countries, that they won't support life. Corporations, it is said, are taking too much in profit; they are being greedy; they should

keep less for themselves, their stockholders, and their executives, and pay higher wages to their employees instead. Thus rather than trying to abolish a system wherein some live off wages while others live off profits, these activists are limiting their demands to merely getting a 'living wage'. It reminds me a little of that older, similarly absurd slogan, 'a fair day's pay for a fair day's work'. Under capitalism there is no such thing as a fair day's pay;

it is structurally impossible; the system is inherently unfair, being based on the siphoning off, through force, of part of the wealth created by the direct producers.

The recent clamor, by many progressives, for 'socially responsible corporations' is another misguided campaign, and also stems in part from the idea of greed. It is assumed that corporations could, if only they weren't so greedy, be more generous and responsible. This assumption, however, misjudges the nature of the beast. Corporations, by their very nature, are inherently irresponsible. They could not survive, for example, if they had to absorb all the external costs of their operations. They could not possibly make a profit. Being able to externalize (fob off onto the public) many of the costs of production is almost a definition of capitalism, as a system of competing, profit-based, corporations, supported by nation-states. Nor could they survive very long if they raised wages very much, or spent money on safety, because other corporations wouldn't and would therefore drive them out of business. We need to keep this struggle among capitalists in mind when looking at sweatshops, unsafe mines, and toxic workplaces, and not limit our criticisms to the cruelty and greed of capitalists, but direct it to the system itself (although obviously such capitalists have to be able to at least stomach what they are doing, which is already a strong indictment of their characters).

On the other hand, when we do see the occasional corporation that 'does right by its employees', as they like to claim, with 'decent' wages, pension plans, profit-sharing, sick leave, good vacations, maternity leave, grievance procedures, eight hour days, and so forth, we have to remember that this is still based on wage-slavery, on the expropriation of wealth from the direct producers, and is thus an unjust set up. Furthermore, such beneficial policies came into being originally in the context of a strong labor movement, which raised the standards for all workers, even those in nonunion workplaces. Now that unions are practically gone in the United States, benefits like these have been disappearing rapidly. It's doubtful that such 'liberal' corporations will last much longer in the current period of corporate ascendancy. Most Americans are already working longer hours, at a faster pace, for less pay,

than they were thirty years ago. In short, the campaign for 'socially responsible corporations' is ridiculous, totally reformist, and completely unable to solve the social and ecological crises that are overwhelming humanity under late twentieth century capitalism.

Many corporations do try of course to portray themselves as socially responsible, mainly by giving away money to good causes, like symphony orchestras, the arts, scientific research, education, and the like, such moneys often taking the place of public funding for these activities (funding which has been gutted from government budgets by corporate-bought legislators). I always thought that if a company had so much extra money that it could give it away, it should either raise the wages of its employees or lower the prices of its products. It has no business getting into philanthropy. Quite obviously though, corporations use this largess as a public relations ploy; the expenditure can be considered part of their advertising budget; it is designed to improve their corporate images. If the public becomes concerned about the environment, before long corporations will start giving themselves a greenwash. Just as the Fords, Mellons, and Rockefellers, in earlier times, set up philanthropic foundations, to give away millions for good

causes (but good causes, by the way, which never challenged the system itself), to try to diminish somewhat the public's anger at their plunder, so do our contemporary super corporations constantly try to enhance their images by giving to worthy causes. Corporate giving of course doesn't begin to replace the deleted public funding. Also, much contemporary corporate philanthropy is not done through semi-independent foundations, but directly by the corporations themselves; it is therefore even more blatantly sheer self-aggrandizement.

Sometimes the criticism is broadened a bit, beyond simple greed, to the 'institutionalization of greed'. This idea is somewhat more useful, but not by much. Every class society since the dawn of history could be described as the

'institutionalization of greed', but this would not be saying very much about them. It would not tell us what is distinctive about these societies and in most cases would even distort their functioning. Most importantly, it would not explain the mechanisms through which the surplus wealth was expropriated from one class by another.

Capitalism might be defined as the 'institutionalization of the profit-motive', but the profit-motive is not at all the same as greed. Anti-capitalist radicals too often focus almost exclusively on the struggle between capital and labor, to the neglect of the very serious struggles among capitalists themselves. These latter struggles account for a lot of what happens under capitalism. If a capitalist enterprise doesn't make a profit, it disappears, vanishes, goes out of existence. It either goes bankrupt or else is gobbled up by a larger, more profitable company. From the point of view of the corporation, the need to turn a profit, and as big a profit as possible, is absolute. It is the first requirement for survival. Turning a profit means expanding, finding new markets, making new products. This is necessary because of the pressures of other corporations, all of which are trying to do the same thing.

In the nineteen nineties we are living through one of the most intense periods of the concentration of capital (mergers, or the big fish gobbling up the little fish) in the history of capitalism. These mergers have been triggered by pressures on the rate of profit throughout the world. This tendency to merge is inherent to the system, stemming from the competition among firms to stay profitable (and therefore to stay in existence), and, needless to say, from pressures from below, from the working class, which also puts a squeeze on profits. So corporations get bigger and bigger. The idea that we can go backwards, to a capitalism made up of millions of small scale proprietors, is completely unrealistic. Yet this assumption underlies much of populist protest and agitation in the United States. These populists do not direct their anger against capitalism itself, but only against giant corporations.

This analysis shows that even for the big boys, operating in a world market composed of viciously competing, profit-based corporations, survival is the driving force, not greed. The idea that any of these firms could, if they were only so inclined (that is, if only they were run by nicer people), start behaving in more generous and responsible ways, is a total illusion. Sometimes

corporations can be forced to behave responsibly by government regulation of a whole industry, which eliminates the competitive advantage for any individual firm which behaves irresponsibly. But we are now in the midst of a great period of deregulation. Neo-liberals have launched a sustained assault on government regulation of business. Governments are thus losing the power to reign in individual corporations or industries, in order to protect capitalism as a whole. That is, they are losing the ability to act in the interests of capitalists as a class (unless the interests of the class truly lies in neo-liberalism, weakened national governments, and the new world order; but I doubt that they are). Given this situation, populists who are clamoring for 'socially responsible corporations' are acting rather naively, perhaps even irresponsibly.

Another notion sometimes used to diagnose our current situation is the 'culture of materialism', which is somewhat connected to the idea of greed, which is why I'm mentioning it. It is thought that our problems stem from ourselves. We are too materialistic. We are too addicted to 'things'. The solution to the dire straits the world is in, according to this view, is for us to slough off this materialism, reform ourselves, stop wanting everything, and learn to live more simply. I have problems with this idea.

For one thing, I believe that most human communities throughout history have been materialistic. They have had to be in order to survive. They have had to provide a certain quantity of essential material things for themselves in order to live -- food, shelter, clothing, tools, transportation, weapons. I doubt though that persons who complain about the culture of materialism are talking about these bare necessities. They are talking about things you don't need. But this is a little tricky. Needs are socially defined. An item which is considered unnecessary in one culture, may be considered quite essential by the average person in another culture. Beyond bare necessities of

nourishment and shelter from cold, human needs are almost completely culturally defined, and vary considerably, historically and across cultures. And why shouldn't they? Why shouldn't different peoples have different tastes and different ways of satisfying their needs? And why shouldn't our needs expand as we become richer? Why shouldn't we try to enrich our lives as much as we can?

For another thing, I believe that the 'culture of materialism', as the idea is being used currently, is quite obviously a product of capitalism itself. Under the incessant drive to sell, sell, sell, corporations strive mightily to create needs, and bring into being a demand for their products and services.

Advertising is an enormous industry, incessantly pressuring us to buy. Many other social pressures also get us to buy commodities. The average person is a victim of this culture of materialism, not its cause. This might be called a false materialism, or a materialism that has run amok. We probably shouldn't even call this materialism, however, but 'commodification', 'commercialism', or 'consumerism'. I shop, you shop, we shop, they profit. It is the culture of capitalism, which has promoted a whole set of needs, a whole schedule of irrational priorities, that might even be regarded as nonmaterial, since they lead to death, rather than sustain life. Some capitalists value profit more than life itself.

Many of the needs we have might not be considered necessary in another society, but are essential in this one. We are locked into many of these needs. Most of us need a car, for example, to commute to work and drive to a supermarket miles away (in the absence of work closer to home, public transportation, or corner grocery stores). We need our own house or an apartment, in the absence of communal or cooperative housing. We need a refrigerator, since much of the available food needs to be kept cold. We need machines to wash our clothes, and either have to buy these machines or rent them. We need a stove to cook our food on. And so forth. Capitalism has rebuilt (in a very haphazard and irrational way) almost the entire human material world, and in the process has locked us into a multitude of needs which cannot be abolished just by wishing. We will have to change practically the entire social world and then rebuild the physical plant within which we live in order to eliminate many of these needs.

So what is urgently needed is for us to redefine what it means to live really well and enjoy a high quality life. But this cannot be done abstractly. It must be done as part of the struggle to oppose the destructive definitions of wealth and well-being that have been thrown up by the capitalist imperative to maximize profit for the owners. The material look of a truly free society,

one created to facilitate the highest possible development of every individual, would be strikingly different than the one we now live in.

There is a slightly different angle on this to consider. Rather than criticize ourselves for being materialistic, we might try criticizing capitalists for preventing us from meeting our material needs. The truth is, that despite all the glittering commodities, capitalism doesn't deliver the material goods. We are left wanting. We have umpteen urgent material needs that are not being met -- the simple need for food, clothing, and shelter (for billions of people), the need for nutritious food (for most of us in the rich countries), the need for clean air, the need for time to play, sleep, love, dance, sing, the need for clean water (an increasingly rare item), the need for an unpolluted environment, the need for meaningful work, the need for neighbors, the need for safe and nontoxic workplaces, the need for parks, the need for swimming pools and bicycle paths, the need for resources to travel. The list of our unmet material needs is long.

A slight variation on the "culture of materialism" theme is the "culture of greed". There can be no doubt that capitalism has thrown up a "culture of greed", but this does not mean that it is the motor which runs the system. The culture of greed is more the outcome of the normal operation of the profit-motive, rather than its cause, just as are fanatic individualism, competitiveness, the fetishism of privacy, people without memories, materialism, and all the other dimensions of the culture of capitalism. Capitalists have not only erected the social institutions they need, but have brought into being an entire cultural apparatus to support their practices, and

even worse, have shaped our very personalities and character structures to fit the prerequisites of a profit driven system. The disappearance of all other values, leaving just commercial ones, is thus a result not a cause. But this result is definitely there -- masses of individuals looking out only for themselves, trying to get as much as they can, any way that they can, with very narrow definitions of the quality of life, of material enrichment, and of well-being. But individualism, competitiveness, and greed cannot simply be exorcised from our personalities, directly, on a person to person basis, through exhortation, but can be eliminated, in the long run, and on a massive scale, only by destroying social arrangements founded on the profit-motive, wage-slavery, and private property. Of course first there have to be people who want to do this.

Let's consider now a group of corporations engaged in more than murder. The one hundred or so giant corporations that produce the bulk of the world's coal, oil, and natural gas, the burning of which is warming the earth, are not just thieves and murderers, but are rapidly becoming guilty of genocide, ecocide, and possibly even planetcide. It is not just that these companies have been producing these products in response to demand. It is that they have conspired to create the demand in the first place, and then conspired further to keep the world dependent on fossil fuels. The oil companies, for example, together with automobile manufacturers, in the United States, prior to world war two, conspired to destroy the nation's mass transit system. In many cases, they simply bought up a city's trolley system, and then dismantled it.

Railroads were passed over in favor of trucks. The nation became dependent on automobiles and trucks, and had to build a vast highway system, at public expense, to accommodate them, which led also to the creation of suburban America and malls, one of the most egregious patterns of human settlement ever built. The benefiting corporations had a heavy hand in all this. It didn't just happen naturally, accidentally. And now, for the past several decades, they have been vigorously conspiring to block the emergence of nonpolluting energy sources, like solar, wind, or thermal. These are enormously rich and powerful corporations, which spend millions in propaganda and in lobbying

legislators the world over, to defeat efforts to deal with the problem of global warming by switching to clean energy.

So what's going on here? Is this just greed? It's rather more complicated and considerably more evil. It's the profit-making system of capitalism functioning at its normal best. Entrepreneurs have always sought to use the state, from the dawn of capitalism, to gain competitive advantages for themselves. They have also always sought to externalize many of the costs of their operations. Oil companies are just doing what capitalist firms have always done, even though the consequences in this case are considerably more dire. It's not just about making money. It's about making money above all else, even life itself. It's about making money for themselves, no matter what the costs to others. That is, it's about making profit, and thus surviving as an actor in the system. Making profit comes to take precedence over all other human activities and desires. This is why it is said that 'the economy' dominates society (that is, the accumulators of capital do). And for the fossil fuel companies, making a profit even takes precedence over survival of a livable earth! The privileging of the profit-makers is inherent to the system, is deeply embedded, and cannot be eradicated by improving the moral quality of individuals. Private ownership of productive properties has to be abolished, as well as classes, and the state itself, and all of these replaced with cooperative, democratic social forms.

The problem is, and this is another complicating factor, that many of the people involved in these corporations, and the legislators who support them, believe their own propaganda. I believe there has always been a fairly large central core of hardheaded realists, who occupy positions of power and who set policy, or perhaps who are working behind the scenes, who do *not* believe the propaganda. These people see things as they are, see their enemies clearly, know exactly what they are doing and what the consequences will be, and know that their indicators are right, but who nevertheless go on being profit-mongers, and defending themselves in this, even with torture,

assassination, and bombing. These are the truly evil people.

But for many, perhaps even the majority, of capitalists, they do not believe they are doing anything wrong. An ideology is not just to delude or brainwash the victims of a system. It is for the rulers too. It is an intellectual, moral, rational justification for what they are doing. It is only natural that they would believe it themselves, or most of them anyway. You cannot go through life knowing that you are a thief and a murderer and are very likely even destroying the earth and humanity with it. The truly evil can, and do, and are, but not ordinary persons. A big part of the job of radicals is to break through this ideological defense and convince these people that their actions are unconscionable. After that comes the problem of dealing with the profit-mongers who know this already but just don't give a damn.

I come now to a case that I finally have to admit is nothing but pure, unadulterated greed -- the salaries of today's crop of corporate executives. The millions they are raking in is preposterous.

Is executive talent so hard to find that corporations have to pay millions to attract it? I don't think so. What's more likely is that these executives have gotten themselves into a position where they can write their own paychecks, with nobody around able or willing to stop them. Some of them are even getting sweetheart deals, worth millions, in severance pay, when they are being booted out of a company, after having run it into the ground. To the extent that these executives are suppressing wages or inflating prices so that they can bank millions, even if it means destroying the company they are supposed to be managing (by driving it into bankruptcy), unbridled greed appears to be motive. This is not even rational from the point of view of capitalists.

The current financial speculators working the stock markets of the world are

another instance of greedy individuals gone berserk. These guys are rogues, basically, operating in recently deregulated financial markets (a deregulation engineered by the financial institutions themselves, but not I think to unleash rogue speculators). The speculators are not numerous, but they can move billions of dollars overnight, gambling with the futures of whole economies. I suspect that the financiers themselves will soon try to bring this aberration under control. In the meantime, we are witnessing the consuming sin of individual greed on a grand scale (or perhaps just a few addicted, criminal gamblers playing for extremely high stakes, at our expense).

But this is not the normal way of things under capitalism. The normal way is profit-making, by exploiting wage-slaves, and defending all the institutions needed to perpetuate this exploitation, through murder and war if need be. It is this system of exploitation that has to be undone, not just greed.

Capitalists have a choice of course. They don't have to keep doing this. They can stop being capitalists. They can give up profit-making and become wage-slaves. They can leave the ruling class and join the oppressed masses, and there have been some noted revolutionaries who have done just that. If capitalists become ashamed of what they are doing, they can certainly stop doing it. But if they remain capitalists, their behavior is prescribed: they have to make profits to survive, whether they are greedy or not.

One last caveat is necessary. The above analysis does not apply to nonprofit corporations. These corporations don't depend on profit-making for their survival, but on pleasing their sponsors or members, so that the grants or donations keep coming in. So it is a different dynamic entirely. The bloated salaries of some of the executives in many of these organizations would appear to be irrational and dysfunctional even from the point of view of the goals of the organization, because they siphon off resources and create stark inequalities of income within the organization, and hence reduce the effectiveness of the organization. This is hard to explain. But perhaps here the "culture of greed", thrown up by the surrounding profit system, works as well as anything, facilitated of course by the inevitable hierarchies, salary differentials, upward mobility, and the whole sorry system. The fat salaries of many tenured professors probably fit into this category.

I hope I have argued the point sufficiently well to persuade you.

Majority Rule

By Jared James, January, 2001

Majority rule is just a voting procedure for resolving disagreements within a deliberative assembly. Sometimes it might be combined with other rules, like those requiring unanimous or two-thirds votes on certain issues. But what voting procedures were used to select the voting procedures? That is, what rule was used for the vote to select majority rule? - majority rule, unanimity, two-thirds, or what? And how was that decision made? We are clearly in an infinite regress here.

In reality, the establishment, for any assembly, of the original procedures for voting usually happens by fiat or by revolution (given the rarity of unanimity). Thus democracy can usually only be established in-between regimes. In the case of the US constitution for example, the fifty-five members of the constitutional convention decided that the constitution would be considered adopted if nine out of the thirteen colonies approved it, with the constitution simply being imposed by force on the remaining four colonies. (As it happened, only two colonies refused ratification at the time, North Carolina and Rhode Island, both of which had ratified by 1789, and 1790 respectively.) In the case of international treaties, the writers of the treaty usually include rules for adoption in the treaty itself, stipulating how many countries need to ratify the treaty before it comes into force. This works of course only if the treaty contains enforcement powers, so that the terms of the treaty can be imposed by force on nations who don't ratify it. In the absence of enforcement powers, a nation can simply ignore the treaty. National parliaments do have enforcement powers of course. A nation-state is by definition a monopolizer of violence, so-called legitimate violence (that is, the parliament defines its own violence as legitimate and everyone else's as illegitimate). National governments have armed forces, intelligence agencies,

police, and secret police at their disposal to enforce the will of the parliamentary majority on the minority in the parliament and on everyone else in the nation. Any other police or armed forces within the nation are declared illegal. In the setting of the nation-state system, minorities who refuse to go along with majority decisions have only one recourse (other than simply disobeying and facing fines and prison) - civil war. They can attempt to secede from the nation (from the decision-making unit), and establish a nation of their own, with its own parliament (a separate decision making unit).

The situation is somewhat different for sub-national organizations like corporations and voluntary associations. Unless the decisions of these groups can be linked to national laws, and thus be enforced by the national government (and many decisions of capitalist corporations are), they cannot be imposed by force, since the organizations have no policemen to arrest and imprison those who disobey. About all they can do is expel the disobedient from the organization, revoking their membership. Members of an organization who come to disagree too severely with the policies of that organization (however established, either through majority rule or management), simply leave the organization, as a rule. A minority can also attempt to expel the majority of course, and this happens all the time (as in a takeover). Associations are rather often taken over by minorities within them which contrive in one way or another to force the

majority out of the project. There are also the numerous cases of splits within an association, wherein a minority leaves in mass and establishes another organization. The history of political parties, especially on the left, is replete with such splits.

The principle of majority rule can itself sometimes lead to a split. Let's say that a small group of people get together and establish an association in order to accomplish certain goals. They are all agreed upon these goals (tasks,

objectives), and they also agree to govern their association by direct democracy, using majority rule to resolve disagreements. The founders therefore are very clear about what they want to do. But new members of course are needed, in order for the project to grow and accomplish its objectives. So new members are recruited, all of whom have to agree to the original objectives and established voting procedures as a condition of being admitted as members. Nevertheless, the recruitment and admission process is rather different than the deep commitment to certain goals that brought the original founders together, and over time, a majority can slowly emerge in the project which wants to take the project in a different direction than the one originally intended by the founders. Founders can thus find themselves in a situation, through the principle of majority rule, of losing their project, and all the years of effort that went into building it. They are faced with the dilemma of either leaving this project (the one they originally founded) and starting all over again in a new one, or of leaving and abandoning their goals altogether, or of staying in and working toward goals that they didn't originally endorse. It is because of the possibility of this happening that founders of projects sometimes eject majority rule and choose instead some kind of elite rule, whereby the original founders of a project can keep control of it. This is actually the predominant organizational form in our society, in corporations and in all hierarchically organized associations. These organizations recruit people to work on the project, wage-earners for corporations and members for voluntary associations (because almost all human projects require more than one or a few persons in order to be accomplished), but control of the organization remains in the hands of a few. In the case of corporations, majority rule (workers control or democracy at the workplace) is obviously anathema to capitalists because it would destroy their objective of making profit. Even if the worker-controlled enterprise stayed in the market and continued to make profit (rather than switch to cooperative labor and leave the market), the profit would not go to the original owners, but would be appropriated by all the employees. This is why capitalists fight the movement for workplace democracy tooth and nail. It's a life and death struggle for them.

In non-capitalist organizations, elite control may enable the founders to keep

the organization on course for quite some time, but ultimately, it is no guarantee. Why? Because disagreements can emerge among the original founders, as new situations and new issues arise, over what direction the organization should take in light of these new circumstances. So the belief that elite control of an association is a solution to the problem of splits is ultimately an illusion. Before long, we always end up right back at majority/minority dynamics regarding the goals and procedures of the project.

The same process will be at work in our neighborhood assemblies. Assume for example that at the very first meeting of a neighborhood assembly a proposal is made for a certain set of voting

procedures, and that this proposal wins unanimous support. Every member of the assembly agrees to resolve disagreements in this certain way and to abide by decisions made like that. What happens then if a new member moves into the neighborhood or a child reaches maturity and starts participating in the deliberations of the assembly? Are the voting procedures going to be voted on anew every time a new member comes into the assembly? Surely not. New members will have to accept the procedures that already exist. The assembly may decide to change them periodically, but that is a different matter. Thus the unanimity has disappeared because new members did not explicitly agree to abide by the procedures (although I suppose acceptance of the procedures could be made a condition for membership). But what if the procedures were voted on anew with the addition of every new member? Wouldn't the unanimity eventually break down anyway? Surely so. It's easy to see then that even if an assembly starts out unanimous, as regards voting procedures, it is unlikely to remain that way, because sooner or later a person will come along who will disagree (or some original member will change their mind), and thus break the unanimity. Original unanimity is therefore no solution to the problem of splits and disagreement. There is no escaping

disagreement, and the minority/majority dynamics these disagreements create.

As an aside: What if a majority emerges in an assembly that doesn't like democracy any longer, doesn't think direct democracy works very well, doesn't like majority rule? Instead, this majority wants to elect leaders and turn over decision making to them (or even worse, wants to simply accept leaders without even electing them). Can a majority in such an assembly use majority rule to abolish majority rule? Obviously not. This would be totally contradictory, and would represent in fact a coup, a counter-revolution, if they were able to get away with it. A majority which favors tyranny cannot use majority rule to justify its preference. But what if a majority in an assembly did so vote? What then? The minority that wants to keep democracy would have to revolt, reject the majority decision, and struggle to defeat the anti-democratic majority.

This shows us that even if there is unanimity to begin with about accepting majority rule as a way to resolve disagreements, this unanimity can break down. Actually, it can break down around almost any intensely felt opposition to a majority decision, and not just when the majority decides to abolish majority rule. This example shows us also that democracy, if we ever get it, will involve us in an unending struggle to keep it, although that struggle may lessen in intensity as we gain decades and hopefully centuries of experience with it, and democratic values permeate deeper and deeper into our cultures and personalities.

Let's throw another ingredient into the mix. Let's assume that our neighborhood assembly does not have police at its disposal, so that the majority cannot impose its will on the minority by force.

A digression: We might want to remind ourselves that the earth was covered for tens of thousands of years with hunting and gathering tribes of human beings, and they had no police forces. Also, for the past several thousand years, the vast majority of humans have lived in peasant villages, and societies comprised mostly of peasant villages, and there were no police forces there either. The empires that were sometimes superimposed on these peasant societies

had police, tax collectors, and soldiers whose reach extended, usually quite superficially, down into peasant villages, but the villages themselves were free of police, and they managed just fine.

The situation started to change rather drastically with the emergence of capitalism in Europe nearly five hundred years ago. Capitalists required governments which could monopolize violence through armed force, in order to defend and enforce capitalist imperatives. So police power, and violence, extended deeper and deeper into the society. Peasant villages were slowly destroyed in Europe over the past several centuries. They were nevertheless still quite prominent even as late as the second world war, and it has only been since then that this destruction has been carried, on a large scale, to the rest of the world, with peasant societies disappearing almost everywhere. The last half century has seen the final rout of the peasant world in most of Europe, with the process well along elsewhere.

The European settler governments that formed the United States are a somewhat different case, in that they rapidly destroyed whatever hunting-gathering tribes and peasant villages that were already here, while the settler society itself never had autonomous peasant villages. This society has been capitalist from day one. US citizens then have been living so long in a social order founded on violence that it's hard for them to believe that there could ever be life without it. They have never known anything else, and have no memories of a peasant society before capitalism.

I sketched the above history just to remind us that police forces are not an inherent, inevitable, universal feature of human life. We lived without them once, and we can do so again. But just try to convince someone living in the United States, for example, that we could arrange our social life in such a way that we wouldn't need police, and see how far you get.

To return now to the issue I had raised right before this digression: if neighborhoods do not have police forces to impose the will of the majority on

the minority, what bearing does this have on the relations between the majority and the minority within our assemblies?

In the absence of an armed police force to impose majority decisions through arrest, fines, and imprisonment, we will certainly want to be careful though to avoid the following peculiar situation: It could come to be thought that members of an assembly who disagree with a decision of the assembly don't have to abide by it. In other words, the decision of the majority is not thought to be binding on the minority. Wouldn't this embody perfectly the principle of 'self-assumed political obligation'? - each individual will only obey those decisions which they have personally agreed to.

But then why have an assembly at all? Why go through all the trouble and expense of building meeting halls, gathering together, debating the issues, and voting, if the people who vote against a proposal can ignore it? At the core of 'self-assumed political obligation' therefore must lie a commitment to procedures for resolving disagreements. Without this commitment to these procedures, and the commitment to abide by decisions that are made following these procedures, democracy is impossible. All you have is a hall full of fanatic individualists who waste their time discussing and voting, only to do just what they each wanted to do anyway. There are plenty of such fanatic individualists already around, persons who would never commit in advance to a

procedure for reaching cooperative policies, believing as they do in the absolute sovereignty of the individual, wherein they do only what they want when they want. Such persons are as great a threat to democracy, perhaps even a greater threat given contemporary culture, than tyrants.

We have already seen however that a commitment to abide by a procedure for resolving disagreements, say majority rule, can breakdown too, in extreme cases. Certainly, if a majority decides to murder a circle of members

of the assembly, those targeted for execution are not going to stick by their previous commitment to majority rule. It will break down too if a majority decides to abolish democracy in favor of tyranny. In fact, it can break down on almost any extreme rejection of a majority decision by the minority. In deliberative assemblies therefore, which are based on free association and voluntary compliance rather than compulsion and violence, what it really boils down to is that on every issue the minority must decide whether or not to go along with the majority, even though they may disagree. On routine matters, the decision to go along might be assumed to be routine too. But in cases of severe disagreement, whether or not to abide immediately comes to the fore.

There is another peculiar situation that we must avoid (which is really the same situation, but from another angle): It could come to be thought that the assembly must reach 'consensus' on every issue. The only practical meaning of consensus (although this is rarely admitted by its proponents) is unanimity. The belief that every last person in an assembly must agree to a proposal before the assembly can act is surely one of the most destructive and misguided beliefs to have emerged in the opposition movements in the past few decades. What this belief often ends up doing is holding the entire assembly hostage to a minority of one, or a minority of a few. It also results in extreme pressure being brought to bear on dissidents. The debate starts to become dishonest and compulsive.

Not every person has to agree with every decision. All that is needed is for every person to agree to go along with the decision, even though they disagree with it. This is a much different thing, and retains an open and honest expression of disagreement. Whereas rule by consensus, so-called, tends to suppress such disagreements.

What is needed in our deliberative assemblies is a measure of the intensity of opposition to any given proposal. To my knowledge, this has almost never existed so far. Intensity varies in both degree and number. There could be a majority of fifty-one intensely in favor, and a minority of forty-nine mildly opposed. There could be a majority of ninety mildly in favor and a minority of ten intensely opposed. And so forth. It is this mix that is crucial in majority-minority dynamics in deliberative assemblies.

We need a two-stage voting system. The first vote measures approval or disapproval of the proposal. The second vote measures the intensity of opposition -- disagree but willing to go along, disagree and willing to go along with minor changes, intensely disagree and not willing to go along, and so forth. This would give the assembly the knowledge it needs to proceed. If it finds that there exists a small minority that intensely disagrees and refuses to go along, then it knows that it has to back up and rethink the proposition. It knows that it has to struggle to

compromise, and work through the issue until a proposal can be devised that everyone can agree to go along with, even though some may still disagree with it. This would also bring into the open any minority that regularly blocks majority decisions, and would lead to political struggle around this issue, with the possibility that the minority, or majority itself, might be changed. This would be an open and honest voting system, rather than the vague, often manipulative and dishonest, struggle (often without even voting!) for so-called consensus.

If no compromise can be reached that an intensely opposed minority can agree to go along with, then obviously the assembly cannot have a policy on that issue, not without further political struggle to resolve the disagreement. But given the imperatives of cooperative social life, everyone will become acutely aware of the necessity of having collective decisions, if we are to succeed in carrying out any project. It is the rare instance when we can each do our own thing.

Democracy has been a long time coming, and will still be a long time yet in coming. By democracy I mean, not just majority rule, but the use of human intelligence, by everyone, to consciously shape the cultural and social arrangements within which we live. We will never have complete control over our social lives of course, even with the most thoroughly direct democracy possible, because of the phenomenon of unintended

consequences. But we can move a long way in that direction. The idea of democracy existed already in antiquity, and was practiced briefly then. It has reappeared sporadically since then, in medieval towns, in the guilds of the middle ages, in many peasant villages (and undoubtedly elsewhere too, for example in the League of the Iroquois). It was not until modern times however, with the emergence of the belief in popular sovereignty, that democracy started to gain serious ground. Democracy, in the sense of majority rule, has never yet been achieved on the national level anywhere. But the parliaments of the ruling class have been forced to steadily include more and more elements of the population, or at least representatives of those elements, first non propertied white males, then women, then blacks and other ethnic groups, then young adults down to the age of eighteen, and so forth. The ideas of democracy in general, and even of majority rule in particular, have become widely accepted and deeply rooted in contemporary culture. Perhaps someday we will be able to create the reality to match our dreams.

Indigenism

By Jared James, Summer, 2001

This is actually the same issue as the nationalities question and the identity question, but it might be worthwhile to treat it separately because there is an outstanding Native-American writer, Ward Churchill, who develops and advocates this theory. It is a theory, of native or indigenous peoples, which tends to replace class analysis, and generates a view of the history of the last five hundred years of world history which is quite at odds with an understanding of capitalism. I have never seen a critique of the idea (although surely some marxist journal has published one).

It is quite erroneous to identify the enemy as Western Civilization, Europeans, or White People and to attribute the world's problems to these

false abstractions. The rise and spread of capitalism was not only massively resisted by peoples all over the world, generating brilliant articulations of this resistance by writers and leaders like Fanon, James, Cabral, Nkruman, Gandhi, Magon, Mandela, and Cesaire. It was also resisted by Europeans themselves. The European peasants were among the first so-called indigenous or native peoples to be dispossessed and colonized by the emerging capitalist ruling class. They were driven off their lands and forced into wage-slavery. Their villages were destroyed, and their local cultures, as were their unique languages.

European resistance to capitalism was vigorous and long lasting. It gave rise to massive movements: the labor movement, the cooperative movement, communism, socialism, anarchism, syndicalism. It resulted in revolutions: the revolutions of 1848, the Paris Commune, the failed revolutions in Central Europe in 1919, the Spanish Civil War, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, Polish Solidarity, and so forth. There was a worldwide upsurge of anti-capitalist resistance in 1968, and this took place also throughout Europe and the West. Recently there has been another such wave of global opposition to capitalism, but which has appeared also in Seattle, Quebec City, and Genoa. Thus I believe that Indigenism mis-identifies the enemy, and is therefore incompatible with an Association of Free Peoples (anarchism, communism). Actually, we are just now witnessing a still basically peasant population in Europe, in the Balkans, being hit with an improved, strengthened, new, enclosures movement. Are the peasants in twenty-first century Eastern Europe indigenous peoples who are being attacked by Western Civilization or are they being dispossessed by the neoliberal offensive of late capitalism? Indigenists I think will have to be double-jointed to apply their theory to recent events in Eastern Europe, because peasants there are White, European, a part of Western Civilization, and are Indigenous, if by that term we mean that they have lived there for eons (although most of them moved there from elsewhere in some distant past, as have all so-called Indigenous peoples on earth). So I guess they are attacking themselves, if we follow Indigenism. Thus, rejection of and resistance to capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism has been going on in Europe too, not just in the world outside Europe. It distorts the picture to deny this. Marx himself wrote some of the earliest

analyses of colonialism in his essays on India and Ireland. Western Civilization thus includes not only capitalism, but also the critique of capitalism. If we use the

term at all it should include both these movements, the evil of capitalism and the good of anti-capitalism. It includes not only White Europeans who fought to impose capitalism on the world, but White Europeans who fought to stop this and to get free from capitalism completely. The terms European and White are false abstractions, in that it is only some Europeans and only some Whites that have colonized the world. Just as it was wrong for some radical feminists to see all men as the enemy, or for some black nationalists to see all whites as the enemy, so also it is wrong for Native Americans to see all non-indigenous people as the enemy, and for Indigenists to blame all Europeans and all Whites for imperialism.

Thus I can no longer accept the notion of indigenous versus nonindigenous people. I much prefer to think in terms of oppressors and the oppressed, exploiters and the exploited, criminals and victims, rulers and the ruled, rather than in terms of western civilization versus the rest of the world, and certainly rather than Whites versus People of Color. Ireland, one of the first countries to be colonized, was a nation of white people.

In Africa, the ruling classes are Africans, in the Middle East they are Arabs, Turks, Persians, or Jews, in Asia they are Asians. Local ruling classes, generally speaking, are of the race and ethnicity of their nations, and yet are intimately tied into the world capitalist system, vigorously defend it, and use it to exploit their peoples, for their own enrichment. Japanese exploit Japanese in Japan, Chinese exploit Chinese in China, Indians exploit Indians in India, Haitians exploit Haitians in Haiti. So how can it be claimed that oppressors are all European and White?

It has even become fashionable now to criticize anyone who talks of Capitalism as having originated in Europe and spread from there throughout

the world as Eurocentric. Why anyone would want to take credit for an evil social order like capitalism is a mystery to me. But as has been recently argued brilliantly by Ellen Meiksins Wood, their anti-Eurocentrism is itself Eurocentric, in that it embraces a liberal European theory about the origins of capitalism, as having evolved naturally from trade and commerce (basically, the Pirenne thesis), which evolution would have happened elsewhere had it not been blocked by Europeans, rather than adopt the radical analysis which claims that capitalism originated in an unusual set of historical circumstances and is not a natural development at all, but an aberration. This widespread anti-Eurocentrism is on a par with the growing influence of Indigenism, and is just as misguided.

I argue, however, that in point of fact, seen historically, there is no such thing as an indigenous people. Every people on earth originally came from somewhere else. Even Africans who are now living in the very same area where our species first appeared came from somewhere else, because those original homo sapiens are long gone, having migrated to the far corners of the earth. Those living there now moved in from elsewhere. Reports are, that of the Indians now living in Chiapas, Mexico, a lot of them moved there recently from Guatemala. All the so-called native peoples of the Americas of course originally came from somewhere else, either from Siberia (the traditional theory) or from across the seas (Cyrus Gordon). I've never heard anyone claim that homo sapiens evolved independently in the Americas. There have been mass migrations throughout human history -- Huns moving into eastern Europe, Turks from Central Asia moving into the fertile crescent and Asia Minor, Aztecs conquering the Mayans, Vikings settling in Ireland, Normans invading England, Russians migrating into Siberia,

Greeks into Asia Minor, Franks and Celts filtering south into the Roman Empire, Arabs into Spain, Chinese into Indonesia, Jews into Palestine, Africans into the Americas, Indians into South Africa, and on and on. The

human race is one incredibly jumbled up affair.

A people has always called itself something, always has had a name for itself, which is one thing we mean by ethnicity. But the more general concept of indigenous people is of more recent origin. In fact I believe it is of very recent origin, dating from the sixties. I think it is part of the Identity Politics that emerged out of the New Left in the United States. The New Left, in its determined blindness to the working class, invented a whole set of new categories, and built movements on them -- women, gays and lesbians, blacks, old people, welfare mothers, youth, Latinos -- and, of course, Native Americans. There was a movement here, AIM, the American Indian Movement, of which Leonard Peltier was a member. Native Americans became one of the many categories (replacing that of class) that made up Identity Politics. Fortunately, we are currently witnessing, after nearly thirty dreary years, the demise of this orientation. Not to say that there weren't positive things accomplished by this focus, but it couldn't, and didn't, overthrow capitalism.

Obviously, the idea of an indigenous people sets up a contrast with non-indigenous peoples. And in our present historical situation we all know who that refers to -- Europeans. We certainly never see it used with regard to the Japanese colonizing Southeast Asia, or the Chinese colonizing Tibet. No, it is a current, but badly misguided, attempt to conceptualize the expansion of capitalism to all corners of the earth. This is actually a mis-conceptualization, because it blames all Europeans for something that only a few of them have done. It sets up a conflict between Europeans and the rest of humanity, ignoring the fact that European peasants were among the first to be colonized, dispossessed, uprooted, and sent packing, as well as ignoring the fact that local ruling classes have helped affix the ball and chain of capitalism to every nook and cranny of the earth.

We must remember that the great migrations of people out of Europe that have taken place under capitalism were not all composed of imperialists and colonizers. Many of those leaving were such, of course, but they were very far from being in the majority. Australia was founded as a prison colony. The ruling class of England expelled its criminals and undesirables from England

and deposited them in Australia. Millions came to the United States as indentured servants. Tens of millions more came as the result of the enclosures movement in Europe. They had been forced off their lands and had to go elsewhere to live. Blacks of course were brought here as slaves (and it's interesting that Blacks are never considered, by Indigenists, as non-indigenous people, no matter where they live; this is a slur that is reserved for European whites). The great wave of Irish immigration to this country was caused by the colonization of Ireland by the English, who seized the farms there and used them for export crops, thus starving millions of Irish peasants, who had to leave -- a process that is going on now again all over the world on a vast scale. Millions of eastern European Jews came to this country to escape the pogroms, in 1905 especially, but also at other times. The vast migrations to Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay were for similar reasons.

When we start thinking in terms of indigenous vs non-indigenous, native vs european, people of color vs whites, we get into such a briar patch of contradictions it becomes simply laughable. Are the whites in South Africa, who have been there for four hundred years, to pack up and go back to Europe, because they are not indigenous? (Same with Algeria, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United States.) Are the nations of Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay, which are predominantly of European extract and white, to be defined as People of Color and Third World? Are the Irish, one of the first people colonized, included in the oppressed indigenous peoples, or are they white Europeans and part of the oppressors? Are the Turks, many of whom look just like Europeans, with red hair and all, being of Indo-European stock mixed up with Mongolian stock, people of color or white? Are they part of Asia or Europe? Are they third world or first world? They nearly conquered Vienna once, after all, and have lived in the Balkans for half a millennium. Should the Puerto Ricans in New York, Turks in Berlin,

Algerians in Paris, Chinese in San Francisco, or West Indians in London all go back where they came from? Are the Chinese communities in Indonesia indigenous or not? Are the Indian communities in South Africa indigenous or not? Are the Arabs in the southern Sahara to go back to Arabia where they came from? How long does a people have to live in an area before it becomes indigenous? Do the Jews (the Zionists among them), who want to go 'home' to Palestine, have a real claim to that territory even though they have been gone for 2000 years and Arabs have been living there all that time? Can they now go back and drive the Arabs out, claiming that Palestine is theirs? How anyone can think that this quagmire is superior to class analysis is beyond me.

A critic of my take on indigenism said that I had missed the point. Indigenous is just a name for the people who were in a place before the Europeans arrived, he claimed. Perhaps the concept has a certain plausibility when applied to the United States and Canada, and one or two other places, but it rapidly breaks down if applied worldwide (and it is even false, as explained above, when used for the US and Canada). Yet Indigenism is being applied worldwide, and has practically become a movement, and is spreading, as an analysis, and becoming a widely accepted approach to the strategy and philosophy of revolution.

Naturally, if there are important grass roots movements of people who call themselves indigenous you might argue that it makes sense to call them what they themselves call themselves, and for the most part I would agree. Of course, a movement, group, or people can call themselves anything they want to. It is their right to do so. And out of respect for them, there is generally no reason why others shouldn't accept the name. That doesn't mean we have to suspend critical judgement though, especially if a name has theoretical significance. I had no problem, for example, switching from Negro to African-American, because in that case, it was pretty much immaterial to me what name was preferred. (I refuse to use the term People of Color however, which I regard as pompous, euphemistic, and pretentious, seeing no difference between it and Colored People, which is taboo; the condoned phrase is actually closely linked with Indigenism).

The term indigenous however is in a rather different category. It has become

a name for a whole analysis, an analysis which is unaware of or denies that we live in a capitalist social order. So I'm wary of it, and ultimately opposed to it. None of this means however that I don't support the revolts of people who call themselves indigenous, like the Zapatista revolt in Chiapas, which is

obviously a very significant struggle. All kinds of struggles are undertaken by people who don't have the analysis that I wish they had -- strikes, boycotts, urban insurrections, demonstrations -- all done by people who don't have a thought of overthrowing capitalism -- but I'm happy to see those revolts. It will all add up in the end, or at least I hope so. The Zapatistas have been especially creative in breaking down all sorts of barriers, mind sets, categories, and boundaries. Who knows where it will all end? It's hard to imagine that it won't end in something good. But I still take a critical attitude toward their conceptual framework and self-identity.

I recently asked a friend who is living in Mexico about the racial breakdown in Mexico, and whether or not there was a name for a pure blooded Spaniard, and how conscious people were of racial distinctions there. He sent me back some passages from a book by James Cockcroft, *Mexico's Hope*, which described the following distinctions (this was from considerably earlier in Mexican history): "Spaniards were at the top of the social pyramid, followed by successful criollos (whites born in Mexico), mestizos (of mixed Spanish/Indian descent), mulattos (of mixed black and white descent), negros (Africans), and, at the bottom, Indians." (There are obviously a couple of likely categories missing: persons of mixed black and indian descent, and persons of mixed white, black, and indian decent.) So the question is: how can a mix like this ever be divided into indigenous and non-indigenous, and even if it could be, how could a just social policy ever be based on such a distinction?

In Cuba, the people who lived on the island before Columbus have long since

been exterminated. None of the people there now are indigenous (in the sense of being there before Columbus). The population of Cuba now is composed of ex-slaves (blacks, negroes), ex-slave owners and other Spaniards (whites, criollos), and mulattos. Indigenists though do not consider the population of Cuba to be non-indigenous (a bad term), but third world and people of color (good terms). So their application of the concept is rather contradictory and hypocritical.

The Turks started migrating into Asia Minor around the eleventh century. They captured Constantinople in 1453. So I guess you couldn't consider them indigenous to Anatolia, having come originally from Central Asia, although by now they have been living there for nine hundred years.

North Africa, originally a land of the Berbers, was overrun first by Arabs, and then by Ottoman Turks, and finally by the French, as empires waxed and waned. The Berbers, Arabs, Turks, and French are all still there.

In Lebanon, the population is divided religiously into Maronite Christians, Druses, and Muslims, all ethnic Arabs, plus hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees, from just across the border. Are the Palestinian refugees non-indigenous? They are Arabs, but not Lebanese. Each of the main religious groups considers the others as somewhat illegitimate, although not exactly alien or foreign I guess. At one time or another, since ancient times, just about every ethnic group in the Middle East, and there are many, has passed through Lebanon, with some of them staying behind to settle. It would be next to impossible to say who is indigenous to that region. In Egypt, in the Nile delta, peasants have been there for eons. I guess you could call them indigenous.

Of course, European Spaniards are themselves mestizos in a sense, being a mixture of Arab and European genes (and Arabs are a mixture of Indo-European, Mongolian, and African genes). In this case, since the Arabs were

the invading group, representing a so-called higher civilization, and were imposing their culture on so-called native, indigenous Europeans, the Spaniards were the colonized, while the Arabs were the colonizers. So many contemporary Spaniards are mestizos, the descendants of a colonized people, who intermarried with their colonizers.

The same might be said of the Turkish invasion of Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The Turks were the invaders. So the Europeans, according to indigenous theory, would have to be considered the native, indigenous, colonized element. There was also an earlier invasion of Eastern Europe by the Huns from Central Asia (c. 379), and a later invasion by Mongolians (c. 1279).

Also, many southern Europeans have some African genes, from way back, and are therefore mulattos. Dark complexioned persons are born throughout Europe in fact, except in the far north. Marx was called The Moor because of his dark complexion. So, many eastern and southern Europeans have long been either mestizos or mulattos. All of which shows why I believe it is rather absurd to try to comprehend history in terms of blood lines.

Many radical Latinos who are part European genetically, nevertheless adopt the identity of an indigenous person. How is it that they identify only with their Indian genes, but not with their European genes? Isn't it somewhat dishonest not to acknowledge one's actual genetic heritage, but instead only recognize those genes that are ideologically fashionable?

I got into a dispute once with a man who walked into the Lucy Parsons Center, a radical bookstore in Boston, and started trashing a young woman who was staffing the store, because she was white, and therefore imperialist, and "part of the problem". This man himself was white. He looked European to me. I could see no visible evidence of black or indian genes. It turned out though that he was Puerto Rican, and considered himself to be a Person of Color. It's possible of course that he was Mestizo or Mulatto, and might have fathered black or brown children. But it's also possible that he was a pure blooded descendant of Spaniards, and of pure European ancestry, genetically speaking. Yet he denied the European part of his genetic heritage.

There was another similar incident at the store one day. A young woman came in who claimed that she was an Indian. She was tall and slender, had

blue eyes, blond hair, and ivory white skin. I looked at her in astonishment. "How do you figure that?" I asked her. She claimed that her great-great grandmother was an Indian. So we see how far at least one sensitive young person would go to avoid the stigma of being White and European, a stigma that has been aided and abetted by Indigenism.

A big part of the problem with the concept of indigenous people is that it is linked to territory in a very bad way. Can the remaining American Indians in the United States ever really be free by trying to reclaim the land they once lived on? Can they link their destiny to the reservations they still own (by treaty with the government in Washington, DC)? Or is another approach called for,

page 126

in which all peoples can be free, regardless of their ethnicity or where they live, and where nothing, including land, is commodified and bought and sold?

Edward Said published an insightful piece recently in the Progressive (December 1999), about territory, although I don't think he got it quite right. He had returned to a village in Palestine, where a horrible massacre of Palestinians had taken place in 1948, and was struck by the irreconcilable interpretations of the place offered by himself and his Israeli guide. He writes:

"This incident raises a profound existential dilemma, and not just for Palestinians: how to deal with issues of contested territory and competing claims of ethno-national identity?

"It seems clear to me that schemes of separation and partition and wishful ideas of creating ethnic or religious homogeneity have failed miserably and, in fact, have reproduced and intensified the problems they were designed to remedy. The idea was to divide Ireland between Protestants and Catholics. It hasn't worked. The idea to divide Cyprus between Turks and Greeks hasn't

worked, either. The partition of Palestine between Jews and Arabs hasn't worked. Israel is not a homogeneous Jewish state. Twenty percent of the population are non-Jews. What do you do about them? The whole idea of partitioning and trying to separate ethnic groups who have lived together in one way or another, in contest or not, into pure states is a mistake. Look at India, which is largely a Hindu state but has a Muslim population of 120 to 150 million people. What do you do about them?"

Later on he describes, rightly, the destruction that Identity Politics has caused in the Middle East over most of the decades of his life. And then he comments: "Identity, I think, is more of a burden and an inhibitor of thought -- especially identity as ethnic, religious, or even national particularity. This identity strikes me as something to be gotten over." Unfortunately though, in seeking a solution to "the ravages of the politics of identity", he moves in the direction of a universal, secular humanism, rather than toward a decentered, diverse, anarchistic world. If he had given more consideration to the two-hundred-year-old communist and anarchist attack on states as such, he might have seen another solution.

Identities

By Jared James, Summer, 2001

All that agonizing Marxists have suffered, for nearly a century now, over the Nationalities Question was so pointless. They could have saved themselves a heap of trouble if they hadn't excluded anarchists so completely from the political and intellectual arena. There is definitely a problem here, but not the one they have perceived. Quite obviously, there is a nationalities question only when there are nations, or more precisely, nation-states. If there is a Russian Empire, and within its boundaries exist a multitude of distinct

peoples with unique languages, cultures, histories, and traditions, how can these peoples be free and self-determined and still be subject to the authority of the national government? Well that's not hard. They can't be. If Ho Chi Minh and the communists are in power in Hanoi and are setting policy for the whole country, what happens to the tribal peoples in the hills? If the Sandinistas are in power in Managua, and setting policy for all of Nicaragua, what is the nature of their relations with the Miskito Indians on the Gulf Coast? Or what about the Basques and Spaniards, the Quebecois and English Canadians, the Scots and the English?

These are all non-issues under anarchy, which is a worldful of autonomous, communal peoples. If there were no ruling class, then there would be no pressure on local peoples to give up their own languages, ethnicities, and cultures in favor of those of the ruling class. There would be no King's English to be imposed on the lower orders to facilitate more efficient administration. There would be no national religion. There would be no hegemonic culture. Under the communists in China, distinct ethnic groups have been disappearing faster than ever before, as a national, homogenous culture is imposed from Beijing. Regional dialects are disappearing from an already fairly homogenous country like the United States. Similarly the world over.

But if every neighborhood, village, or small town were self-governing and autonomous, then what reason could there be for them to give up their own language and culture? Unless they just wanted to, because they wanted to assimilate for example (but to what?), or simply to learn a second language, or adopt certain items (ideas or things) because they liked them. But they would be under no compulsion to do so. They could change or stay the same, as they chose. Under such conditions, it would even become possible again for new ethnicities and cultures to emerge, rather than disappear, which is about all they've been doing lately.

But wouldn't essentially the same problems reappear on the neighborhood level? They would, but with a difference. It's unlikely after all that every neighborhood or village will be homogeneous (or stay homogenous). Even if they begin homogenous, new identities can emerge almost overnight to split them. A good example was the emergence in the late sixties of gender as the

primary identity for millions of young women the world over. An identity which had not been especially salient suddenly became so. I suppose something similar could happen in a decentralized world.

But on the neighborhood level, in self-governing free communities, the question of identity takes on an entirely different cast. How so? Because of the already achieved equality of power and

wealth. Much of the struggle of blacks has been to get the same civil rights everyone else had. Women have sought equal rights under the law and equity in pay and work loads. Old people have wanted to live in dignity and independence, and not be shoved off to die in some holding pen. In autonomous neighborhoods based on democratic decision-making, cooperative labor, and shared wealth, all these things would be theirs as a matter of course. It's hard to see how identity politics, as we have known it this past quarter century, could even exist under anarchy. Identities that would exist, would surely exist, would devolve into the standard difficulty of majority/minority relations. There will be minorities on just about every issue. But will these minorities be based on race, gender, age, or language? I doubt it. They will be political or philosophical minorities.

Nevertheless, there may well still be intractable conflicts. The current dispute between the christian right and homosexuals might provide an example. Christian conservatives believe that homosexuality is a sin, unnatural, and a violation of human nature and the laws of God. You can argue with them until the cows come home and not get anywhere. You can point out that there have always been homosexuals in human societies throughout history. They reply that there have always been murderers, thieves, and prostitutes too, but that doesn't make them morally acceptable or socially tolerable. You can point out that homosexuality was considered entirely normal in some periods, like in the Roman Empire. They reply that this only proves how decadent that empire was. And so forth and so on. (Of course, slavery was justified with

comparable beliefs, namely that blacks were inferior creatures and not really human.)

What if a few homosexuals were living in a democratic, autonomous neighborhood where everyone else was a christian conservative? Well, could they be denied participation in projects, households, and the assembly? Could they be denied their fair share of the cooperatively produced wealth? They couldn't. Not and have the neighborhood still remain a member of the association. Could they be expelled from the neighborhood? Probably. Freedom to associate implies the freedom not to associate. Otherwise this freedom is meaningless. I don't see how the right to expel persons from a neighborhood could be abolished and still have a social arrangement based on free association. And remember, there is no higher authority to impose laws to resolve the conflict in favor of one or the other side.

I don't deny that this is a very thorny issue. Naturally, we hope that the horizons of human tolerance for difference will keep expanding. But where intractable conflicts still exist, I believe the solution lies with the principle of free association and shows the beauty and genius of this way of arranging our social life. The long running debate in Israel over "Who is a Jew?" has made this clear. Certain orthodox Jews want a Jewish state peopled by Jews like themselves. This certainly excludes Palestinians and Christians. It also excludes even secular Israelis, that is, citizens of the present state of Israel, who may once have been practicing Jews, in the religious sense, but no longer are. Are these secular Israelis Jews? Does Jewishness spring from citizenship in a Jewish state or from religious beliefs and practices only? There is no solution to this dilemma within the framework of a territorial nation-state. Those who insist that a secular Israeli state solves the problem are simply missing the point and opting for one side in the dispute, for citizens rather than Jews. The problem is the state itself, with its

citizens, and not its particular definition, whether secular or religious. The

Jewish question can only be solved under anarchism, as the late-nineteenth century socialist Bundists in the Ukraine and the Polish Pale, who were opposed to Zionism, realized. Unlike Marx, who thought the solution to the Jewish Question was the disappearance of the Jewish identity in favor of a more universal human identity, these Jewish communists knew that their freedom could never be achieved by the ownership and control of a territory. They knew that they had to be free to live as they pleased - no matter where, and no matter what their identity - even as Jews.

True communism (that is, anarchism) can never be geographically defined, but only socially. It has no territorial boundaries. Getting rid of the state of Israel (and all states everywhere) would free up the whole region (and the whole world) for an abundance of diverse, democratic, autonomous communities. Jews and Palestinians could live side by side, in their neighborhoods and villages, peacefully, as they had done for hundreds of years before Zionism and the State of Israel came along.

Under anarchism, diversity rules, not sameness. But diversity does not mean that every tradition will exist side by side in every neighborhood (although many neighborhoods might move a ways in this direction), but only that there is room enough for every tradition to exist somewhere. People who speak the same language will tend to live together. People with strict religious practices and eating regimens will tend to live together. People who share a history and a culture will tend to live together. Families will tend to live together. In this, there is sameness. But that the world will continue to possess thousands of languages and identities, rather than one imperial language and identity, is diversity.

So if christian conservatives find homosexuals morally repugnant, they have a right not to associate with them. They do not have a right to pass laws forcing their views on everyone else, as they have been trying to do lately in the United States (an option that would not even be available in a decentralized world without nation-states). But neither do homosexuals have the right to pass laws forcing the toleration of their sexual practices on christian conservatives.

The struggle by homosexuals to alter the general beliefs, so that

homosexuality would not be seen as morally repugnant by anyone - just as the prevailing view, among Caucasians, that Negroes were not really people, was eventually overridden by the belief that they were - is of course a useful strategy, but one not likely to succeed as long as christian conservatives exist, because theirs are deeply rooted beliefs which have persisted for hundreds of years, and cannot be expected to disappear anytime soon (a remarkable assessment considering that forty years ago many people, myself included, thought that christianity was gasping for its last breath). Christianity will undoubtedly outlast capitalism. And under anarchism (assuming that we win the battle for succession), who will give a damn what they believe (unless they keep proselytizing me, waking me up early Sunday mornings with door to door evangelizing, and then I will certainly give a damn; and I guess homosexuals will give a damn if they are expelled from their neighborhoods). This is perhaps just wishful thinking on my part. Christians are not likely to leave us alone to live as we please. Have they ever? Christians, as a rule, are aggressively proselytizing people. They are not noted for their tolerance. And they have this compulsion to save other people. Although there is room for them in my scheme, there is not room for me in theirs. But under free

___conditions, will any group be able to impose its way of life on others? I suppose some majorities in some neighborhoods might try. But how far will they get? Wouldn't they need bureaucrats, police, superintendents, and lawyers? And where are they going to get these?

Nor is this strategy homosexuals have of altering the culture in general one that can be universally applied to all other identity conflicts. What if a community of people emerged with the conscious identity of murderers and thieves, as perhaps has actually happened with the Mafia (and has certainly happened with the capitalist ruling class, muted only by its absurdly transparent ideological dissimulation)? Is anyone going to argue that killing and stealing are really okay and that this identity has a right to exist? Would

any community tolerate murderers and thieves in their projects, households, and assemblies? Wouldn't they take steps to constrain such people or expel them from their ranks?

Free association provides a way out of this muddle for many identity conflicts short of outright crime. New identities and lifestyles are emerging all the time. Identities are not fixed, immutable, eternal. They appear and disappear like everything else. So people with shared beliefs and practices can form communities and live together, and leave others alone to live as they please. No one is stopping them. The world is a big place. There is room for everyone. It is only as the cancer of imperialism, and the nationalism that it has spawned, has metastasized to all corners of the globe, that the world has started to seem crowded.

We cannot expect, though, that every time a serious disagreement emerges in a neighborhood, a bunch of people will just pack up and leave and establish a new neighborhood elsewhere or move into another neighborhood where people already share their beliefs, or at least tolerate them. This kind of split will be feasible only in rare cases. Gender conflicts, for example, obviously cannot be solved, on the social level, by one sex moving out and forming a new neighborhood, not if the human species is to survive that is. Living in distinct neighborhoods is certainly a solution for many existing differences though, since for the most part we already do. So we're back to the recognition that disagreements are inherent in the human situation, and to the unending contest, therefore, over whose values, perceptions, and projects will win acceptance and prevail, and whose will be rejected and fade away.

The Loss of Anti-Capitalism

A Review of Audacious Democracy

By Jared James, April 1998

Audacious Democracy: Labor, Intellectuals, and the Social Reconstruction of

America. Edited by Seven Fraser and Joshua B. Freeman, Houghton Mifflin, 1997, 273 pages, \$12 paperback.

Not one word about destroying capitalism! That is the most striking thing about this book. Not one word about abolishing wage-slavery. In fact the concept of wage-slaver is completely absent from this book. Instead, the assumption throughout is that working at a job for a wage is all there will ever be, the only issues being the conditions under which this work is done, its rewards, and the extent of state sponsored amelioration. Such is the depth to which the opposition in America has sunk, such is the thoroughness of the defeat of anti-capitalist forces, that radicals themselves now accept the permanence of the system of employers and employees, bosses and workers, buyers and sellers of labor-power. What a far cry from the blistering indictments of the boss system at the beginning of the century by Haywood, DeCleyre, Debs, Goldman. You would have thought that at least Norman Birnbaum, Frances Fox Piven, Eric Foner, or Manning Marable, socialists all, could have spared a sentence or two for the ultimate goal. Not so however. Maybe they have lost sight of it.

The book contains 21 short essays (plus an introduction by the editors), presented at the "Teach-In with the Labor Movement" held at Columbia University in New York City in October, 1996. The conference brought together "leading American intellectuals and labor movement activists" (according to the jacket blurb). Seven of the 21 represent labor; six of these are with AFL-CIO, one with AFSCME. Of the intellectuals, twelve are professors and two are writers. One of the editors is a professor and the other is executive editor at Houghton Mifflin. Thus the book is in no way representative of either labor activists or intellectuals, especially those not affiliated with large institutions.

A glance at the table of contents gives a hint about what we might be in for. There are articles on women and labor, Asian-Americans and labor, black leadership and labor, whiteness and labor, intellectuals and labor. We might surmise from this that identity politics has swamped the labor movement just like it has swamped the universities and the opposition movement in general, eradicating class analysis everywhere. But perhaps there is hope. There is an

article on "Beyond Identity Politics." But we'll come back to this. First let's take a look at the union bureaucrats. John Sweeney, in "America Needs a Raise," bemoans the passing of the boom days after World War II. "For employers back then, decent wages and benefits and high standards of corporate responsibility were seen as good business and good for business. And our leaders in government, business, and labor understood what President Kennedy said best: "A rising tide lifts all boats." Back then "*We* (my italics) were concerned with raising the standard of living for all Americans, not just accumulating wealth for the fortunate few." And things did improve -- "*...a fair portion* (my italics) of the newly created wealth was distributed among the American *workforce* (my italics)." But the "Corporate irresponsibility

became the strategy of choice in our new winner-take-all economy" "Even employers with proud histories of doing right by their workers joined the rush to speed up work, freeze wages, slash benefits, and eliminate pensions."

Sweeney documents the tremendous hit the American working class (he never uses this term however, saying instead "workforce", "working people", "American workers", or "employees") has taken over the last twenty-five years, and he wants to stop it. The way to stop it is to rebuild unions. Then you could make corporations stop exporting jobs, invest in America, provide training, and raise wages, and you could force the government to reform the tax laws, stop corporate welfare, and restore the safety net. "Our idea of a just society," says Sweeney, "is one in which *honest labor* (my italics) raises the standard of living for all, rather than creating wealth for just a few." Of course there is zero analysis of why the boom ended, why the welfare state is being dismantled, or why factories are being moved overseas. The problem for Sweeney is "corporate irresponsibility," not the normal functioning of capitalism. His dream is to live permanently in the biggest boom, in the richest country, in the history of the capitalist system (which he

completely accepts). This is the leader of organized labor in America speaking. His speech is so pathetic it's painful to write about it.

Robert Welsh details AFL-CIO's program for rebuilding unions. It sounds like a good initiative, provided your only objective is to "get a raise" for "workers".

Jose La Luz discusses new educational strategies to empower workers "to transform the existing power arrangements in order to improve the lives of working men and women." Nothing here about abolishing workers as workers and creating a society not based on, and entirely free from, the "employment" of "workers".

Mae Ngai outlines an informative short history of Asian workers in America, a history of exclusion primarily, and discrimination, linking this history to current debates about immigration. Once again though, the absence of anti-capitalism is obvious. "The real solutions," Ngai writes, "to workers' economic problems lie elsewhere [than in policing immigrants], in union representation, in living wages, in the enforcement of labor and environmental regulations, in higher workplace standards and in the retention of jobs in the United States." Isn't the real solution to workers' economic problems the abolition of capitalism -- the destruction of the wage-slave system, the destruction of the labor market (the buying and selling of labor power), and the *end of exploitation*? How can there ever be a 'real solution' short of this?

Karen Nussbaum presents a standard discussion of the role and position of women in the labor market, and discusses recent organizing efforts. Her goal though is merely "... to restore balance in our world -- between the rich and the rest, between work and family, between men and women...." Balance? Between the rich and the rest? Under capitalism? Give me a break.

Saddest of all though is Ron Blackwell's piece on "Globalization and the American Labor Movement." Blackwell complains that corporations "have escaped the reach of public authority

and are pursuing their private objectives at the expense of the rest of society." Have they *ever* done anything else? He seems to think the problem "is not globalization itself but the irresponsible actions of corporations in regard to workers, unions and other social movements, and to governments" "Without countervailing power," he writes, "from other social forces [e.g., unions] or effective governmental regulations, there is no way to make private corporations fulfill their public responsibility" Well why not just *get rid* of private corporations? "Without effective regulations, corporations pursue profit with no regard for the wider social or environmental impact of their activities." "The challenge to the American labor movement is not to stop globalization but to restore a balance of power between workers and their employers and to make corporations accountable again to government and the people." Well golly gee! I must have been asleep to have missed this golden age of capitalism when corporations were accountable to the people. When was it? Even during the heydays of the post WWII boom, most countries of the world were being gutted and impoverished, toxic dumps were being laid down by the thousands, native and peasant cultures were being destroyed everywhere, whole nations were inflicted with artificially induced famines, whole huge sections of the working class were living on subsistence wages even in the rich countries, hundreds of millions of acres of land were being grabbed, the commodification of everything was proceeding at a furious pace, militarism was rampant, tens of thousands of species were being exterminated, rain forests obliterated, oceans polluted. When have capitalists ever behaved responsibly? Tell me that.

This essay is so preposterously naive, so thoroughly unaware of the fierceness with which capitalists defend, on a daily basis, their mechanisms of theft, so completely ignorant of the structures of capitalist rule through five hundred years of murder and plunder, that it is a shame the piece was ever printed.

Now let's take a look at the academics. First Todd Gitlin's "Beyond Identity Politics." Any hope we might have had that Gitlin would return to class analysis is quickly dashed. Gitlin likes identity politics; he just thinks it has

reached its limits of effectiveness. Far from seeing it as having helped eradicate class analysis from the American left, he thinks it has accomplished a lot. That he sees "workers" as just another identity betrays his deep embeddedness in identity politics. He thinks it's time to add this identity, that of worker, to the others: women, blacks, gays and lesbians, Native Americans, Latinos, and so forth. This identity, of worker, gives us a new "commonality" he says, and will help us overcome "poverty" and "inequality."

But of course "worker" is *not* an identity category. It does not refer to a personal characteristic like gender or race, nor to a cultural characteristic like language or ethnicity. It is an analytical concept used by radical theorists to dissect capitalism. It is inextricably linked with capital -- labor and capital -- as the two poles of the profit system, "worker" being a name for one location in this system. It is a *relationship*, not an identity. And it is a relationship of subordination and exploitation, whether workers are aware of this or not. But it is only rarely that workers *have* been conscious of themselves as workers, let alone as wage-slaves. This consciousness was more widespread in the nineteenth century. It can be argued that this was because capital then had not yet fully colonized the consciousness of the working class. Workers then were still in possession of cultures predating capitalism, and still retained some non-commodified relations. Be that as it may, workers have long since stopped thinking of themselves as workers. It is questionable

whether this consciousness can ever be revived, or whether it is desirable to even try. Capital itself, as part of its ideological defense, has destroyed this consciousness. Also, however I believe that workers themselves have sloughed it off. Who wants to think of themselves as just a worker, a wage-earner? We are more. We are human beings, or at least citizens. Working at a job is something we have to do to survive, but it is not us. We have lives of our own to lead, and many interests outside work. So this can be turned to

advantage in the anti-capitalist struggle. The original goal after all was to abolish workers as workers. So we have sloughed off the label, but we are still trapped in the relationship, a relation of abuse and slavery. It is this bondage that has to be sloughed off now. And it can be.

But Gitlin says none of this. His goals are merely "shorter work weeks, work-sharing, democratic controls over corporate policies [sic], health care, worker protection, [and] a reversal of the thrust toward inequality." Gitlin is a New Leftist who never made it to a class analysis and an understanding of capitalism, but remained encased in the old liberal, pluralist theory of democracy, which he then, along with thousands of others, imported into the radical movement and renamed identity politics.

The only sustained discussion of class in the book is in Lillian Rubin's "Family Values and the Invisible Working Class." This essay is a plea for keeping the category of "working class" and not lumping everyone in the middle class. But once again the pernicious influence of mainstream social science is quite evident. For Rubin, class is a matter of income or occupation level, not a question of your relation to the accumulators of capital, that is, of whether or not you have to sell your labor-power to live. So although she believes that there is still a working class (contrary to popular belief), she also believes that most Americans are in the middle class. Actually, income has nothing to do with class. That is, it is the source of income that determines class, not the amount. Workers who sell their labor-power for \$100,000 a year are still in the working class. They can only escape the working class if they use some of that money to buy real estate, stocks and bonds, or profit-making enterprises, and thus begin to live off rent, interest, dividends, and profits, rather than wages or salary. But if they spend it all on houses, cars, boats, vacations, clothes, and entertainment, they remain workers, although rich ones. Many thousands of middle level managers have learned this all too painfully in recent years as they have been fired from their good jobs, and, unable to find another buyer of their labor at a similar price, have rapidly lost everything, ending up on the unemployment line or on welfare. They learned the hard way that they are workers who, in order to survive, have only their labor to sell.

The closest anyone comes in this book to rejecting capitalism is Norman Birnbaum, in the following sentence: "The subordination of the market by the nation and the extension of citizenship to the workplace remain the unfulfilled tasks of American democracy." This is a rejection of capitalism only for those who realize: (1) that the "subordination of the market" implies the destruction of capitalism, since that is precisely what capitalism is -- the domination of the market and commodified relations over all realms of life; and (2) that democratic citizenship in the workplace is incompatible with capitalism since capitalism by definition is precisely the monopolization of the means of production by the accumulators of capital. But how many are going to, or can, read between the lines like this? And the statement is marred in other ways, by his reliance on "the nation," for example, as if creating the nation-state system wasn't

how capitalists managed to set up the market in the first place, and send its tentacles out over the entire world. Also, for a radical scholar to be still speaking of "American democracy" is very disheartening.

All the authors included here hope for the revival of the labor movement. What they seem to have forgotten is that for over a hundred years, from the 1830s until World War II, labor struggles were rooted in an anti-capitalist working class culture. Of course, there were reformist unions, what we now call business unions, from the very beginning, but they were surrounded by communists, anarchists, socialists, and anarcho-syndicalists. All this anti-capitalism has been swept away. At some point the term 'labor movement' was substituted as a euphemism for communism and anarchism by unionists who wanted to disassociate themselves from their more radical comrades, choosing instead to agitate only for small gains within capitalism, rather than for its overthrow. Can the "labor movement" be revived in the absence of anti-capitalist sentiments? Will workers fight again just for a raise? I have my doubts. I think we have passed through the welfare state phase, never to see it

again. Workers, and their associations, will have to become revolutionary again, that is anti-capitalist, before they can hope to organize anew and fight effectively. A raise is not enough. *Freedom*, from drudgery and bondage, will have to be desired.

There are moments of relief in the book. Piven (and also Fletcher, the best of the labor pieces) offers a detailed and informative analysis of how recent legislative changes in Social Security, Medicaid, food stamps, welfare (especially AFDC), etcetera, are forcing millions of people back onto the labor market, thus expanding the "reserve army of labor" and weakening the power of labor vis a vis capital. She focuses especially on "workfare" and shows how this program is undermining unions and undercutting organized labor. Fonder and Birnbaum both present very interesting thumbnail sketches of the history of intellectuals and labor. Rorty reminds us that workers' struggles have not all been sunshine and flowers but usually have been rather brutal and bloody. Marable analyzes the differing strategies black leaders have adopted, stressing alternatively race or class, in trying to improve the conditions of African-Americans.

So there you have it. In short, there is not one audacious thought in this whole book.

If ever there was an urgent need for the infusion of anarchist ideas into the American left it is now. The total bankruptcy of statist strategies, whether Leninist or Social Democratic, could not be more glaringly apparent. Fortunately, there are revolutionary currents not noticed by the essayists in this book. The burgeoning anarchist movement in many countries, the *autonomia* in Italy and elsewhere, native and peasant uprisings like the Zapatistas in Mexico, the rediscovery of anti-Bolshevik communism, the continued development of autonomous, non-sectarian marxism, the still active anarcho-syndicalist organizations, mass anti-statist communist parties in India, localist movements in Africa, the regionalism of radical environmentalists, plus revolutionary theorists like Ellen Meiksins Wood, Colin Ward, Cornelius Castoriadis, Antonio Negri, David McNally, Carole Pateman, Immanuel Wallerstein, Silvia Federici, Harry Cleaver, David Noble, Selma James -- all these point the way to the renewal of the anti-capitalist war and the liberation of humanity from the bondage of wage-

slavery.