



# Australian Independent Marxists

AIM For ... Socialism



Issue No.01

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Banner graphic: *Labor Solidarity Has No Borders*, Mike Alewitz, 1990

Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research. Acrylic, 42' x 12'.

The artist assisted by Juan Garcia, Mauricio Cabrera, Elden Bookhart, and Lydia Velasquez. The mural depicts workers determined to break down the U.S.-Mexican border, while capitalists watch horrified, protected by a monster.



# Surplus Value

## Are you being served?

### Naturalisation of Capitalist Bias In Australian Society

If you do something often enough, it seems right? This process is naturalisation. It is the same with language - especially political language. If we hear something often enough, we stop questioning it. Is this why many Australians now seem to accept low wages and the loss of their working conditions?

In an interview with Kerry O'Brien, John Howard made the following comment<sup>1</sup>: "Somebody can have the bargaining done on their behalf. The bargaining can be done by anybody they choose. It can be done by a union official, it could be done by a family friend, it could be done by a lawyer or anybody they choose. This notion that somebody is necessarily alone in bargaining, quite apart from the other things I've talked about, has not been the case since our workplace relations reforms of 1997. So nobody is forced to do any bargaining on their own."

Of course, what he failed to mention is that an employee can't sack an employer if that person is not satisfied with their change of conditions. The only way an individual has to bargain with an employer is through collective action with his fellow workers.

Over a long period in Australia, the people have been "educated" by a continuously-biased press to think that if they ask for better working conditions they are un-Australian; that somehow they are letting their fellow Australians down. No wonder they feel this way, when they continually read comments from the media such as the following from "The Australian", where Paul Kelly says<sup>2</sup>, "Rudd's new industrial policy is a giant step into the past. Indeed, so sweeping is Labor's embrace of the principles of collective power and re-regulation that it must be wondered whether Rudd fully comprehends what

he has done." This implies that any move towards fairer working conditions is a step backwards and is catastrophic for Australia as a nation.

The reality of what we read and hear in most of the mainstream media is interests groups who are supported by large multinationals corporations. Their interest is not the average Australian, but their shareholders and business organisations.

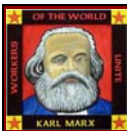
These interests groups so permeate our society that even the leadership of the Australian Labor Party acquiesces to their interests. We see this when Kevin Rudd panders to them by espousing policy which will deny workers the right to strike.

The reality is that we are witnessing a continual struggle between classes. The arguments put forward by the Business Council and the Media are nothing new. If you push the average Australian to the poverty line, then there will be conflict and this will happen because employers are always looking to increase their profit margin at the expense of the employee.

Now we see in the press that those business organisations say we need to let go of the past. They say they are trying to take us into the future. In reality, this is far from the truth. The coal miners of northern New South Wales were locked out in March, 1929, to force a wage cut of 12.5 percent as part of a general drive of the employing class to force the burdens of the economic crisis onto the backs of the workers<sup>3</sup>.

So what we see in Australia today is nothing new. Work Choices is just one part of a overall strategy to reduce the living standards of the average Australian worker. They do this by attacking Medicare and public education. They promote the line that having a job is a privilege, not a right.

(continued on Page 2 ...)



## The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas

### INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS: HOWARD'S GRAVE-DIGGERS

In one of the greatest modern works of insightful polemic, *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx wrote 'What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers ...'

In this age of reduced expectations we might now read that prophetic announcement as meaning that capitalist assault will, in time, produce its own working-class response. Courtesy of the reactionary assault on working-class employment conditions occasioned by the Coalition's capture of the Senate, we see, at present, a process of class politics re-emerging.

Not yet the grave-diggers of capitalism, frightened and angry workers may yet halt the Howard Government's neo-liberal assault that aims to bring globalisation of the labour market closer to home.

In the world envisaged by Howard, Australia will soon have a working poor. This will dilute the power of organised or regulated labour. Instead of the dole acting as the benchmark of whether one will accept employment or not, it will now be the worker next to you, brow-beaten into reduced conditions, who will serve as the measure of what is acceptable.

One hundred and fifty years ago, stonemasons and building workers won the right to an eight-hour day. The '8 Hour Day Monument', which celebrates that achievement, stands adjacent to Victorian Trades Hall Council in Melbourne. It now looks like a futuristic piece of art.

As wages are driven down among unskilled labour and those pockets of white-collar labour that are in long supply, we must expect further assaults on unemployment benefits. The logic is inexorable. If anything gets Howard's heart beating faster than a regulated labour force, it is the socially secured unemployed.

The sad thing is that Labor paved the way for the present situation.

Beginning with the Hawke Labor Government's close relationship with business and trade union leadership, the 1980s witnessed the weakening of working-class organisation. As union

leaders demobilised militants in the union movement — moving instead to the provision of discount cards and cheaper dental services — a new form of politics emerged in Australia that eschewed collective commitment.

It was the Labor Government that attacked compulsory unionism and it was under Labor that historically high levels of union membership — up to 50 per cent in the 1970s — began their downward slide to 40 per cent in the mid 1990s and around 25 per cent today.

The 1980s were marked by an ideological assault that used the spectre of global competition as the sledgehammer to nail unions to self restraint. Threats of capital flight if Australia didn't 'deregulate' were used to cajole workers to accept a weaker bargaining position and to accept centralised negotiations.

The social wage promised by Labor's tripartite Accords between government, employers and workers produced a 15 per cent decline in wages over the decade it was in office. The Hawke and Keating Governments' historic achievement was to weaken working-class organisation, not by malicious intent, but by being carried away with notions of global competition and capitalist nation building. When workers broke from the straightjacket of fiscal discipline and arbitrated wage rises they were demonised — such was the fate, for instance, of the Victorian nurses whose 50-day strike in 1985–6 sent Laborites into a blue-blooded rage worthy of Thatcher.

However, no comment on Labor presiding over the decline in working-class living standards can proceed without recourse to irony.

The first irony of Labor's first years in office is that Australia in the mid-1980s was not so much reacting to global conditions as acting as a pioneer for the neo-liberalism that was soon to be ascendant globally. That Australia had its own nomenclature for this is indicative — we called it 'economic rationalism.'

The second irony is that Labor, in pioneering a new way of seeing the world, would give rise to ideologies of new individualism that would undermine its own electoral position. Stock market postings became as avidly read in some quarters as AFL results. Later it would be property prices.

Labor delivered the aspirational voter to the Liberal Party. It turned unionism into a defensive position for workers, and it released hundreds of thousands of overly confident workers into the clutches of financial advisors.

Now, as the screw turns, for many the question of unionism is a matter of calculus of what they can personally gain. There is now an army of workers who will only be recruited to the union if a gimmick is offered or the threat of dismissal is looming.

Union delegates the country over are now telling prospective members that surely the cost of union membership is not prohibitive, especially given the gains in wages that have been secured by various Enterprise Bargaining Rounds. The response is sometimes telling. 'Sorry, got to pay off the investment property,' 'sorry, my finances are so poor,' 'sorry, but I think I'll look after myself.'

The greatest challenge facing Australian unions is not recruitment but the re-creation of the notion of solidarity. While unions will grow in the short term — based on the fear of Howard's IR agenda — recruitment will mean nothing unless that ethic of solidarity re-emerges.

Howard might not like it, but he will be the very source that will drive this new ethic.

By: **Michael Connors**  
Wednesday 21 June 2006

Michael Connors teaches politics at La Trobe University.

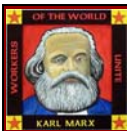
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So when you ask yourself 'am I being served?' by Australian mainstream politics, ask yourself if politicians speak for you or someone else? Or do you feel that the little man has no voice in this political climate?

1.~<http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2005/s1430603.htm>

2.~<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,21643313-12250,00.html>

3.~*Of Storm and Struggle, Pages from Labour History*, Edgar Ross, p 43

**The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas****FROM THE EDITOR****The Winds of Change**

The winds of change are blowing. The spectre of a working people's power is resonating in the backrooms of capital, and there is movement amongst their chief executive officers. In this time of change, we see some unlikely, but not altogether unexpected happenings. Leader of the Federal Labour Party sups with the most powerful media baron in the world – and gains his endorsement. Leaders of the Business Council of Australia decline to fund a campaign in support of *their* industrial laws. Trade Union leaders who have previously talked long and hard about the struggle against the bosses – and some who have led struggles as well – quietly acquiesce to a policy designed to appease these same bosses.

A heralded Labor victory will see great outpourings of joy from a thousand hearts and a thousand heads. Yet hanging over that victory will be a looming storm-cloud. For the victory will come only at a price. The captains of capital will call in their chips.

The vast mass of people in the 1800s saw slavery as a normal and acceptable part of life. The few do-gooders and left-wing ratbags who opposed slavery seemed somehow to be out of touch with reality. Yet within less than a hundred years, the everyday person in the street regards slavery as an abhorrent and inconceivable blot on a civilised world. Such was the complete victory of a campaign taken up by the few and completed by the many. That struggle was based both on human rights as well as on the need for capital to profit from free rather than slave labour.

That story has a lesson for us today. The ideological assumptions of one era become the lost and quaint beliefs of another. What might those assumptions be today?

First and foremost amongst our firm and un-stated confidences today is that most oft-stated saying in the labour movement – “a fair day's work for a fair day's pay”. Will this maxim be thrown out as a dated and unnecessary belief? It is based on a simple proposition – that the owners of

business have a fundamental and unshakeable right to make their living from those they employ. In other words, that capital has an inherent right to exploit our labour power and discipline our labour time.

Will this assumption go the way of a host of abandoned assumptions like the rightness and propriety of slavery? Such a course will happen only when a thousand – tens of thousands – workers question the right of our employers to exploit our creative capacities.

In the current turmoil over parliamentary power, is it really time for a new start for collective working class politics?

Proletarians unite! We have more to gain than enterprise bargaining!

**Pope accuses rich nations of robbery**

By **John Hooper** in Rome  
Thursday April 5, 2007

Pope Benedict appeared to reach out to the anti-globalisation movement yesterday, attacking rich nations for having “plundered and sacked” Africa and other poor regions of the world.

An extract published from his first book since being elected pope highlighted the passionately anti-materialistic and anti-capitalist aspects of his thinking. Unexpectedly, the Pope also approvingly cited Karl Marx and his analysis of contemporary man as a victim of alienation....

Describing humanity's alienation, Marx had “provided a clear image of the man who has fallen victim to brigands”...

The Pope ... compares [the rich nations] to the thieves.

“If we apply [the story] to the dimensions of globalised society we see how the peoples of Africa, who have been plundered and sacked, see us from close-up,” he wrote. “Our style of life [and] the history in which we are involved has stripped them and continues to strip them.”

**A.I.M. FOR ... SOCIALISM**

The Australian Independent Marxists is a circle of comrades interested in discussion and analysis of the current world situation, the struggle for change, and the form and workings of a future socialist society.

We take as our starting point a belief in Marxism as the most-valid and effective tool of analysis available for an understanding of the workings of capitalism, and for the struggle for socialism. We also believe that class issues are central to this analysis.

AIM has the following general aims and methods:

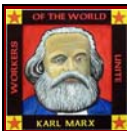
- o To be a forum for discussion and analysis of issues relating to capitalism and socialism
- o To use Marxist dialectics as the primary analytical tool
- o To analyse the current situation, address issues of tactics, and discuss issues relating to the future form of society and its workings
- o To reach out to and include everyday workers and other strata of society in these discussions and activities

AIM believes that the Left has been too reactive in the last few years (long on protesting, but short on analysing) and needs to become more-constructive in proposing ways forward. The ruling class still sees the Left as its real threat, despite its rhetoric of “the end of History”, the Islamic threat, etc.

Central to our analysis will be the economic foundations of society, and the role of class in the workings of capitalist society.

Although we are not aligned to any party, we welcome involvement by comrades from parties and other organisations who share our aims and methods.

*‘Eisenhower was correct in pointing out that the hallmark of the Police State is the loss of the right to strike. A worker's right to strike is surely a basic human right. The right to withdraw labour is the one thing that distinguishes a free worker from the slave. This is a fundamental freedom.’ -- Labor MP, Clyde Cameron, 1970*

**THE GAP BETWEEN WORK AND CHOICE**By **David Peetz**

Posted Monday, 12 March 2007

When the government launched a \$55 million advertising campaign, "WorkChoices" was created as a single symbol. Yet the gap between work and choices, embedded subtly in the legislation's title (the "Work Choices" Amendment Act) is experienced starkly by many employees.

Government spin has not been enough to turn around public opinion. The polls show that WorkChoices remains deeply unpopular with voters. The policy is opposed by a margin of two or three to one. Among voters who believe industrial relations is the most important election issue, the margin is four to one against the government.

The government fell seriously behind Labor when WorkChoices was debated in Parliament, and was - in trend terms - behind in all three major polls through most of 2006, from the time WorkChoices took effect. WorkChoices represents a clear and present danger to the re-election of the government.

In Sydney, within days of WorkChoices taking effect, Amber Oswald, a 16-year-old casual working in a juice bar, was put on to an AWA that cut her weekly pay from \$97 to \$65. Her boss told the media: "If they don't want to sign, they can leave ... It's not about what's fair, it's [about] what's right - right for the company."

Amber was able to challenge it through her union because the AWA had not been offered properly - she had not actually seen it before she was put on it. But after winning her case for back pay, she was taken off her Sunday shift which had attracted double-time rates. One day, a few months later, she was told not to come in the next day because the store was closed - for "rebranding".

Therein lies the problem for many casual workers. In theory, workers are still protected from "unlawful termination" if they are sacked for refusing to sign an AWA. It is expensive - a case will cost upwards of \$30,000 to run through the federal court - so if you are not wealthy or in a union,

it is at best a threat. But for casuals, if you do not sign you can just find that your rosters are changed, your hours are cut back until it is barely worth coming in to work any more.

At retailer Spotlight, new employees were offered AWAs that abolished penalty rates, overtime rates, rest breaks, incentive-based payments and bonuses, annual leave loading and public holidays. For those who worked Thursday nights and Saturdays, this would cost \$90 a week. In return, they received an increase in their base hourly rate of pay of two cents an hour. That was OK, said Spotlight management. Because that is just "the starting point ... Our store managers negotiate the rates with the staff depending on the skill of the person and market forces." But if the starting point for "negotiations" is \$90 a week less, then most workers are going to be hard pressed to get near what they would have been automatically entitled to under the old system.



WorkChoices is not about increasing productivity or prosperity; rather, it is about increasing the power of those who already have the most power and resources, and in doing so taking power away from those who have the least, and from those who would challenge the power of the mighty.

The greatest power rests with those who own and control the most resources. They use those resources to generate profit and more resources and power. In order to do so, they typically organise themselves into a collective of capital known as a corporation. This collective form has all sorts of benefits, including the granting of the status of an "artificial person", and the granting of limited liability. Workers respond to the power of capital by organising collectively into unions, as the power of an individual employee bargaining with

a corporation is minimal, but the power of employees bargaining together is potentially quite substantial.

WorkChoices seeks to undercut this challenge to the power of corporations, by removing many of the protections that workers previously had as a result of the pressure exerted collectively by workers for over a century, lowering the starting point for negotiations (if negotiations occur), and making it very difficult - and sometimes illegal - for workers to bargain collectively. It seeks, in effect, to re-establish the great divide between the strong and the weak.

One mechanism for this is the targeting of trade unions. In no other Western democracy can a union be fined for seeking similar outcomes in different agreements ("pattern bargaining"), or for including in a collective agreement provisions that protect against unfair dismissal. In no other Western country can a worker be jailed for six months for refusing to answer questions asked by government inquisitors about what happened at a union meeting where such seditious matters as pattern bargaining or union security provisions were discussed.

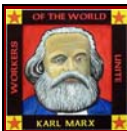
As of June 30, 2006, 29 people had secretly been questioned under threat of jail if they refused to submit or told anyone about what happened in the interrogation room. Some were denied the right to be represented by the lawyer of their choice.

The secondary target of WorkChoices is the independent industrial tribunals. Their powers have mostly been enfeebled or given to partisan government agencies or private contractors. The federal tribunal is left mainly with responsibility for administering the anti-strike laws targeted at unions.

And then there is another, unexpected target: the companies who refuse to play ball with the government, who wish instead to maintain constructive, co-operative relations with a unionised workforce. For many companies, this is the most sensible way to make a profit.

In no other Western democracy does the government micro-manage consenting relations between employees

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## The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas

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and employers to such a degree, fining employers for making agreements that allow union officials onto their own workplace or permit union-provided training. While decrying the “paternalistic influence of ... third parties”, the minister, at the stroke of a pen, declares provisions in collective agreements “prohibited content” and makes the users of such provisions potentially liable to large fines.

It is, as the president of the conservative H.R. Nicholls Society says, the “old Soviet system of command and control, where every economic decision has to go back to some central authority and get ticked off”.

To get a small sense of the partisan nature of WorkChoices, consider the origins of the provision concerning “operational reasons” for dismissal. The Prime Minister stated that this provision arose from a dispute at the Blair Athol coal mine, in central Queensland, owned by a subsidiary of Rio Tinto. Blair Athol management, according to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, had created a “black list” of union members who were “singled out for termination” through a redundancy process. Mine management went about “demeaning” those targeted for termination, a practice “designed to force (unionists) to accept the redundancy package”.

This case was pursued by the blacklisted workers under the unfair dismissal provisions of the old law. Following numerous cases, appeals and delays, most of the workers were reinstated and the case was settled after seven years. Reports suggest that Rio Tinto spent \$20 million in legal fees, trying unsuccessfully to keep these 16 unionists out of its mine sites.

Then along came the chance to rewrite the rules. Lawyers from Freehills, who represented the employer in the Blair Athol case, and other firms commonly representing employers, helped draft the WorkChoices legislation. No more Blair Athols.

In regional areas, away from the resource boom districts, alternative opportunities may be hard to come by.

There is a national shortage of nurses yet in Parkes, 100 kilometres from Cowra, a nursing home gave five nurses a work choice: take a 22 per cent pay cut to become “care service employees”, or be made redundant. That’s legal, said the OWS. In a small town, if you take on your employer, you may also be hurting your chances of getting a job elsewhere. So there are stories from places like Coff’s Harbour, Merimbula and Albury of people forced to sign AWAs that cut their pay, in ways that are mostly illegal but for which redress is quite impractical.

For women, the problems of WorkChoices are not restricted to regional areas. Women are more reliant on awards, and people reliant on awards have most to lose from WorkChoices. Most on collective agreements will have the collective bargaining power to resist reductions in pay and conditions. But those who are entirely award-reliant, who until now have been subject to the collective protection of awards, are people who are without individual market bargaining power. They have suddenly had that collective protection taken away.

Women have more to lose from the attacks on institutions and from the shift to individual contracts. Unionism and collective bargaining have a bigger positive effect on women’s pay than on men’s. Conversely, individual contracting has a bigger negative effect on women’s pay than men’s. Women on individual contracts agreements have an hourly wage nearly one-fifth lower than men, whereas for women on collective agreements the difference is more like one-tenth.

WorkChoices killed off the ability of women and unions to pursue equal pay, parental leave and other important conditions through industrial tribunals. Indeed, some types of equal pay claims are now illegal. At the same time, actions that are illegal may become increasingly tolerated.

Western Australia’s Equal Opportunity Commissioner warned that one consequence of WorkChoices is a fear among workers about lodging complaints concerning discrimination. Stripped of the collective protections provided by the law - or at least, of confidence in these protections - it is women who are most vulnerable in the dysfunctional workplace.

But it is both easy and dangerous to fall into a sort of resigned torpor, to accept that all our rights have been taken away and we might as well just get used to it. In reality, workers still have many rights at work. There are a lot fewer than existed in the past, but they still exist. The problem for many workers is to know what rights they still have, and possess the confidence to exercise them. This is a special problem for non-unionists, who make up the majority of employees, as they are less likely to be informed about their rights or to have the ability to enforce them.

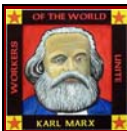
In one way, workers are lucky that WorkChoices came in when it did - during a resource-driven boom. For many occupations, there simply are not enough workers to meet employers’ needs.

But try explaining to the half a million workers presently unemployed that they are the ones with the upper hand in bargaining with a potential employer, and see what sort of look you get. Explain it to the sole parents or the disabled people on “welfare-to-work”.

The “boom” is uneven, many people are missing out (real wages are falling for about half the workforce), and economic growth is slow in several states. No boom lasts forever, and this one will come to an end as surely as every other has. Then, even the workers who are momentarily protected from the effects of these laws because their skills are in short supply will find them biting hard.

In the long run, it is that fundamental shift in power - which eventually tears away the entitlements that workers fought so long to get - that represents the biggest threat posed by these laws. It is not what it does in 2007 or 2008 that comprises the worst aspects of WorkChoices; it is what it could do to the prospects of our children and our grandchildren.

**David Peetz** is the author of *Brave New Workplace: How Individual Contracts are Changing Our Jobs* (Allen and Unwin, 2006), and Professor of Industrial Relations at Griffith University.



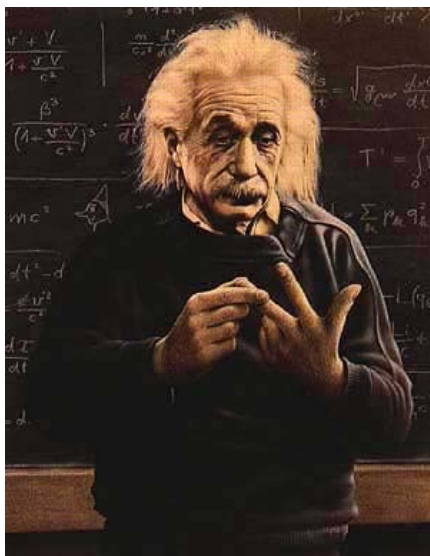
## The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas

### WHY SOCIALISM?

by **Albert Einstein**

*This essay was originally published in the first issue of Monthly Review (May 1949).*

**Is it advisable for one who is not an expert on economic and social issues to express views on the subject of socialism? I believe for a number of reasons that it is.**



Let us first consider the question from the point of view of scientific knowledge. It might appear that there are no essential methodological differences between astronomy and economics: scientists in both fields attempt to discover laws of general acceptability for a circumscribed group of phenomena in order to make the interconnection of these phenomena as clearly understandable as possible. But in reality such methodological differences do exist. The discovery of general laws in the field of economics is made difficult by the circumstance that observed economic phenomena are often affected by many factors which are very hard to evaluate separately. In addition, the experience which has accumulated since the beginning of the so-called civilized period of human history has—as is well known—been largely influenced and limited by causes which are by no means exclusively economic in nature. For example, most of the major states of history owed their existence to conquest. The conquering peoples established themselves, legally and economically, as the privileged class of the conquered country. They

seized for themselves a monopoly of the land ownership and appointed a priesthood from among their own ranks. The priests, in control of education, made the class division of society into a permanent institution and created a system of values by which the people were thenceforth, to a large extent unconsciously, guided in their social behavior.

But historic tradition is, so to speak, of yesterday; nowhere have we really overcome what Thorstein Veblen called "the predatory phase" of human development. The observable economic facts belong to that phase and even such laws as we can derive from them are not applicable to other phases. Since the real purpose of socialism is precisely to overcome and advance beyond the predatory phase of human development, economic science in its present state can throw little light on the socialist society of the future.

Second, socialism is directed towards a social-ethical end. Science, however, cannot create ends and, even less, instill them in human beings; science, at most, can supply the means by which to attain certain ends. But the ends themselves are conceived by personalities with lofty ethical ideals and—if these ends are not stillborn, but vital and vigorous—are adopted and carried forward by those many human beings who, half unconsciously, determine the slow evolution of society.

For these reasons, we should be on our guard not to overestimate science and scientific methods when it is a question of human problems; and we should not assume that experts are the only ones who have a right to express themselves on questions affecting the organization of society.

Innumerable voices have been asserting for some time now that human society is passing through a crisis, that its stability has been gravely shattered. It is characteristic of such a situation that individuals feel indifferent or even hostile toward the group, small or large, to which they belong. In order to illustrate my meaning, let me record here a personal experience. I recently discussed with an intelligent and well-disposed man the threat of another war, which in my opinion would seriously endanger the existence of mankind, and I remarked that

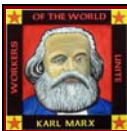
only a supra-national organization would offer protection from that danger. Thereupon my visitor, very calmly and coolly, said to me: "Why are you so deeply opposed to the disappearance of the human race?"

I am sure that as little as a century ago no one would have so lightly made a statement of this kind. It is the statement of a man who has striven in vain to attain an equilibrium within himself and has more or less lost hope of succeeding. It is the expression of a painful solitude and isolation from which so many people are suffering in these days. What is the cause? Is there a way out?

It is easy to raise such questions, but difficult to answer them with any degree of assurance. I must try, however, as best I can, although I am very conscious of the fact that our feelings and strivings are often contradictory and obscure and that they cannot be expressed in easy and simple formulas.

Man is, at one and the same time, a solitary being and a social being. As a solitary being, he attempts to protect his own existence and that of those who are closest to him, to satisfy his personal desires, and to develop his innate abilities. As a social being, he seeks to gain the recognition and affection of his fellow human beings, to share in their pleasures, to comfort them in their sorrows, and to improve their conditions of life. Only the existence of these varied, frequently conflicting, strivings accounts for the special character of a man, and their specific combination determines the extent to which an individual can achieve an inner equilibrium and can contribute to the well-being of society. It is quite possible that the relative strength of these two drives is, in the main, fixed by inheritance. But the personality that finally emerges is largely formed by the environment in which a man happens to find himself during his development, by the structure of the society in which he grows up, by the tradition of that society, and by its appraisal of particular types of behavior. The abstract concept "society" means to the individual

*(continued on Page 7 ...)*



## The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas

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human being the sum total of his direct and indirect relations to his contemporaries and to all the people of earlier generations. The individual is able to think, feel, strive, and work by himself; but he depends so much upon society—in his physical, intellectual, and emotional existence—that it is impossible to think of him, or to understand him, outside the framework of society. It is "society" which provides man with food, clothing, a home, the tools of work, language, the forms of thought, and most of the content of thought; his life is made possible through the labor and the accomplishments of the many millions past and present who are all hidden behind the small word "society."

It is evident, therefore, that the dependence of the individual upon society is a fact of nature which cannot be abolished—just as in the case of ants and bees. However, while the whole life process of ants and bees is fixed down to the smallest detail by rigid, hereditary instincts, the social pattern and interrelationships of human beings are very variable and susceptible to change. Memory, the capacity to make new combinations, the gift of oral communication have made possible developments among human being which are not dictated by biological necessities. Such developments manifest themselves in traditions, institutions, and organizations; in literature; in scientific and engineering accomplishments; in works of art. This explains how it happens that, in a certain sense, man can influence his life through his own conduct, and that in this process conscious thinking and wanting can play a part.

Man acquires at birth, through heredity, a biological constitution which we must consider fixed and unalterable, including the natural urges which are characteristic of the human species. In addition, during his lifetime, he acquires a cultural constitution which he adopts from society through communication and through many other types of influences. It is this cultural constitution

which, with the passage of time, is subject to change and which determines to a very large extent the relationship between the individual and society. Modern anthropology has taught us, through comparative investigation of so-called primitive cultures, that the social behavior of human beings may differ greatly, depending upon prevailing cultural patterns and the types of organization which predominate in society. It is on this that those who are striving to improve the lot of man may ground their hopes: human beings are not condemned, because of their biological constitution, to annihilate each other or to be at the mercy of a cruel, self-inflicted fate.

If we ask ourselves how the structure of society and the cultural attitude of man should be changed in order to make human life as satisfying as possible, we should constantly be conscious of the fact that there are certain conditions which we are unable to modify. As mentioned before, the biological nature of man is, for all practical purposes, not subject to change. Furthermore, technological and



demographic developments of the last few centuries have created conditions which are here to stay. In relatively densely settled populations with the goods which are indispensable to their continued

existence, an extreme division of labor and a highly-centralized productive apparatus are absolutely necessary. The time—which, looking back, seems so idyllic—is gone forever when individuals or relatively small groups could be completely self-sufficient. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that mankind constitutes even now a planetary community of production and consumption.

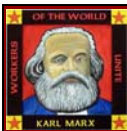
I have now reached the point where I may indicate briefly what to me constitutes the essence of the crisis of our time. It concerns the relationship of the individual to society. The individual has become more conscious than ever of his dependence upon society. But he does not experience this dependence as a positive asset, as an organic tie, as a protective force, but rather as a threat to his natural

rights, or even to his economic existence. Moreover, his position in society is such that the egotistical drives of his make-up are constantly being accentuated, while his social drives, which are by nature weaker, progressively deteriorate. All human beings, whatever their position in society, are suffering from this process of deterioration. Unknowingly prisoners of their own egotism, they feel insecure, lonely, and deprived of the naive, simple, and unsophisticated enjoyment of life. Man can find meaning in life, short and perilous as it is, only through devoting himself to society.

The economic anarchy of capitalist society as it exists today is, in my opinion, the real source of the evil. We see before us a huge community of producers the members of which are unceasingly striving to deprive each other of the fruits of their collective labor—not by force, but on the whole in faithful compliance with legally established rules. In this respect, it is important to realize that the means of production—that is to say, the entire productive capacity that is needed for producing consumer goods as well as additional capital goods—may legally be, and for the most part are, the private property of individuals.

For the sake of simplicity, in the discussion that follows I shall call "workers" all those who do not share in the ownership of the means of production—although this does not quite correspond to the customary use of the term. The owner of the means of production is in a position to purchase the labor power of the worker. By using the means of production, the worker produces new goods which become the property of the capitalist. The essential point about this process is the relation between what the worker produces and what he is paid, both measured in terms of real value. Insofar as the labor contract is "free," what the worker receives is determined not by the real value of the goods he produces, but by his minimum needs and by the capitalists' requirements for labor power in relation to the

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number of workers competing for jobs. It is important to understand that even in theory the payment of the worker is not determined by the value of his product.

Private capital tends to become concentrated in few hands, partly because of competition among the capitalists, and partly because technological development and the increasing division of labor encourage the formation of larger units of production at the expense of smaller ones. The result of these developments is an oligarchy of private capital the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organized political society. This is true since the members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists who, for all practical purposes, separate the electorate from the legislature. The consequence is that the representatives of the people do not in fact sufficiently protect the interests of the underprivileged sections of the population. Moreover, under existing conditions, private capitalists inevitably control, directly or indirectly, the main sources of information (press, radio, education). It is thus extremely difficult, and indeed in most cases quite impossible, for the individual citizen to come to objective conclusions and to make intelligent use of his political rights.

The situation prevailing in an economy based on the private ownership of capital is thus characterized by two main principles: first, means of production (capital) are privately owned and the owners dispose of them as they see fit; second, the labor contract is free. Of course, there is no such thing as a *pure* capitalist society in this sense. In particular, it should be noted that the workers, through long and bitter political struggles, have succeeded in securing a somewhat improved form of the "free labor contract" for certain categories of workers. But taken as a whole, the present day economy does not differ much from "pure" capitalism.

Production is carried on for profit, not for use. There is no provision that all those able and willing to work will always be in a position to find employment; an "army of unemployed" almost always exists. The worker is constantly in fear of

losing his job. Since unemployed and poorly paid workers do not provide a profitable market, the production of consumers' goods is restricted, and great hardship is the consequence.

Technological progress frequently results in more unemployment rather than in an easing of the burden of work for all. The profit motive, in conjunction with competition among capitalists, is responsible for an instability in the accumulation and utilization of capital which leads to increasingly severe depressions. Unlimited competition leads to a huge waste of labor, and to that crippling of the social consciousness of individuals which I mentioned before.

This crippling of individuals I consider the worst evil of capitalism. Our whole educational system suffers from this evil. An exaggerated competitive attitude is inculcated into the student, who is trained to worship acquisitive success as a preparation for his future career.

I am convinced there is only *one* way to eliminate these grave evils, namely through the establishment of a socialist economy, accompanied by an educational system which would be oriented toward social goals. In such an economy, the means of production are owned by society itself and are utilized in a planned fashion. A planned economy, which adjusts production to the needs of the community, would distribute the work to be done among all those able to work and would guarantee a livelihood to every man, woman, and child. The education of the individual, in addition to promoting his own innate abilities, would attempt to develop in him a sense of responsibility for his fellow men in place of the glorification of power and success in our present society.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to remember that a planned economy is not yet socialism. A planned economy as such may be accompanied by the complete enslavement of the individual. The achievement of socialism requires the solution of some extremely difficult socio-political problems: how is it possible, in view of the far-reaching centralization of political and economic power, to prevent bureaucracy from becoming all-powerful and

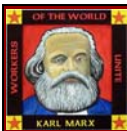
overweening? How can the rights of the individual be protected and therewith a democratic counterweight to the power of bureaucracy be assured?

Clarity about the aims and problems of socialism is of greatest significance in our age of transition. Since, under present circumstances, free and unhindered discussion of these problems has come under a powerful taboo, I consider the foundation of this magazine to be an important public service.

**Albert Einstein, 1949**

An excerpt from *Karl Marx: A Life*: Midway through *The Civil War in France* [When writes #], "Marx . . . paus[es] to consider the lessons of the Commune [of 1871]. He quotes a manifesto of 18 March which boasted that the proletarians of Paris had made themselves 'masters of their own destiny by seizing upon the governmental power.' A naive delusion, he argues. The working class cannot simply 'lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes': one might as well try playing a piano sonata on a tin whistle. Fortunately the Commune had quickly taken the point by getting rid of the political police, replacing the standing army with an armed populace, disestablishing the Church, liberating schools from the interference of bishops and politicians, and introducing elections for all public servants -- including judges -- so that they would be 'responsible and revocable.' The Communal constitution restored to society all the forces hitherto absorbed by the state, and the transformation was visible at once: 'Wonderful indeed was the change the Commune had wrought in Paris! . . . No longer was Paris the rendezvous of British landlords, Irish absentees, American ex-slaveholders and shoddy men, Russian ex-serf owners, and Wallachian boyards. No more corpses at the morgue, no nocturnal burglars, scarcely any robberies; in fact, for the first time [in many years] the streets of Paris were safe, and that without police of any kind.'





## The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas

### WHAT KEEPS CAPITALISM GOING?

by Michael A. Lebowitz

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*This essay is based on an address to the Rebuilding the Left Conference at Simon Fraser University on September 23, 2003.*

**I want to address a very simple question: What keeps capitalism going? Or, in the somewhat more technical language of Marxists, How does capitalism as a system reproduce itself?**

Of course, the first point that we need to establish is what I mean by *capitalism*. People mean a lot of different things when they use the term. They may have in mind a market economy or an economy with wage-laborers—or maybe only an economy in which corporations dominate. Naturally, then, what they mean by *anti-capitalism* will also differ—it may mean, anti-markets, anti-wage-labor, and it may simply mean anti-large corporations.

My definition is the one that Marx developed: capitalism is a relationship in which the separation of working people from the means of work and the organization of the economy by those who *own* those means of work has as its result that, in order to survive, people must engage in a transaction—they must sell their ability to work to those owners.



But, the characteristic of capitalism is not *simply* that the mass of people must be wage-laborers. It is also that those who are purchasing that capacity to perform labor have one thing and only one thing that interests them—profits (and more profits); that is to say, the purchasers of labor-power are capitalists, and their goal is to make their capital grow.

What the capitalist gets as the result of purchasing that ability of workers is the right to direct workers in production and the right to all they produce. It is a set of production relations quite different from the case, for example, of the cooperative or collective where workers direct themselves in production and have the property rights in what they produce themselves. Within capitalist relations, the capitalist has purchased the right to exploit workers in production. He pays them, on average, enough to meet their customary needs, but he has purchased the right to push them to produce more than it costs him for the use of them. As a result, the worker produces additional value, more money, profits, for the capitalist—the worker produces more capital for the capitalists. And that capital, the result of the exploitation of workers, goes into the accumulation of more means of production. What you see when you look at capital is the result of past exploitation.

This was the central message that Marx was attempting to communicate to workers. What is capital? It is the result of exploitation. It is the workers' own product which has been turned against them, a product in the form of tools, machinery—indeed, all the products of human activity (mental and manual).

But, turned against them how? Before talking about how this system keeps going, how it reproduces itself, we need to understand why this question is even important to ask. Think about the drive of capitalists to expand their capital, the drive to increase the exploitation of workers. How can they do this? One way is by getting workers to work more for the capitalists, for example by extending the workday or intensifying the workday (speedup). Another is to drive down the wages of workers. And, still another is to prevent workers from being the beneficiaries of advances in

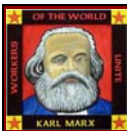
social knowledge and social productivity. Capital is constantly on the search for ways to expand the workday in length and intensity—which, of course, is contrary to the needs of human beings to have time for themselves for rest and for their own self-development. Capital is also constantly searching for ways to keep down and drive down wages, which of course means to deny workers the ability to satisfy their existing needs and to share in the fruits of social labor. How does capital achieve this? In particular, it does so by separating workers, by turning them against each other.

The logic of capital has nothing to do with the needs of human beings. So practices such as the use of racism and patriarchy to divide workers, the use of the state to outlaw or crush trade unions, the destruction of people's lives by shutting down operations and moving to parts of the world where people are poor, unions banned, and environmental regulations nonexistent—are not accidental but the product of a society in which human beings are simply means for capital. We could go on about the character of capitalism, but I think the point is clear.

So, back to the topic—how is it that this continues? What keeps capitalism going? How is such a system reproduced? Let me suggest a few answers.

First, the exploitation of workers is not *obvious*. It doesn't look like the worker sells her ability to work and that the capitalist then proceeds to get all the benefits of her labor. The contract doesn't say—this is the part of the day you are working for yourself (reproducing your requirements), and this is the part that you are working for the capitalist and adding to his capital. Rather, it *looks* like the worker sells a certain amount of her time (a day's work) to the capitalist and that she gets its *equivalent* in money. So, clearly the worker must get what she deserves—if her income is low, it must mean that she didn't have anything very valuable to sell, nothing much to contribute to society (certainly, very little compared to the capitalist); in fact, she should be happy she got anything.

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On the face of it, in short, there is no exploitation. Marx was very clear on this point—the very way that wages are expressed as a wage for a given number of hours extinguishes every trace of exploitation—“all labour appears as paid labour.” This disappearance of exploitation on the surface, he noted, underlies “all the notions of justice held by both the worker and the capitalist, all the mystifications of the capitalist mode of production”<sup>(173)</sup>. \* Note that it is not only the capitalist who will tend to think there is no exploitation; it is also the worker. If that’s the case, when workers struggle, they are struggling not against exploitation but against unjust wages or working conditions—they are struggling for a better wage or shorter day, for what they see as fairness: a “fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay.” In short, they do not see themselves as challenging the system, only some of its unfair results.

Second (and closely related), if it doesn’t appear as if there is exploitation of workers in the process of production, then capital cannot appear as the result of exploitation—it cannot be recognized as the workers’ own product. So, where does all that wealth come from, then? What is the source of machinery, science, everything that increases productivity? It must be the contribution of the capitalist. Having sold to the capitalist their ability to work (and thus the property rights to all they produce), the social productivity of workers necessarily takes the form of the social productivity of capital. Fixed capital, machinery, technology, science—all necessarily appear only as capital. Marx commented, “The accumulation of knowledge and of skill, of the general productive forces of the social brain, is thus absorbed into capital, as opposed to labour, and hence appears as an attribute of capital”<sup>(156)</sup>. What I am describing here is the mystification of capital. The more the system develops, the more that production relies upon fixed capital, on the results of past labor which take the form of capital—the more that capital (and the capitalist) appear to be necessary to workers. It is

no accident, in short, that workers would see themselves as dependent upon capital. Marx made a very significant comment in this respect:

The advance of capitalist production develops a working class which by education, tradition and habit looks upon the requirements of this mode of production as self-evident natural laws. The organization of the capitalist process of production, once it is fully developed, breaks down all resistance.<sup>(157)</sup>

Given the hidden nature of exploitation and the mystification of capital, we obviously already have a strong basis for the reproduction of capitalism as a system. But, there is more.

A third reason why capitalism keeps going is that society does not only *appear* to be dependent upon capital and the capitalist for all advances. As individuals within capitalist relations, workers really *are* dependent on capital to meet their needs. As long as they are separated from



the means of work and need to sell their ability to work in order to get the money to buy the things they need, workers *need* the capitalist, who is the mediator between them and the realization of their needs. For the wage-laborer, the real tragedy is not the sale of her labor-power; it is the *inability* to sell it. What can be worse for one who must sell a commodity than to find no buyer? Workers, it appears, have an interest in the health of capitalists, have an interest in expanding demand on the part of capitalists for their labor-power—by education, tradition, and habit, they come to look upon the needs of capital as self-evident natural laws, as common sense. The reproduction of workers as wage-laborers requires the reproduction of capital.

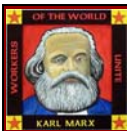
Do we need any further reasons for the continuation of capitalism as a system? Let me throw in just one more before we consider some of the implications.

Workers are not simply dependent upon the state of capital in general for their jobs and thus their ability to satisfy their needs; they are dependent on *particular* capitals! Precisely because capital exists in the form of many capitals, and those capitals compete against each other to expand, there is a basis for groups of workers to link their ability to satisfy their needs to the success of those particular capitals that employ them. In short, even without talking about the conscious efforts of capital to divide, we can say that there exists a basis for the separation of workers in different firms—both inside and between countries. In other words, we can easily see how workers may see other workers as the enemy and will make concessions to their employers in order to help them compete better.

Is it hard, then, to understand why Marx could say that capitalism produces a worker who looks upon its requirements as “self-evident natural laws”? When we think about the dependence of the worker on capital, is it difficult to grasp why capitalism keeps going? After all, Marx not only proposed that capitalism “breaks down all resistance”; he also went on to say that capital can “rely on his [the worker’s] dependence on capital, which springs from the conditions of production themselves, and is guaranteed in perpetuity by them”<sup>(899)</sup>. Capitalism tends, in short, to produce the workers it needs.

Well, you might say that I’m presenting a rather distorted picture of capitalism. That I’m making it seem as if capitalism is a system without contradictions, a stable economic system that delivers the goods. What about economic crises? Doesn’t capitalism inevitably come up against crises, crises inherent in its nature? Some people predict the collapse of the system once a week. I don’t think too much of arguments that suggest that the permanent crisis of capitalism began in the hour of its birth. But, the system *does* have crises—periods in which profits fall, production drops, people are unemployed. Don’t those crises demonstrate that a new system is necessary?

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Without question, an economic crisis brings the nature of the economic system to the surface. When there are unemployed people, resources, machinery, and factories—and at the very same time people with the need for those things that could be produced—it is pretty obvious that production in capitalism is not based on human needs but, rather, only on what can be produced for a profit. This is a time when people can be mobilized to question the system. However, so long as people continue to think capital is *necessary*, then the solutions they look for will not be ones which challenge the logic of capital. (The same will be true in the case of the environmental crises that capitalism produces.) So long as they see capital as the source of jobs, the source of wealth, the source of all progress, then their answer will be that they don't want to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs.

The same point needs to be made in relation to the struggles of workers against capital to reduce the workday, improve working conditions and raise wages—both directly against specific employers and also in the attempt to capture the state and to use it in their own interests. So long as workers do not see capital as their own product and continue instead to think of the need for healthy capitalists as common sense (and as in their own interest), they will hold back from actions that place capital in crisis. As long as workers have not broken with the idea that capital is necessary, a state under their control will act to facilitate the conditions for the expanded reproduction of capital. Here, in a nutshell, is the sorry history of social democracy—which, despite the subjective perspective of some of its supporters, ends by reinforcing the rule of capital.

So, we return to our question—what keeps capitalism going? How is capitalism reproduced as a system? I think you can see the answer that I am offering: capital tends to produce the working class it needs. It produces workers who look upon it as necessary—a system that is unfair, one that requires you to struggle

constantly to realize your needs, a system run by people out to get you, yet a system where the reproduction of capital is necessary for the reproduction of wage-laborers. What keeps capitalism going? Wage-laborers. The reproduction of workers as wage-laborers is necessary for the reproduction of capital.

Note that I haven't said anything about patriarchy or racism. Some people on the left argue that patriarchy and racism are necessary conditions of existence for capitalism. I think we need to distinguish between what is necessary and what is *useful* for the maintenance of capitalism. When we speak of necessity, we are saying that without *x*, capitalism could not exist. I don't think this is true of patriarchy or racism. Capital certainly *uses* racism, patriarchy, national, and ethnic differences to divide the working class, to weaken it and to direct its struggles away from capital. But, it can find many ways to divide and weaken workers. And, it can, if forced, do without racism or patriarchy just as it can, if forced, live with higher wages or shorter workdays. (Just as it has been able to do without apartheid and white rule in South Africa.) What capital *cannot* live with, however, is a working class that both understands that capital is the result of exploitation (i.e., that the wealth that confronts it is the product of the collective workers) and is also prepared to struggle to put an end to that exploitation.

Obviously, a working class with this characteristic does not drop from the sky—not when capital produces workers who look upon the requirements of capital as self-evident natural laws. Is the answer, then, the vanguard party which brings a socialist consciousness to ignorant workers? Why should the workers who are the products of capital pay any attention to these messages from the outside? This picture seems like a scenario for inevitable irrelevance and isolation.

Let me propose, however, that the picture is not necessarily as bleak as it seems. Workers are not simply the products of capital. They are formed (and form themselves) through all the relationships in which they exist. And, they transform themselves through their struggles—not only those against capital but also against those other relations like patriarchy and racism. Even though these

struggles may take place fully within the confines of capitalist relations, in the course of engaging in collective struggles people develop a new sense of themselves. They develop new capacities, new understandings of the importance of collective struggle. People who produce themselves as revolutionary subjects through their struggles enter into their relations with capital as different people; in contrast to those who are not in motion, they are open to developing an understanding of the nature of capital.

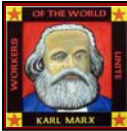
But, they are merely *open* to this understanding. All those actions, demonstrations and struggles in themselves cannot go beyond capitalism. Given that exploitation inherently appears simply as unfairness and that the nature of capital is mystified, these struggles lead only to the demand for fairness, for justice *within* capitalist relations but not justice *beyond* capitalism. They generate at best a trade union or social-democratic consciousness—a perspective which is bounded by a continuing sense of dependence upon capital, i.e., bounded by capitalist relations. Given that the spontaneous response of people in motion does not in itself go beyond capital, communication of the essential nature of capitalism is critical to its nonreproduction.

For those within the grasp of capital, however, more is necessary than simply to understand the nature of capital and its roots in exploitation. People need to believe that a better world is possible. They need to feel that there is an alternative—one worth struggling for. In this respect, describing the nature of a socialist alternative—and analyzing the inadequacies and failures of 20th century efforts—is an essential part of the process by which people can be moved to put an end to capitalism.

To the extent that those of us on the left are not actively attempting to communicate the nature of capitalism and working explicitly for the creation of a socialist alternative, we are part of the explanation as to what keeps capitalism going.

**Michael Lebowitz, 2003**

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"To tell the truth is revolutionary."  
Antonio Gramsci



# The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas

## SOMEWHERE A BANKER SMILES

By Joe Bageant

Created Dec 5 2006 - 6:08pm

It's hard as hell to keep conspiracy theories out of one's mind these days. And I'm not talking about "Who really brought down the Twin Towers? or the "Are Zionists behind the Iraq War?" kind of stuff. Both camps are pretty clearly dug in into their hardened bunkers on those issues. But the booger stalking my ragged old mind these days puts both of those in the shade because of its sheer scale. And it runs like this:

Is the consumerist totalization of this country and the world really a conscious plot by a handful of powerful corporate and financial masters? If we answer "yes" we find ourselves trundled off toward the babbling ranks of the paranoid. Still though, it's easy enough to name those who would piss themselves with joy over the prospect of a One World corporate state, with billions of people begging to work for their 1,500 calories a day and an xBox chip in their necks. It's too bad our news media quit hunting with live ammo decades ago, leaving us with no one to track the activities and progress of what sure as hell seem to be global elites, judging from the financial spoor we find along every pathway of modern life.

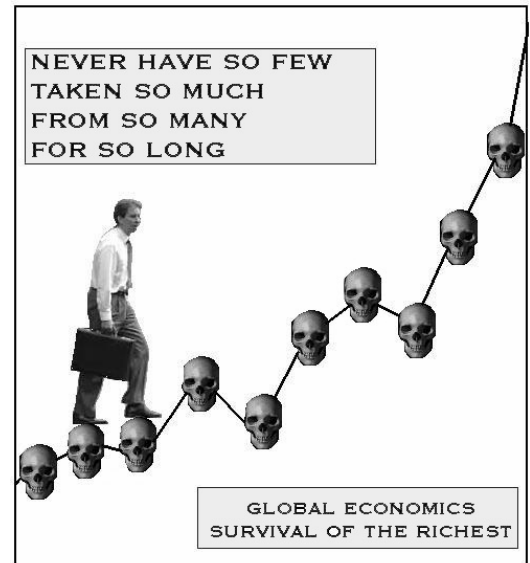
In our saner moments we can also see that it does not take dark super-centralized plotting to pull off what appears to have been accomplished. Even without working in overt concert, a few thousands of dedicated individual corporate and financial interests can constitute a unified pathogenic whole, much the same as individual cells create a viable dominant colony of malignant organisms -- malignant simply by their anti-human, anti-societal nature. We don't see GM, Halliburton, Burger King and CitiBank lobbying the state for universal health or clean rivers, do we? But mention unions or living wages, and the financial colony within our national Petri dish shape shifts into a Gila monster and squirts venom on the idea and shits money all over Capitol Hill. I looked at all this as coincidence for years until the proposition finally strained credulity so much that I threw

in the towel and said, "Fuck it. There is only so much coincidence to go around in this world."

Put another way, the global decision makers, international planners, financial institutions, political parties, media conglomerates, corporations, banks, a hegemonic, accumulative bloc working in concert to coordinate the extraction of wealth from first and third world alike. A series of privately held international institutions to which and from which money can be moved to leverage nations and populations according to their needs is probably gonna do just that because they can. National territory doesn't mean shit to such people, and those who govern said territory mean even less, except to the extent they can obstruct or incite resistance. People like Castro and Chavez. But even they are they are just the thorn in the lion's paw.

Consider this: The war in Iraq has been immensely profitable for the people who make weapons and for the contractors who supposedly rebuild what the weapons destroy. They profit in either case. And the longer war goes on the more they will make.

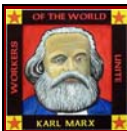
Meanwhile, the money for both is obtained through extraction practiced upon the world's laboring poor. But the big money, the "juice" as street people used to say, comes from squeezing the orange of American society for more work, more production and tax money. Some of us older oranges are feeling pretty wrung out these days and are getting hard as hell to get along with. Yet, the squeeze doesn't seem to bother most Americans at all. The pressure has been so great and so constant that no one any longer feels it. It has become so pervasive as to be incomprehensible to ordinary people. For example, seventy cents of every income-tax dollar goes to pay for past, present, and future wars. Education gets two cents. As Michael Parenti has pointed out, the cost of military aircraft parts and ammunition kept in storage by the Pentagon is greater than the combined federal spending on pollution control, conservation, community development, housing, occupational safety, and mass



transportation all put together. And the US Navy spends more money in its never ending development of a submarine rescue vehicle than is spent for public libraries, occupational safety, and daycare centers combined.

Collectively, these financial super-elites, who either do or do not exist, must be at least somewhat aware that they are managing the world. Otherwise, why would we have Davos conferences and such? Global financial conferences where the likes of Bill Clinton and Al Gore and John Kerry are merely the entertainment, mere proof of the attendants' prestige? Can it be true that the world's real players practically yawned at Alan Greenspan's cryptic little speeches while waiting for the backstage action with the real movers and shakers from Goldman, Citibank and others, none of whom we have ever heard of but never the less are said to account for the drop in gas prices in the U.S. just prior to the 2006 mid-term elections? Word has it that they changed the index last July so oil futures holders would be forced to dump in October and November, creating a mild glut during the elections. If that is true, then we can probably thank them for that Dow 12,000 last month too.

Meanwhile, back in Camp Davos, the lustful, pathologically approval seeking, bright student teddy bear from Hope, Arkansas expounds and entertains the new global elites. (continued on Page 13 ...)



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And everyone has Beluga caviar and chopped hardboiled quail eggs afterward, even as more than one billion people live on less than one dollar a day. "And have you tried the unborn calf veal poached in Peruvian sheep's milk at the Swisse Bank suite? It's to die for!" Nobody is remotely worried about blowback from that billion people eating moldy cassava or rat urine polluted rice, because poverty, well, poverty is not threat, is it? Just a source of cheaper labor. "Now, about the oil crude taps and NYMEX . . ."

Personally, I've decided they are real and that they constitute an unseen class, and that they are mid-stage in becoming the most powerful class the earth has ever seen. One that American politicians not only refuse to publicly acknowledge, but when pressed, flatly swear does not exist. Show me the Republican or Democratic leader who says, "Politics is economics by other means, and our own Federal Reserve Bank is a privately held institution, not a governmental one, and is an interlocking part of the global financial network which owes allegiance to no country or ordinary citizens, regardless of nationality." Or, "My corporate campaign contributions come from people whose every action is directed at extracting two things from you, my dear voter: Your money and the cheapest possible labor you can be driven to provide. The absolute cheapest possible payment to you for the hours of your life consumed by work, which, depending upon the degree of your delusion, is called either a job or an exciting career."

No American politician is going to admit that. You must go to Venezuela or the smoldering dumps of Manilla or fields of Chiapas to hear that sort of truth.

Admittedly, there is at least some reason for fear among these elites. The US economy, the real material economy, is dreadfully weak, having been so gutted by parasitic speculation. The only source of strength left here is the military, which is currently at play in an effort to gain control over the world's energy supply, and make damned sure no one gets any funny ideas about using anything but dollars

in trading oil. But the real players say, "Well then, let the Americans keep it if they can! If the U.S. loses, then someone else wins. No matter. We can leverage our position from any emerging market point on the globe. And doesn't China look like a real comer, old boy! History is long. The Chinese understand that." Thus we find the Chinese creating joint American holding companies to buy up commercial US real estate at bottom dollar after the crash. At some future point it could neatly offset their current loans to US for more consumption of Chinese goods. And if the Americans get too pissy, the Chinese can always turn off the money spigot.

On the other hand, this monstrous class of parasites has not yet won over the entire world. America seems to be their only complete victory, and that one will hold only as long as superheated consumption can be sustained. They have only been at it for maybe forty years, and are still pouring the foundation for the global gulag, setting the rules as they go. And they are hitting at least a few speed bumps: "Why is Castro still stinking up the joint, fer godzsake? And now we've got that friggin mexi-nigger dwarf Evo Morales in his goddamned stinky little dime store sweater strutting around like he was president or something. And why inna hell hasn't somebody smoked these bastards? Doesn't the CIA do anything for their paychecks anymore?"

Probably not. Last we heard the CIA was sidelined, sent to the benches until they come up with those goddamned weapons of mass destruction.

Meanwhile, a Chinese economist calculates the US trade deficit. A Swisse Bank exec orders another bottle of wine, and a Shia youth receives instruction in how to blow up an oil pipeline.

Only the Chinaman and the bank exec are smiling.

**Joe Bageant** is the author of a forthcoming book, *Deer Hunting with Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War*, from Random House Crown about working class America, scheduled for spring 2007 release.

A complete archive of his online work, along with the thoughts of many working Americans on the subject of class may be found at:

<http://www.joebageant.com>

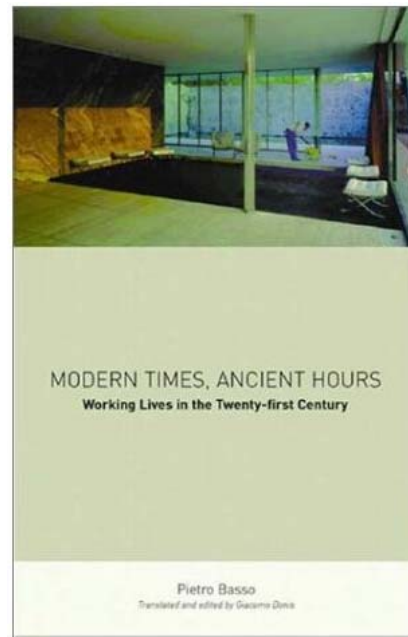
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### STILL WORKING

#### Book Review

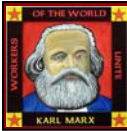
Reviewed by McDo.



"Productivity" will always be a holy canon for business. Even today when most wealth takes the form of speculation on speculation, obtaining the maximum labor effort from workers matters more than it ever did. No amount is ever enough. Pietro Basso's book details the human consequences of the workhouse society: overtime, speed-ups, shift work, night work, on-call work, temp work, "accidents," ruined health and lives. Basso deftly deploys a mass of empirical data to show that working (and thus living) conditions are deteriorating universally. The importance of Basso's book is that he not only describes the horrors of modern work but attempts to explain the reasons for them. He does this by relating the increasing length and intensity of work to the nature of capitalism itself.

It is an indication of the weakness of the working class today that Basso even has to argue for its existence—or, to put it more precisely, those who have no means of survival except the sale of their ability to work to those who stand to gain financially from it. He does this with feisty wit, desiccating the widespread fantasy spewed by academic charlatans that

(continued on Page 14 ...)



## The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas

(continued from Page 13 ...)

the working class is an antiquarian curio. In fact, Basso demonstrates that when viewed on a global scale the growth of industrial work has been a secularly increasing trend over time—and that today there are more industrial workers than ever before in history. The relative decrease in industrial work in “developed” nations is not evidence of salvation from a proletarian existence, but a consequence of the enormous increases in the productivity of labor and the consequent decrease in demand for living labor (exactly as predicted by a thinker whose name is more often invoked as a political signifier than his ideas bothered with, Karl Marx). The preponderance of service work in the developed world represents an amplification of capital’s command over labor, not its diminishment: service jobs are modeled on the principles of industrial work, not vice versa.

Basso connects the explosion in working hours—as well as work’s intensity—to profit making itself. Profit (or surplus-value) is nothing but the excess of money that emerges at the end of the circulation of capital. The magnitude of surplus-value depends on the quantity of surplus labor, which is the excess of the working day over the labor-time necessary for workers to produce a value equivalent to their wages. This is how workers are exploited; they produce more value than they are paid, and therefore a part of their working day produces surplus-value for capitalists for which they receive no equivalent. It follows from this that there is an inherent conflict between capital and labor over the length of the working day and over the intensity of labor, and that there is an inherent tendency toward technological change that reduces necessary labor-time.

According to the mythology of the economists, work time has been decreasing with the rise in the productivity of labor. Much of Basso’s argument is directed against this fallacy. He not only exhaustively shows that the opposite is the case—work time has increased or, at best, remained stationary in one or two countries—but shows that when the working day was successfully shortened (way back in

1918 and 1968) it was a result of class struggle by the working class—and not a gift from capital, as the economists would have you believe.

The labor process is designed to squeeze as much labor time as possible out of workers, so that workers in many modern factories—and offices—are forced to be in continuous motion for 59 seconds of every minute. This is way up from the average 45 seconds per minute of the classic assembly line of thirty years ago. Even as work performance is gauged by the minute—even by nanoseconds in today’s computer world—so also the length of what constitutes the social norm for working time has expanded. No longer based merely on the 8-hour day, work time is now calculated according to the week, the year, the lifetime. Basso exposes the economists’ swindle that time away from work has increased per lifetime because life expectancy in developed countries has more than doubled, raising the retirement age (though even this is being contested by capital’s political hirelings). This, of course, overlooks the fact that working lives—the most vigorous years of life, not coincidentally—have doubled as well. And what exactly is a worker entitled to after having had nerves and muscles depleted in the service of another’s wealth? A slow wait for death while being constantly reminded how expensive it is to maintain those who no longer contribute to the GNP.

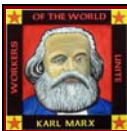
Strangely, Basso’s book, with its lost-in-translation title (it has nothing to do with ancients), is marketed as being about excessive working time when it deals comprehensively with all aspects of work under contemporary capitalism. For instance, Basso repeatedly points to the quality of work—its mad pace, its stultifying monotony, its corrosive stupidity, its degradation of sociability and spirit. The never-ending torment of wage labor is not just for the sheer sake of it—or because of the “work ethic”—but is linked to capital’s need to valorize fixed capital expenditures by keeping plant and equipment running at all times, making the worker ever more servile to the pace and demands of machines. It is a measure of capitalism’s strangulation of human progress that its enormous development of technology does not serve to alleviate burdensome toil but increases it.

No patron of ideological fashions, Basso validates the much-maligned “immiseration” thesis—which, contrary to received opinion, does not have to do solely with wages (real and/or nominal) or quantity of work time, but more broadly with the power relation between labor and capital. Workers have been made ever more dependent for their continued employment on the successful competitiveness of “their” particular firm, territory, or nation-state. The meaning of “flexibilization” is that the worker adapts to the economic cycle, facing overwork in periods of business expansion and unemployed desperation in recessions.

Basso brings out the true meaning of globalization. The book is organized to show the common experience of increased exploitation of workers around the world as workers everywhere are put in competition with each other. At the most glaring extreme, there is the example of 24-hour shifts in Vietnamese sugar factories. In the developed world, America’s example of work overload—grown by an exponential five weeks a year over the last 30 years—has established the norm to beat for its rivals. Japan—which has a word for death by overwork—now looks like a slacker’s haven by comparison. Elimination of legal limits to the working day are now being attempted in Europe, as portended by last year’s defeat of a strike for a shorter work week by the world’s most powerful union, IG Metall in Germany. However, it is probable that the Bush administration’s elimination of overtime pay requirements for all kinds of job classifications will keep the USA in the vanguard of cheap, super-productive workforces.

Of special interest is Basso’s analysis of the 35-hour workweek in France that, contrary to the illusions of reformists, is anything but an exception to the trends he outlines. In fact, the 35 hour workweek has served to create more work—eliminating downtime, informal breaks, overtime pay, and introducing Saturday workdays—and not at all in

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## The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas



Angela Brennan, *The Wrong Side of Capitalism* 2004. Private collection, Melbourne.

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the sense of its absurd promise to create jobs for the huge numbers of unemployed. The Aubry law indexes work time to the year—that's called "annualization"—rather than to the week, thus allowing employers to exploit existing workers in sluggish periods for, say, 30 hours a week while overexploiting them in periods of high demand for, say, 50 hours a week (supposedly averaging out to a 35-hour week!). It also greatly expands the category of part-time work. The whole plan re-organizes the work process to enable French capital to compete on the basis of less investment in new technology with more effort ("productivity") on the part of the workers. Most insidiously, implementation of the law is negotiated sector by sector, thus ending uniform social legislation that treats all workers equally, serving to divide workers against each other.

Although Basso does not explore this, French workers resisted the Aubry law (this is the subject of an excellent film, *Human Resources*). This is disappointing given that Basso optimistically predicts an eventual upsurge in working class resistance—in fact he claims the swell is mounting. Though this is sort of like predicting when the biosphere will collapse—what are the limits to unhindered exploitation?—it raises the question as to why the demand for shorter work time has not been on the working class's agenda for the last ... quarter century at least! One rather obvious reason is that overtime constitutes an important part of workers' efforts to make up for declining wages. The threat of unemployment is another. Basso

notes the alarming discovery of the American problem of "presenteeism"—i.e., workers who refuse to leave the office—as domestic life in America is so alienated that work has become a refuge from it.

Although Basso demonstrates the total failure of social democrats and trade unions in Europe to shorten work time, he doesn't draw any political conclusions from this. When not arising organically from the working class's own struggles but is merely a demand with which leftist bureaucrats seek to lead the masses to a happy world of pro-worker capitalism, the effort to shorten the workday can be a trap. At best, French workers were asked to accept lower wages for shorter working time. Whose interests does this serve?

Although its appeal is rare among American capitalists, shortening work time as a political demand does have its adherents here. Take, for one example (there are others), the entirely virtual "movement" of Give Us Back Our Time, a public interest-type group enlisting liberal religious leaders, unionists and human rights petitioners to appeal to capital and the state to shorten exploitation to an extent that will allow workers to spend more time in church, with their families and communities. The literature of Give Us Back Our Time details the human costs to workers of the "time squeeze" but it bases its whole program on convincing capitalists that it's in their interests to shorten work time. If workers work shorter hours, they can work them harder, thus enhancing the position of American capital in the global market! What these reformers really oppose is not the shortage of time for a life worth living but the shortage of profits.

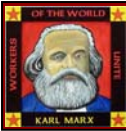
Similarly, a recent MSN article deplored the shortage of vacation time for American workers—because it leads to higher health care costs for employers! It is not uncommon to see editorials and research papers pityingly shed a tear for the sad condition of workers today—wages have failed to keep up with productivity (shocking!); or: work time has failed to decrease with increased productivity (outrageous!). But this is a conjurer's trick: under capitalism, the point of increased productivity is not to give

workers time off—unless, by "time off" is meant unemployment. The point is to save labor costs and gain a competitive position that allows the individual enterprise to accrue surplus profits above the average. Nor is the point of production to enable wages to rise, or for people to have better things; it is to make rich people lots of money. The delusion of economics is that capitalism is a system of meeting needs that rewards its participants with what they put into it: capitalists with profits, workers with wages.

The notion that wages and productivity should rise together—if unequally—formed the underlying principle of the post-WW2 wage bargain, codified in collective bargaining agreements. But just as collective bargaining and the "social wage" in that period served the needs of accumulation by providing capital with a predictable, regulated supply of workers and wage costs, so today economic growth—the "bottom line" of all social policy—demands that the costs of working class reproduction be pushed ever lower. This makes appeals to the common interests of workers and capitalists an exercise in nostalgia at best.

Maybe, as the French example shows, less work time is not as important as other aspects of flexibilization such as income insecurity. Maybe there are other demands with wider resonance, such as—given the truly torturous distances workers are forced into—paid commute time. No question, less work time would be an improvement—but not at the cost of decreased wages. It must not be forgotten that decreasing work time can never be an end in itself. At best, it's a defensive—if necessary—fight that repairs labor so that it might be able to go to work the next day. A fight solely to enable the working class to continue to function as a working class is ultimately not in the interests of the working class—their interest can only be the end of exploitation itself, not its shortening.

On a wage-slave's rare day off  
there's no hiding  
her stress & strain  
Haiku by Jim Sharp



The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas



Sindicalismo Sin Fronteras (Trade Unionism Without Frontiers), Frente Autentico Trabajadores Auditorium, Mexico City 1997 (Approx. 8' x 30')

REVOLUTIONARY ART

Sindicalismo Sin Fronteras by Mike Alewitz

Assistance by Daniel Manrique and numerous volunteers

On April 5, 1997, a public inauguration of two new murals was held at the auditorium of the Frente Autentico Trabajadoras (FAT) in Mexico City. The event was part of a cross-border organizing project of the FAT and the United Electrical (UE) union. The following is based on a dedication speech given by artist Mike Alewitz of the Labor Art and Mural Project (LAMP).

Sisters and Brothers:

It is a humbling experience to come to Mexico to paint, for this country is the home of the modern mural movement, and gave birth to some of the greatest public art of this century. Here is where the Rivera, Orozco and Siqueras were inspired by millions of peasants and workers to illustrate the historic conquests of the Revolution. On a smaller scale, we are attempting to illustrate the UE-FAT efforts to build international solidarity and cross-border organizing.

It was Emiliano Zapata who gave the greatest political expression to the Mexican revolution, and it is under his watchful eyes that our mural unfolds. We have also included the figures of Albert and Lucy Parsons. Albert was one of the Haymarket martyrs, framed up and executed for his leadership in the Chicago labor movement's fight for the eight hour day. Lucy was also a leader in that movement, and she continued her labor and anarchist activities until she died at an old age. She was of African-American and Mexican ancestry, was an early leader

of the feminist movement, and a founding member of the Industrial Workers of the World. The Parsons hold in their hands some bread and a rose. "Bread and Roses" was a slogan of the Lawrence textile strikers; women who demanded not only the bread of the union contract, but the rose to symbolize that workers deserve a rich spiritual and cultural life.

The quotation in the painting is from August Spies, also executed on November 11, 1887. "If you think that by hanging us you can stamp out the labor movement...the movement from which the downtrodden millions, the millions who toil in want and misery expect salvation-if that is your opinion, then hang us! Here you will tread upon a spark, but there and there, behind you-and in front of you, and everywhere, flames blaze up. It is a subterranean fire. You cannot put it out."

How fitting a quote for this land of volcanos. This is precisely what is happening today, as first a Los Angeles, and then a Chiapas explode, here and there, precursors of a generalized conflagration. Our class is like the core of the earth, being compressed under ever greater pressure, until forced to explode.

We are using this cultural project to illustrate our collective union vision. Unions are the first line of defense for workers. They keep us from getting killed or poisoned. They allow us some basic human dignity.

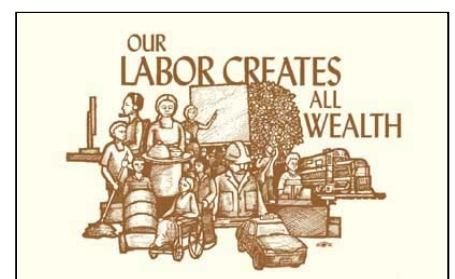
Unfortunately, too often our unions resemble exclusive clubs, or worse, criminal gangs. Even unions that pride themselves on being progressive are often bureaucratic and autocratic. Without the full and active participation of the membership, all the weaknesses

of our organizations emerge. As workers, we often must not only battle the employers, but our own conservative leaderships as well.

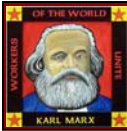
This is a particular problem in the United States, where employers keep us stratified and divided. They attempt to pit low-wage workers against the more privileged. They use divide-and-conquer tactics to convince us to be for "labor peace." But labor peace is the peace of slavery, whether in the U.S. or in Mexico.

The Frente Autentico Trabajadoras is helping to lead the struggle for genuine union democracy. There have been, and will continue to be casualties in this historic fight. And today we dedicate this mural to those who have been victimized in the struggle for union democracy. This mural is the product of not only artists, but the thousands of workers who built our unions. This is their mural.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to denounce the criminal policies of the United States government. In particular I denounce the economic sabotage of Mexico and the criminal embargo of Cuba. The gang in Washington does not speak for me or millions of other American workers. They are waging war upon our class. They are my enemy and your enemy. They represent the past, we are the future. If we continue to forge these links of solidarity, they can never prevail.





**POETRY****Communism in Verse**

Come gather round me comrades, and hear my little lecture,  
The bourgeois world is haunted by Communism's spectre -  
Thus wrote Karl & Freddy - their words I will relate,  
from the Manifesto of 1848.

All History tells a tale of struggles between classes -  
Slaves & freemen, serfs & lords, labourers & masters,  
[in a word] Oppressor and oppressed fought in constant opposition,  
While the modern bourgeois rise like scum to dominant position.

The bourgeoisie converts the family to but a cash relation.  
For feudal ties it substitutes more brutal exploitation,  
All that's solid melts. All that's sacred is profaned.  
By bourgeois competition and bourgeois money gain.

Their commercial crises are such an absurdity,  
They show we can no longer afford the bourgeoisie  
It is unfit to rule, it cannot feed its slaves,  
And so the bourgeoisie creates, the digger of its grave:

The working class must win the battle of democracy,  
And expropriate all capital from the bourgeoisie.  
So the workers control all industry, and create a workers' state,  
which ends all exploitation & a free world does create

The Communists encourage the working class to see  
The class antagonism between prole & bourgeoisie  
They openly declare their aims include the abolition  
Of existing social & political conditions.

Communists disdain to conceal their views & aims.  
The workers have no country, and nought to lose but chains.  
They have a world to win. Let the ruling class take fright,  
at communist revolution - workers everywhere unite!

Eric Petersen

From Centre for Political Song

<http://www.gcal.ac.uk/politicalsong/songs/petersen.html>

**In Memory Of The Paris Commune, Born March 18, 1871,  
and Died In June The Same Year**

What wingéd shape, with waving torch aflame,  
Wild with winds of March, and streaming hair  
Above the storm clouds, doth to men declare  
What message, and a memory doth claim?  
A star through drifting smoke of praise and blame -  
The toilers' beacon, still to re-appear  
With spring-tide hopes new quickening year by year  
Since bright in Freedom's dawn the COMMUNE came.

Maligned, betrayed, short-lived to act and teach,  
Whose blood lies still upon the hands that slew:  
E'en now, when Labour knocks upon the gate  
That shuts on Privilege, He thinks of you,  
And what men dared and suffered, and their fate  
Who ruled a City, once, for all and each.

**Walter Crane**

From Youth for International Socialism

<http://www.newyouth.com/socialistpoetry.asp>

**Productivity Bargaining Blues**

*Productivity Bargaining Blues*  
We were assured we had nothing to lose  
If two men would do the work of three  
Then we would reach prosperity.

Chorus:

*If cows could climb up a tree  
And sheep could fly in the sky  
We might believe much more than we do  
'Til then we'll wink our eye!*

*Productivity Bargaining Blues*  
The welder now the timber hews  
The fitter manages without a mate  
But nobody's sent through the factory gate.

Chorus

*Productivity Bargaining Blues*  
They're the latest modern views  
Everybody does each others job  
And all for the sake of a couple of bob.

Chorus

*Productivity Bargaining Blues*  
Almost drives you on the booze  
Ten thousand jobs there were round here  
But that was when the labour was dear.

Chorus

*Productivity Bargaining Blues*  
Natural wastage is their ruse  
They shrink the size of the labour force  
Prettier profits for them of course

Chorus

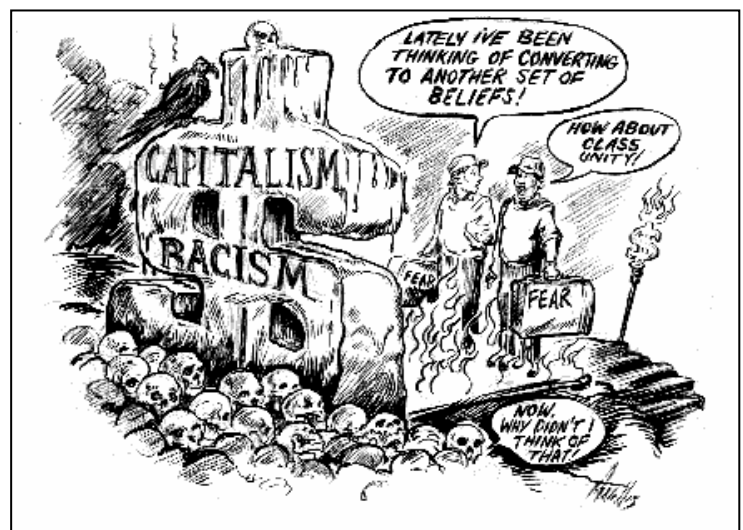
*Productivity Bargaining REFUSE!*  
Good basic wage means short dole queues  
It's not too late, brothers, to end this trend  
Make the unions every man's job defend.

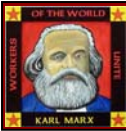
Chorus

**Unknown**

From Centre for Political Song

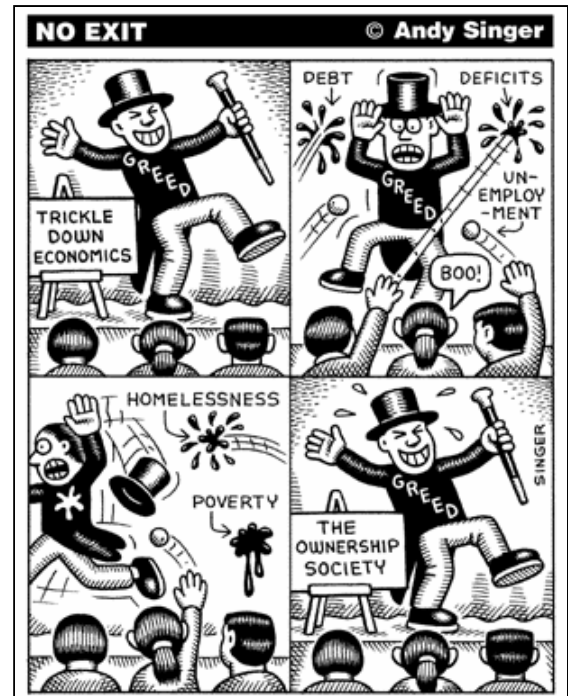
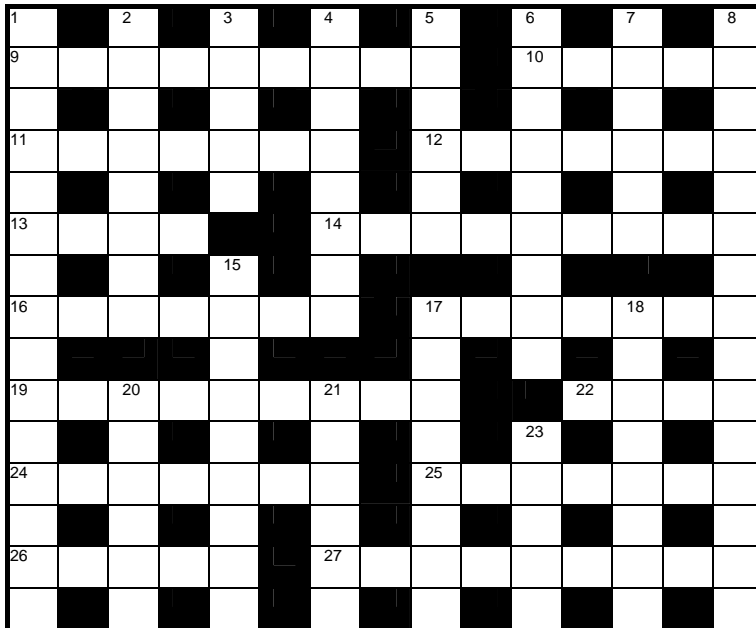
<http://www.gcal.ac.uk/politicalsong/songs/unknown16.html>





The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas

SURPLUS VALUE Cryptic Crossword No. 01 - Set by Gramsci



Across

9. Undivided stock, says the canon. Liar! (3-6)  
 10. Emperor had a note for African, originally (5)  
 11. I am myself (7)  
 12. They raise a sweat when *les riot* erupts! (7)  
 13. A bitter woman (4)  
 14, 17 down, 26. A revolutionary slogan, in the hands of all the people, will become one (7,2,3,5,5)  
 16. Traditional drink made from red bole! (3,4)  
 17. Film director has no 'in' to this city (7)  
 19. "Rebel in it," says Don Juan (9)  
 22. A quiet period in April: ullage occurs (4)  
 24. Dockers' leader is supporting strings (7)  
 25. Go past the end of the innings and get a point (7)  
 26. See 14 (5)  
 27. A glossy, chequered covering for a man wearing a plain, unbleached cloth – not I (9)

Down

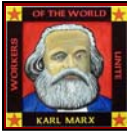
1. It takes a thousand dark hours of toil to form an association of producers (7,2,6)  
 2. I rap nude, but not with another person (8)  
 3. Australian writer gives up all for wetland (5)  
 4. Polite confrontation leads to inner turmoil (5,3)  
 5. Beetle found when coming back from public sale, it seems (6)  
 6. They build 24 using a motor with builders returning ... (9)  
 7. ... from the exit, for example, to the builders to the South (6)  
 8. Issues of work and incorporation result in an early producers' association (4,2,4,5)  
 15. It's said the stirrer is about to pull a weight to the Queen (3,6)  
 17. See 14 (3,5)  
 18. Shaking, 'e run into a tiny particle (8)  
 20. The Scottish magistrate set security, that is ... (6)  
 21. ... the insignificant creature was kept inside, in Sector 1 of the prison (6)  
 23. Measurement of the measurement incarnate (5)

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), was among the first to recognize the potential political and cultural significance of "an ultra-modern form of production and of working methods --- such as is offered by the most advanced American variety, the industry of Henry Ford". Through intensified exploitation of labor, the system of Fordist mass production might counter capitalism's endemic tendency toward a falling rate of profit. The institutionalization of such a system of production required, Gramsci thought, a combination of force and persuasion: a political regime in which trade unions would be subdued, workers might be offered a higher real standard of living, and the ideological legitimation of this new kind of capitalism would be embodied in cultural practices and social relations extending far beyond the workplace. Gramsci called attention to the "long process" of socio-political change through which a Fordist capitalism might achieve some measure of institutional stability.

The social institutions of mass production --- collectively referred to as Fordism --- began to emerge in the US early in the twentieth century and were at the center of a decades-long process of social struggle which extended into the immediate post-World War II era. Cold War ideology played a crucial role in the political stabilization of Fordist institutions in the US, providing the common ground on which de-radicalized industrial labor unions could be incorporated as junior partners in a coalition of globally-oriented social forces which worked together to rebuild the "free world" along liberal capitalist lines and to resist the encroachment of a presumed Communist menace globally and at home. Institutionalized Fordism, in turn, enabled the US to contribute almost half of world industrial production in the immediate postwar years, and thus provided the economic dynamism necessary to spark reconstruction of the major capitalist countries after World War II, and to support the emergence of both the consumer society and the military-industrial complex in the postwar US.

Cartoon is from Andy Singer at <http://www.andysinger.com/index.html>

Text extract is from Fordism, by Mark Rupert, <http://faculty.maxwell.syr.edu/merupert/Research/Fordism/fordism.htm>



# The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas

## BONO'S BULLSHIT

### Not One Red Cent

By Dave Marsh

March 9 / 11, 2007

I read with growing dismay each successive paragraph of David Carr's fawning New York Times business section piece on Bono, the Red Campaign and Vanity Fair yesterday morning. Later, I read the more interesting piece from Advertising Age that shows that all the sturm and drang from Red has generated \$18 million for African relief-I wonder if that'll even be enough to replace the condoms Bono's "effective" friend the Shrub refuses to allow U.S. government-supported agencies to deliver. You can be dead certain that it is hardly a match for the combined profits that the corporations for which Red fronts expect to pull out of all those products.

What maddens me most is that articles like this are built upon a cascading series of false premises, so I thought I'd catalogue the ones in the Times column.

- Bono is a "rare" rock star. Almost every rock star has some kind of charitable endeavor.

- Only the opinions of celebrities (the Pope, Bill Gates) are of any consequence in getting the job done.

- Wealth and charity are somehow a "contradiction." Unless there is wealth, there can be no charity in the sense that Bono and Carr use the term (which is quite a bit different than, say, St. Paul's definition).

- Bono is not part of the "Sally Struthers" thing. But of course, his entire project depends on sustaining the image of Africans as unable to fight for themselves, which is one reason one encounters no Africans-certainly no poor ones-writing for these Bono guest edits. It also depends quite a good bit on their continuing to be humiliated by their poverty (presuming they are, other than in the minds Bono loves most).

- "The crucial role that commerce will play" as a new thing. That has been the barking sales pitch of

imperialism and its missionaries from the first day that Europeans landed in Africa. (If Bono didn't think that history began when Jeffrey Sachs conned his first Russian, he'd know this.) Bono doesn't really contend that corporations have a "crucial role," anyway. He premises this statement on his insistent, added idea that they are the only vehicle by which the problems of African poverty and disease can be solved, despite the fact that everywhere on Earth that these corporations exist, there is a great deal of poverty and disease.

- The bizarre assertion that, in this case (but there is always something equivalent to this), China wants to invest in Africa as somehow a boon to the poor. It is either the opposite (the Chinese invest in Africa because they can exploit African workers even more than Chinese ones) or irrelevant (since the profits will go to China, not whatever part of Africa the Chinese are invested in.) By the way, Bono knows that there are a couple dozen nations that comprise Africa and that Chinese and other corporations invest in one or more of those, not the continent as a whole, right? I read the whole Independent issue and never heard a peep about this reality.

- "Africa is sexy." How many hundred years of racism does that tightly packed cliché contain?

- "People need to know it." If, after all these years of grandstanding, even the kind of person who reads Vanity Fair doesn't know it, what does that say about the Red approach?

- Changing the subject as soon as the topic of extreme wealth comes up-changing it to AIDS, the only time (it would appear) that AIDS comes up in the interview. Talking from both sides of his mouth as usual: If 5000 people a day are dying, as they are, for what, exactly, do Bush and Blair and Bono's other powerful cronies earn their high marks?

- Refusing to discuss his ownership of Forbes, ostensibly because it's off the topic. It couldn't be more on topic given that Capitalist Tool Bono is about to edit a slick magazine, claims he lives in the world of media, claims that such commerce-friendly publications have a "crucial" role to play.

- Bono sees the world through rose-tinted glasses. The Red campaign is based on an entirely cynical view of what motivates humans.

- Bono would have been a journalist. In fact, he did freelance a few pieces, universally undistinguished ones; his more obvious career choices would have been either a priest or a pimp.

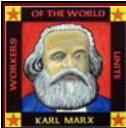
- "Striking fear in the hearts of writers." As if this piece weren't an example of how he carefully selects easily intimidated stenographers to do his bidding. (Would a real journalist have stopped at "I don't want to talk about" Forbes or let him get away with changing the subject to AIDS when the topic of his own arrogance comes up? Or that if he did quote Bono in those cases that he shouldn't have written a little detail about the contradictions

Bono is avoiding, as I have managed to do in about a sentence each here?)

How long before people will call a con a con? How many more people have to die in Africa before we acknowledge that this process is a fraud and a failure and that the evidentiary trail is not short but quite long (it's been 22 years since LiveAid)?

Dave Marsh (along with Lee Ballinger) edits [Rock & Rap Confidential](#), one of CounterPunch's favorite newsletters (now available for free by emailing: [rockrap@aol.com](mailto:rockrap@aol.com)).





## The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas

**Answers to Crossword.** **Across:** 9. Non-racial 10. Negro 11. Gramsci 12. Toilers 13. Tart 14, 17 down, 26. Workers of the world unite 16. Old beer 17. Taranto 19. Libertine 22. Lull 24. Bridges 25. Overrun 26. See 14 27 Calamanco.  
**Down:** 1. Knights of Labour 2. Unpaired 3. Marsh 4. Civil war 5. Elater 6. Engineers 7. Egress 8. Sons of Toil Union 15. Red ragger 17. See 14 18. Neutrino 20. Bailie 21. Insect 23 Fermi.

### Did You Know?

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

**10. Negro** – the first black union in the United States to win major concessions from a corporate giant was the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Their struggle is the subject of a film, *The Union*, made in 2001. The legacy of courage and solidarity of the Pullman porters helped trigger the civil rights movement of the 1960's.

**1. Knights of Labour** – this was a secret society founded in the USA in 1869; its main aim was to bring both skilled and unskilled workers into one organisation, “to establish co-operative institutions, such as would tend to supersede the wage system by the co-operative industrial system”.

In November 1888 the American journal, *Knights of Labour*, announced the dispatch of an organizer to Australia who probably arrived and worked first in Sydney and established a group there. The American was William E Lyght, who, with the assistance of Larry Petrie (later killed in Paraguay) called a mass meeting in Yarra Park, Melbourne, to lay the aims and objects of the Society before the public. “Roll up and hear us on 9<sup>th</sup> October, 1890. Come and join us. Unionism for ever!” a branch of the Knights of Labour was founded in the rooms of one of the leaders of the movement, Dr William Moloney; the spiritual leader of the Australian Knights was J R Davies.

They were refused admission to the founding convention of the Progressive Political League of Victoria in 1891, on the grounds that secret societies were unsuitable for political work. But they were represented in the Melbourne May Day march in 1893 and attended for many years after that. Assemblies were also established at Footscray, Mitcham, and Yarraville, as well as Melbourne.

The society never really flourished in Australia – it seemed pointless to have a secret society in the labour movement under Australian conditions. But at times it had some very prominent members, including W G Spence, W A Holman, George Beeby, Arthur Rae, George Black, Francis Cotton, William Lane, Ernie Lane, Henry Lawson, Conrad von Hagen, L A Petrie, Fred Flowers, and many others who were leaders of important sections of the labour movement. There was an attempt by the Freedom Assembly to appoint delegates to the 1893 Labor League Conference in New South Wales, but apparently the move was not acted upon.

The Freedom Assembly was established in Balmain in 1892, and there were branches in Wagga Wagga, Brisbane, and Maryborough. The Society had only a marginal effect on the labour movement in Australia.

**3. Vance Marshall** – an Australian author who participated in the red flag riots in the later stages of the First World War. A ban on the use of the red flag, except to signal danger, was introduced under the War Precautions Act in September 1918. The red flag, even though it was a traditional emblem of labour, was accused of being a sign of disloyalty, a sign for support for Bolshevism and all that it was said to stand for, nationalization of women and all!

The labour movement, weary of the war restrictions, set out to oppose the War Precautions Act and indicated its opposition by flaunting one of its provisions, the ban on the use of the red flag. In Sydney, returned soldiers attacked a socialist meeting in the Domain being addressed by Vance Marshall, who became a well known writer. Oddly enough, Marshall went to jail, not those who attacked the meeting.

**8. Sons of Toil Union** – a little-known union involved in rail construction works at Camerunga at the time of the Hunter River Colliers' Strike in 1892.

*(Information for the three Australian items above were taken from the book *The Bitter Struggle: a pictorial history of the Australian labor movement*, by Joe Harris, University of Queensland Press, 1970.)*

**24. Harry Bridges** – the co-founder and long-time President of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, one of the most-progressive and democratic of the US trade unions. For the ILWU, Bridges and Goldblatt (leader of the warehousemen) drafted a union constitution that's exceptional in the control it grants members. Many union constitutions give members very little beyond the right of paying dues in exchange for the services provided them by the union's securely entrenched bureaucrats. But the ILWU constitution guarantees that nothing of importance can be done without direct vote of the rank-and-file.

No one can take ILWU office except through a vote of the entire membership; no agreement with employers can be approved except by a vote of all members; the union cannot take a position on anything without membership approval.

Thanks in large part to Bridges, the ILWU also was one of the first unions to be thoroughly integrated racially. The union has always been probably the country's most socially conscious union. As the ILWU's official history records accurately, it is "the most outspoken among trade unions on civil rights, civil liberties, general welfare, and international amity, disarmament and peace."

The ILWU was an outspoken foe of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, even at a time when most other unions enthusiastically supported involvement. The union has been equally outspoken against the invasion and occupation of Iraq and against the government attacks on civil liberties in the name of anti-terrorism. And members have opposed oppressive regimes abroad by refusing to handle cargo bound for or coming from their countries.

Closer to home, the ILWU used its pension funds to finance construction of low-rent apartments in San Francisco's St. Francis Square, an extremely rare example of what the union calls "cooperative, affordable, integrated working-class housing."

Harry Bridges led the way to that and much more which benefited many, insisting always that the credit should go not to him, but to the union's rank-and-file, they who "did the fighting, the organizing, the striking."

As a newspaper that once reviled Bridges as a dangerous radical said on his death, "*He sought the best of all possible worlds. This one is much better due to his efforts.*"

*(Taken from *The Remarkable Harry Bridges*, 27 July 2005, by Dick Meister, published on the MUA web site at <http://mua.org.au/news/general/harryo.html> )*

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