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PROJECTING MARXISM INTO Y2K

Papers from Reno conference, October 1999

(Second of two special issues)

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Papers Presented at the Conference "Projecting Marxism into Y2K," University of Nevada, Reno, 15–17 October 1999
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Was Marx a Promethean?

Paul Burkett

Introduction

Many ecological thinkers have suggested that Marxism does not provide a useful perspective on environmental crises and the requirements of an environmentally sustainable society. The ecological criticisms of Marxism are many and quite varied. Nonetheless, they nearly all have in common the fundamental charge of "Prometheanism" (or "productivism") against Marx. In applauding capitalism's development of the productive forces as a precondition of communism, Marx evidently embraces the view—said to be firmly rooted in the enlightenment tradition—that human progress hinges on the subjugation of nature to human purposes. Human development thus involves a struggle between people and nature in which people come out on top. The critics labeling Marx a Promethean typically suggest that he foresees a continuation and even an intensification of human domination over nature under communism, conceived as a society of ever-expanding per capita levels of material production and consumption with reduced work time as enabled by the further development of the mechanized technologies bequeathed by capitalism. In arguing that "the continued 'development' of industrial production coheres with socialist ideology," for example, Andrew McLaughlin suggests:

> Marx praises capitalism for the development of the means of production which, under socialism, will make possible the reduction of the amount of labor required of all

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> humans, and he envisions a general material abundance as the substratum of communism. . . . Labor falls within the realm of necessity. Marxism promises the maximum possible emancipation from this realm, a freedom which is based on the development of the means of production and a rationally administered social organization. For Marxism, there is simply no basis for recognizing any interest in the liberation of nature from human domination. (1990, 95)

Enzo Mingione also detects a Prometheanism in Marx that explains "how difficult it is to reconcile [the] development of Marxism with an approach that seriously considers the question of 'nature'":

> Marx believed capitalism to be a necessary step–however painful, unjust and disruptive–in the historical development of human society. He did not see much room for argument on this point, and regarded the organization of human relations and the relations between humans and nature as quite rigid in the capitalist mode of production. From this sprang a social critique which formed the basis for political movements and trade unions and focused on the producers' overturning the exploitive relationships between capital and labor. This whole process was associated with the necessity of developing the forces of production along industrial lines, both quantitatively and qualitatively. (1993, 86)

Similarly, Ted Benton asserts that Marx's vision of capitalism as "preparing the conditions for future human emancipation" shares "the blindness to natural limits already present in . . . the spontaneous ideology of 19th-century industrialism":

> Modern industrial production, fostered by capitalist economic relations, is a precondition for the future communist society. The "historical task" of capitalism is precisely to transcend the conditional and limited character of earlier forms of interaction with nature. . . . Elsewhere there is a recognition that *some* element of "struggle" with nature for the necessaries of life is

> inevitable, the content of emancipation being given in the reduction to a minimum of the time taken up in this struggle. Either way, the possibility of human emancipation is premised upon the potential for the transformative, productive powers of associated human beings to transcend apparent natural limits, and to widen the field of play for human intentionality. (1989, 74–77)

The notion that Marx believed in the historical progress of humanity *over* nature–and that this "Prometheanism" blinded him to all natural limits of human production under capitalism and communism–is common even among Marxists. Michael Löwy thus condemns Marx's "optimistic, 'promethean' conception of the productive forces," in particular the "tendency in Marx . . . to consider the development of the forces of production as the principal vector of progress, [and] to adopt a fairly uncritical attitude toward industrial civilization, particularly its destructive relationship to nature" (1997, 33–34).[1]

Now, a priori, the Promethean interpretation appears to be consistent with many statements by Marx concerning the historical necessity of capitalism. In *Capital*, for example, he says that the "development of the productive forces of social labour is the historical task and justification of capital. This is just the way in which it unconsciously creates the material requirements of a higher mode of production" (1967, 3:259).

So the Promethean interpretation is right about capitalism creating prior conditions for communism, in Marx's view. Nonetheless, I shall argue that Marx's belief in the historical progressivity of capitalism is not based on an anthropocentric preference for material wealth over nature. Given Marx's insistence on natural conditions as a necessary part of wealth and on the natural *and* social character of the human producers, such a preference would be self-contradictory, to say the least (Burkett 1999, chaps. 2–4). Neither does Marx's conception of capitalist progress entail an overcoming of all natural limits to human production, if for no other reason than that this would require an infinite supply of exploitable labor power and of material conditions requisite to its exploitation (Burkett 1999, chap. 5). Rather, capitalism is progressive insofar as through its

development and socialization of the human and extrahuman conditions of production, it negates the historical necessity (absolute material-scarcity rationale) of exploitative class relations while removing other precapitalist *restrictions* on the natural and social development of human beings. More to the point, Marx's vision of the *less restricted* human development potentiated by capitalism is qualitatively richer and more conducive to ecological values than the image of mass production and consumption presented by the Promethean interpretation.

The Promethean interpretation also discounts Marx's argument that whereas capitalism develops and socializes production, thereby creating the basis for a transcendence of earlier, more restricted forms of human development, "it does so only in *antithetical form*" due to its own class-exploitative and alienating relations of production (Marx 1973, 528). For Marx, "the conditional, limited character of earlier forms of interaction with nature" (Benton 1989, 75) does not refer to ahistorical natural limits; nor does it just refer to the restricted character of precapitalist people-nature relations (though it partly involves this). It refers above all to the exploitative, anarchic, and insecure character of human production and people-nature relations endemic to all class societies. *This* conditional and limited character, and the limits it places on the development of people as natural and social beings, are reproduced and in some ways even worsened by capitalism, with its extreme social separation of the producers from necessary conditions of production, including natural conditions. Hence, the real transcendence of humanity's heretofore conditional and limited development only occurs with communism; it is not simply bequeathed by capitalism but requires a long struggle by the producers and their communities for a social union with the conditions of production and the transformation of these conditions into "conditions of free and associated labour" (Marx 1985, 157). In sum, the Promethean interpretation seriously misinterprets Marx's view of the historical progressivity of capitalism and the tasks of communism.

In reassessing the ecological connotations of Marx's perspective on capitalism and historical progress, I first detail the importance Marx ascribes to the social separation of the

producers in relation to necessary conditions of production and to the corresponding tendency toward universalization of the social and material network of human development. I consider next capitalism's effects on the development and application of natural 'science and on ecological consciousness. Finally, I reinvestigate Marx's position on capitalism's historical necessity and limits from the standpoint of human needs and consumption. Once we have taken the antithetical character of capitalist development into account, Marx's perspective will appear much less Promethean.[2]

Fundamental basis and limits of capitalist progress

Even in his early *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx asserts the historical necessity and limits of capitalism as a form of human progress: "Precisely in the fact that *division of labour* and *exchange* are embodiments of private property [in the means of production] lies the two-fold proof, on the one hand that *human* life required *private property* for its realization, and on the other hand that it now requires the supersession of private property" (1964, 163).

Marx's later statements of capitalism's historical progressivity tend to be couched more in terms of the interplay between the capital-labor relation and the development of the combined productive powers of nature and social labor. In this context, Marx places great stress on capitalism's social separation of the producers from necessary conditions of social production as a prerequisite for the development of productive forces. Such development is hindered by the direct *and restricted* social ties between laborers and production conditions characteristic of precapitalist forms, including peasant and petty-bourgeois forms based on "private property of the labourer in his means of production" (1967, 1:761). Although "petty industry, whether agricultural, manufacturing, or both" may be "an essential condition for the development of social production and of the free individuality of the labourer himself," it nonetheless

> pre-supposes parcelling of the soil, and scattering of the other means of production. As it excludes the concentration of these means of production, so also it excludes

> co-operation, division of labour within each separate process of production, the control over, and the productive application of the forces of Nature by society, and the free development of the social productive powers. It is compatible only with a system of production, and a society, moving within narrow and more or less primitive bounds. (761–62)

Development of the wealth-creating powers of labor and nature required an extensive and complex social division of labor that was incompatible with localized and socially restricted ties of laborers to production conditions:

> The original unity between the worker and the conditions of production (abstracting from slavery, where the labourer himself belongs to the objective conditions of production) has two main forms: the Asiatic communal system (primitive communism) and small-scale agriculture based on the family (and linked with domestic industry) in one form or another. Both are embryonic forms and both are equally unfitted to develop labour as *social* labour and the productive power of social labour. Hence the necessity for the separation, for the rupture, for the antithesis of labour and property (by which property in the conditions of production is to be understood). The most extreme form of this rupture, and the one in which the productive forces of social labour are also most powerfully developed, is capital. (Marx 1971, 422–23)

Advances in production meant that the wealth-creating powers of labor and nature had to become collective-social powers, and this was inconsistent with individual (personal, family, or local community) ties of labor to the conditions of production. As Marx indicates: "The individual worker could only be restored as *an individual* to property in the conditions of production by divorcing productive power from the development of labour on a large scale" (1994, 109). Capitalist property in the conditions of production is, however, an antagonistic form of property precisely because it separates property from labor, thereby causing the combined productive powers of labor and

nature to take the form of a growing power of *private* capital over *social* production and human need satisfaction.[3] Nonetheless, "this separation of property from labour . . . is a necessary transition to the conversion of property in the conditions of production into *social* property" insofar as "the individual's ownership of the conditions of production [is] not only unnecessary but incompatible with . . . production on a large scale" (108–9).

In short, capitalism's separation of property from labor is progressive insofar as it "revolutionizes, through the organization of the labour-process and the enormous improvement of technique, the entire economic structure of society in a manner eclipsing all former epochs" (Marx 1967, 2:35). It must be kept in mind, however, that Marx does not reduce this progressivity to rising levels of production and consumption per capita. That would be confusing ends and means. For Marx, the content of historical progress resides in the development of people as a social and natural species, and this is not reducible to rising material consumption. Capitalism is progressive not just because it develops productive forces, but because (1) by doing so, it negates any material-scarcity rationale for class monopolies over the disposition of society's surplus labor time and products, hence over opportunities for human development insofar as such opportunities are a function of the distribution of free time *and* the level and security of material living standards; (2) it does so by developing the cooperative and social form of labor and production, thereby enabling humanity to overcome the socially and naturally restricted forms of development characterizing precapitalist societies. The first aspect is set out by Marx in *Capital*:

> It is one of the civilising aspects of capital that it enforces this surplus-labour in a manner and under conditions which are more advantageous to the development of the productive forces, social relations, and the creation of the elements for a new and higher form than under the preceding forms of slavery, serfdom, etc. Thus it gives rise to a stage, on the one hand, in which *coercion and monopolisation of social development (including its material and intellectual advantages) by one portion of society*

> *at the expense of the other are eliminated*; on the other hand, it creates the material means and embryonic conditions, making it possible in a higher form of society to combine this surplus-labour with a greater reduction of time devoted to material labour in general. (1967, 3:819; emphasis added)

Engels makes the same point even more forcefully in *The Housing Question*, arguing that the:

> industrial revolution . . . has raised the productive power of human labour to such a high level that–for the first time in the history of mankind–the possibility exists, given a rational division of labour among all, of producing not only enough for the plentiful consumption of all members of society and for an abundant reserve fund, but also of leaving each individual sufficient leisure so that what is really worth preserving in historically inherited culture–science, art, forms of intercourse–may not only be preserved but converted from a monopoly of the ruling class into the common property of the whole of society, and may be further developed. And here is the decisive point: as soon as the productive power of labour has risen to this height, every excuse disappears for the existence of a ruling class. After all, the ultimate basis on which class differences were defended was always: there must be a class which need not plague itself with the production of its daily subsistence, in order that it may have time to look after the intellectual work of society. This talk, which up to now had its great historical justification, has been cut off at the root once and for all by the industrial revolution of the last hundred years. (1979, 26–27)

The second element of capitalism's historical progressivity, mentioned above, involves the socialization of production that enables humanity to overcome the restricted forms of human development typical of precapitalist societies. The *Grundrisse* presents a three-stage outline of this perspective:

> Relations of personal dependence . . . are the first social forms, in which human productive capacity develops only

> to a slight extent and at isolated points. Personal independence founded on *objective* dependence is the second great form, in which a system of general social metabolism, of universal relations, of all-round needs and universal capacities is formed for the first time. Free individuality, based on the universal development of individuals and on their subordination of their communal, social productivity as their social wealth, is the third stage. The second stage creates the conditions for the third. (Marx 1973, 158)

Clearly, the factors distinguishing the three stages are the social separation of the producers from necessary conditions of production in the second (capitalist) stage (hence the "objective dependence" of labor on capital), and the "personally dependent" or restricted form of nonseparation from production conditions in the first (precapitalist) stage. The third (communist) stage thus represents a return to the unity of laborers and production conditions characteristic of the first stage but in the less restricted form of the associated producers' conscious management of the socialized wealth-creating powers of labor and nature. The third stage's more "universal development of individuals" itself hinges upon an explicit communalization of the "universal relations, all-round needs, and universal capacities" developed under capitalism. This accords with the first aspect of capitalism's historical progressivity, namely, the negation of scarcity rationales for class monopolization of human-developmental opportunities.

Marx is generally laudatory toward capitalism's creation of an increasingly broad and complex social network of human production.[4] For Marx, capitalism's development of "the universality of intercourse, hence the world market" connotes "the possibility of the universal development of the individual. . . . Not an *ideal or imagined* universality of the individual, but the universality of his *real and ideal relations*" (1973, 542; emphases added). It is with this human-social development in mind, and not the development of production and consumption for their own sake, that Marx praises "the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc., created through universal exchange" under capitalism (488).

If I have spent what may seem to be an inordinate amount of space distinguishing the human developmental content from the productive form of capitalist progress, it is mainly because this distinction reveals the error of viewing Marx's historical vision through the productivist blinkers of the Promethean interpretation. Marx does not see capitalism's necessity in terms of a simple floating of humanity on a rising tide of material goods and free time created at nature's expense. The key potential Marx sees prefigured by capitalism is for a *less restricted* form of human development, both socially and in relation to nature. Capital's development of productive forces (hence the negation of scarcity rationales for class limits on human development), along with its extensive and intensive development of the social division of labor and exchange (hence the potential universalization of free human individuality), are the vehicles here, not the human evolutionary content.

That the Promethean interpretation represents a one-sidedly productivist distortion becomes clearer when Marx's historical vision is considered more closely from the standpoint of people-nature relations. Marx does not ascribe a progressivity to capitalism based on a human conquering of nature or an uncoupling of production from natural conditions and limits. Rather, capitalism is progressive insofar as it creates a basis for *less restricted* relations between people and nature. "Less restricted" need not connote "antiecological" in this context; rather, it could signify *richer, more universal* people-nature relations–relations not unconducive to ecological and biospheric consciousness. For Marx, this universalization of people-nature relations is just as progressive as the universalization of socioeconomic relations of which it is a function; both are integral to capitalism's creation of the potential for free human development unencumbered by class limits and other material and social restrictions.

Stated conversely, Marx does not view capitalism as more advanced than precapitalist societies based on a failure of the latter to subdue nature. The relative historical backwardness of precapitalist societies resides in their *more restricted* relations with nature, and this corresponds to their more restrictive social relations from the standpoint of free individual development. In

The German Ideology, for example, Marx argues that in precapitalist societies, "the restricted attitude of men to nature determines their restricted relation to one another, and their restricted attitude to one another determines men's restricted relation to nature" (Marx and Engels 1976, 50). Elsewhere, in a digression on "ancient social organisms of production," Marx suggests that they

> are, as compared with bourgeois society, extremely simple and transparent. But they are founded either on the immature development of man individually, who has not yet severed the umbilical cord that unites him with his fellowmen in a primitive tribal community, or upon direct relations of subjection. They can arise and exist only when the development of the productive power of labour has not risen beyond a low stage, and when, therefore, the social relations within the sphere of material life, between man and man, and between man and Nature, are correspondingly narrow. This narrowness is reflected in the ancient worship of Nature, and in the other elements of the popular religions. (1967, 1:79)

It is testimony to the power of productivist ideology that Marx's comments on the relatively *restricted* character of precapitalist relations with nature are often taken as evidence of an *antinatural* bias, rather than as validations of the freer, more universal relations with nature potentiated by capitalism. When Marx praises "the great civilizing influence of capital," with its "universal appropriation of nature as well as of the social bond itself by the members of society," he is not downgrading nature or the natural character of human beings; rather, he is recognizing the possibility of a less restricted, more conscious form of human coevolution with nature "in comparison to which all earlier ones appear as mere *local developments* of humanity and as *nature-idolatry*" (1973, 409–10). Insofar as the freely developing individuals prefigured by capitalism's universalizing tendencies will be capable of "grasping [their] own history as a *process*," they will also be capable of a freer "recognition of nature . . . as

[their] real body" (1973, 542). They will, as Engels puts it, "not only feel but also know their oneness with nature" (1964, 183).

Promethean interpretations also tend to downplay the contradictory character of capitalist progress in Marx's view–thus falsely ascribing to Marx an overly positive verdict on capitalism's appropriation of natural conditions. While recognizing that capital's "infinite drive for enrichment" translates into a "striv[ing] for the infinite increase of the productive forces" that potentiates less restricted forms of human development, Marx hardly endorses "the alienated form which the objective conditions of labour . . . assume against living labour" in capitalist society (1994, 11, 29). Under capitalism, "every increase in the productive powers of labour . . . appears . . . as a *productive power of capital, independent of labour and confronting it*" (11, 227). This alienation of "the general social powers of labour" encompasses "natural forces and scientific knowledge," which also "appear most emphatically as forces not only alien to the worker, belonging to *capital*, but also directed in the interests of the capitalists in a hostile and overwhelming fashion against the individual worker . . . as the *quintessence* of the *social forces and forms* of the individual worker's common labour confronting him" (29–30).

Although capitalism's development and socialization of production expand the historical possibilities for free human development involving less restricted forms of human interaction with society and nature, this is not the primary orientation of capital. For capital, the goal is simply and solely the expansion of value, of monetary accumulation. Hence "forces of production and social relations–two different sides of the development of the social individual–appear to capital as mere means, and are merely means for it to produce on its limited foundation" (Marx 1973, 706). This, combined with the social separation of the producers in relation to necessary conditions of production, creates a situation in which "the *social* characteristics of their labour come to confront the workers so to speak in a *capitalized* form" (Marx 1977, 1055). This is how "the forces of nature and science," now also subjected to capital's exploitative form of socialization, "confront the workers as the *powers* of capital"

(1055). Alienation of workers from natural conditions is thus a central aspect of capitalism's "reduction of individual labour to the level of helplessness in face of the communality represented by and concentrated in capital" (Marx 1973, 700).

Under capitalism, natural conditions, rather than serving as material and aesthetic vehicles for the development of more universal, variegated forms of human individuality, instead "appear directly as weapons" which, with the help of capital's appropriation of science (see the next section), "are used partly to throw the worker onto the streets, to posit him as a *surplus object*, partly to break down his special skill and the claims based on the latter, partly to subject him to the thoroughly organised despotism of the factory system and the military discipline of capital" (Marx 1994, 29). Capitalism thus converts the development of the "conditions of labour" into "an *alien circumstance to the workers*," one "which the individual worker endures passively, and which progresses at his expense" (Marx 1991, 480; 1977, 1055). This alienation is not just manifested in the fact that the "application of social labour to science, the forces of nature and the products of labour . . . appears as no more than the means for *the exploitation of labour*" (1977, 1055); it is also shown by the narrow viewpoint on nature's utility necessarily adopted by "the individual capitalists, who dominate production and exchange" (Engels 1964, 185). As Engels observes, competing capitalists

> are able to concern themselves only with the most immediate useful effect of their actions. Indeed, even this useful effect–inasmuch as it is a question of the usefulness of the article that is produced or exchanged–retreats far into the background, and the sole incentive becomes the profit to be made on selling. . . . In relation to nature, as to society, the present mode of production is predominantly concerned only about the immediate, the most tangible result; and then surprise is expressed that the more remote effects of actions directed to this end turn out to be quite different. (1964, 185–86)

The antiecological effects of the conversion of nature into a condition of monetary accumulation are discussed elsewhere

(Burkett 1999, chap. 9). The point to be emphasized here is that these environmental tensions are logically encompassed by Marx's broader historical conception of capitalist "progress." This casts further doubt on Promethean interpretations according to which Marx saw in capitalism's "domination" of nature the qualitative basis for a road of high production and high consumption leading directly to communism. Given capitalism's development and socialization of material productive forces, a nonexploitative and sustainable coevolution of society and nature requires explicit social control over these productive forces by the producers and their communities. But communist production, with its freer development of human individuality, is not simply inherited from capitalism, needing only to be signed into law by a newly elected socialist government. It requires "long struggles, through a series of historic processes, transforming circumstances and men" (Marx 1985, 76). In a draft of *The Civil War in France*, Marx makes it clear that among these long struggles will be a struggle for new material forms of production:

> The working classes know that they have to pass through different phases of class struggle. They know that the superseding of the economical conditions of the slavery of labour by the conditions of free and associated labour can only be the progressive work of time (that economical transformation), that they require not only a change of distribution, but a new organization of production, or rather the delivery (setting free) of the social forms of production in present organised labour (engendered by present industry) of the trammels of slavery, of their present class character, and their harmonious national and international co-ordination. They know that this kind of regeneration will be again and again relented and impeded by the resistance of vested interests and class egotisms. (1985, 156–57)

This call for a new, disalienated organization of production contradicts Promethean interpretations, which have Marx endorsing capitalism's mechanized mass processing of nature into material goods as a qualitatively appropriate basis for

communist development (Mingione 1993, 86).[5] That Marx and Engels do not see capitalism as directly providing the technical foundations of communist people-nature relations becomes clearer upon closer consideration of their stance on capitalism and science.

Capitalism, science, and nature

Historically, "capital does not create science"; nonetheless, "it exploits it, appropriates it to the production process" (Marx 1994, 33).[6] Indeed, "it is the capitalist mode of production which first puts the natural sciences to the service of the direct production process" on a systematic and routine basis (32). It is only by "utilising science itself just as much as all the physical and mental qualities" that "production founded on capital creates universal industriousness . . . a system of general exploitation of the natural and human qualities" (Marx 1973, 409). Whether freely appropriated or not, capital's productive *application* of science helps explain how it "tear[s] down all the barriers which hem in the development of the forces of production, the expansion of needs, the all-sided development of production, and the exploitation and exchange of natural and mental forces" (410). It thus also helps explain how capital opens up possibilities for less restricted forms of human development, as it constantly "drives beyond national barriers and prejudices as much as beyond nature worship, as well as all traditional, confined, complacent, encrusted satisfactions of present needs, and reproductions of old ways of life" (410).

The fact that science is systematically "enlisted by capital" does not exhaust capitalism's progressivity in this area (Marx 1994, 38). Marx also argues that capitalism positively encourages "the development . . . of the natural sciences to their highest point" (1973, 409). The fundamental basis of this positive evaluation is that "knowledge . . . becomes independent of labour" precisely insofar as it "enters the service of capital"; in other words, "this process belongs in general to the category of the attainment of an independent position by the conditions of production vis-à-vis labour. This separation and autonomisation, which is at first of advantage to capital alone, is at the same time

a condition for the development of the POWERS OF SCIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE" (1994, 57).

Capitalism thus encourages the development and application of scientific knowledge in the same way it accelerates the development of all productive forces: by socially separating this condition of production from the control of the direct producers and converting it into a vehicle of competitive monetary accumulation. With capitalism, there is

> a *separation of science*, as *science applied* to production, from *direct labour*, whereas at earlier stages of production the restricted measure of knowledge and experience is directly linked with labour itself, does not develop as an autonomous power separated from labour, and therefore in general never gets beyond a collection of procedures carried on traditionally and only expanding very slowly and little by little. (Marx 1994, 33)

Capitalism's separation of science from direct labor thus involves a "concentration" and "development into a science of the knowledge, observations and craft secrets obtained by experience and handed down traditionally, for the purpose of analysing the production process to allow the application of the natural sciences to the material production process" (Marx 1994, 34). This reformation and "application of science" by capital "rests entirely on the separation of the intellectual potentialities of the process from the knowledge, understanding and skill of the individual worker, just as the concentration and development of the [other] conditions of production . . . rests on the divestiture–the separation–of the worker from those conditions" (34; cf. Braverman 1974).

The use of "implements of labour, in the form of machinery" as means of exploitation not only requires a prior deskilling of labor, but also "necessitate[s] the substitution of natural forces for human force, and the conscious application of science, instead of rule of thumb" (Marx 1967, 1:386). In this sense, capitalism "is the first mode of production where practical problems are [routinely] posed which can only be solved scientifically" (Marx 1994, 32). Moreover, capital's "employment of these

forces of nature *on a large scale* is only possible where machinery is employed on a large scale, hence also where there is a corresponding CONGLOMERATION of workers and cooperation of workers subsumed under capital" (32; emphasis added). Such *concentrated* "employment of the NATURAL AGENTS" itself encourages "the development of *scientific knowledge* as an independent factor in the production process."[7] In this way, too, capitalist production naturally elicits scientific developments by making it "the task of science to be a means for the production of wealth; a means of enrichment." At the same time, capitalist development "provides the means for the theoretical subjugation of nature" in the very practical sense that it "generally first produces the sciences' material means of research, observation and experiment" while enhancing the monetary incentives for scientific work, especially of the more "practical" type:

> In so far as the sciences are used as a means of enrichment by capital, and thereby become themselves a means of enrichment for those who develop them, the MEN OF SCIENCE compete with each other to discover *practical applications* for their science. Moreover, *invention* becomes a *métier* by itself. With capitalist production, therefore, the *scientific factor* is for the first time consciously developed, applied, and called into existence on a scale which earlier epochs could not have imagined. (34)

While noting capitalism's encouragement of scientific activity, Marx recognizes the less progressive features of capital's "*exploitation of science*, of the theoretical progress of humanity" (1994, 33). With the social separation of the producers in relation to necessary conditions of production, and the scientific development of these conditions as powers of capital, "science appears as a potentiality *alien* to labour, *hostile* to it and *dominant* over it" (34). For example,

> in so far as machinery develops with the accumulation of society's science, of productive force generally, general social labour presents itself not in labour but in capital . . . and confronts the worker physically as *capital*. In machinery, knowledge appears as alien, external to

> him; and living labour [as] subsumed under self-activating objectified labour. (Marx 1973, 694–95)

Capital's "APPLICATION OF SCIENCE UPON THE PROCESS OF PRODUCTION," and the resulting deskilling and mechanization of labor, thus

> coincides with the suppression of all intellectual development in the course of this process. Admittedly, a small class of higher workers does take shape, but this does not stand in any proportion to the masses of "deskilled" workers. (Marx 1994, 34) . . .
>
> It is capitalist production which first transforms the material production process into the application *of science to production*–science put into practice–but it does so only by subjecting labour to capital and *suppressing* the worker's own intellectual and professional development. (38)

The fact that the productive utilization of science and nature occurs only under conditions of labor's subjection to capital obviously hampers the social diffusion of scientific knowledge about the natural conditions of human production and reproduction, other things being equal.

The subjection of science to capital has an antiecological character rooted in capital's treatment of nature as a vehicle for the production of vendible use values. With capitalist production, "nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility; ceases to be recognized as a power for itself; and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws appears merely as a ruse so as to subjugate it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or as a means of production" (Marx 1973, 410). This instrumental processing of nature, driven by the quantitatively unlimited and qualitatively homogenous goal of monetary accumulation, proceeds without any fundamental concern for the diversities, interconnections, and limited adjustment capacities governing the reproduction of human and extrahuman nature (Burkett 1999, chap. 7). As a result, the so-called "human victories over nature" achieved by capitalism often turn out to be illusory, as Marx's life-long comrade points out: "For each such

victory nature takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first" (Engels 1964, 182).

Engels also observes how the subsumption of labor and nature under capital places an antiecological stamp on the development of science. For example, the concern of competing capitalists "only with the most immediate useful effect of their actions" appears, in a refracted form, in the failure of scientific practice to take adequate account of ecological interconnections: "In nature nothing takes place in isolation. Everything affects and is affected by every other thing, and it is mostly because this manifold motion and interaction is forgotten that our natural scientists are prevented from gaining a clear insight into the simplest things" (1964, 185, 180).[8]

Another factor inhibiting the development and application of ecological knowledge is capitalism's tendency to undervalue scientific knowledge in general. As Marx indicates: "All scientific labour, all discovery and all invention . . . depends partly on the utilisation of the co-operation of the living, and partly on the utilisation of the labours of those who have gone before" (1967, 3:104). As a result, the value of "the product of mental labour–science–always stands far below its [real] value, because the labour-time needed to reproduce it has no relation at all to the labour-time required for its original production" (1963, 353). This undervaluation not only inhibits the general development of science but also biases scientific work toward the production of *monopolizable* forms of knowledge capable of yielding rents. The development and operationalization of the kinds of ecological insights needed for society to sustainably coevolve with nature thus tend to be socially underprioritized.

Capitalism, with its increasingly globalized and intensive appropriation of nature, its new environmental dysfunctions, and its development of the natural sciences (however biased), cannot help but generate new, more universal forms of ecological consciousness. "Present-day ecology" is undoubtedly "a reflection of the socializing and naturalizing processes already at work in human society–the processes that bind man to man and man to

nature"; it cannot help but "reflect man's mode of production, his socialized life and work in relation to nature" (Parsons 1977, 88–89). In this sense, capitalism does create the potential for a less antagonistic *and* less restricted human coevolution with nature:

> Thus at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature–but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly . . . And, in fact, with every day that passes we are acquiring a better understanding of these laws and getting to perceive both the more immediate and the more remote consequences of our interference with the traditional course of nature. (Engels 1964, 183)

Nonetheless, as long as human production is shaped by value and capital, by the market and private profit-making, this ecological potential will remain a relatively underdeveloped and underutilized "positive externality" languishing on the margins of a predominantly antiecological capitalist development. Useful, environmentally sound precapitalist *and* contemporary technologies will continue to be displaced in favor of commercially "viable" processes and products.[9] Ecology itself will remain, for the most part, one scientific specialty among many (albeit an interdisciplinary one)–often coopted for commercial or official "development" purposes but not effectively operating as an overarching framework ensuring that scientific practice as a whole works toward a sustainable and humanly progressive coevolution of society and nature.

That capitalism puts humanity "in a position to realise, and hence to control, even the more remote natural consequences of [its] production activities" does not mean that this potential can be realized under capitalism; such "regulation . . . requires something more than mere knowledge. It requires a complete revolution in our hitherto existing mode of production, and

simultaneously a revolution in our whole contemporary social order" (Engels 1964, 183–84). An important task of this revolution is to "convert science from an instrument of class rule into a popular force," and thereby "convert the men of science themselves from panderers to class prejudice, place-hunting state parasites, and allies of capital into free agents of thought." For "science can only play its genuine part" when the producers are no longer socially alienated from the material conditions of their production and reproduction, which is to say, "in the Republic of Labour" (Marx 1985, 162).

Capitalism and consumption: An antiecological vision?

I have shown that the Promethean interpretation, in which Marx applauds capitalism for building a high-production road to communism at nature's expense, fails to account for Marx's qualitative critique of capitalist production. While arguing that capitalism creates the potential for *less restricted* forms of human development, Marx insists that this system's class-exploitative relations and its narrowly profit-driven appropriation of nature prevent it from realizing this potential. This realization requires a qualitative restructuring of the productive forces and relations developed under capitalism, pursuant to the collective appropriation of these conditions by the producers and their communities. Here I assess the notion, also basic to the Promethean interpretation, that Marx's vision of historical progress hinges on a social broadening and deepening of the same basic kind of antiecological mass consumption produced by capitalism. Once again, I will show that the Promethean interpretation bypasses the real human developmental potential created, in Marx's view, by capitalism–a potential not reducible to increases in mass consumption–as well as Marx's qualitative critique of capitalist consumption relations.

Because the Promethean interpretation bypasses Marx's qualitative analysis of capitalism as a specific class form of production, it also ignores Marx's analysis of the "particular mode of consumption" associated with this "specific mode of production . . . as one of its forms" (Marx 1988, 69).[10] The historical progressivity of this mode of consumption stems first and

foremost from the fact that capitalism "is a form of production not bound to a level of needs laid down in advance" (Marx 1977, 1037).[11] Competitive monetary accumulation "impels the development of human productive capacity and thereby the activation of human dispositions in fresh directions," producing "an extension of the sphere of social needs and the means for their satisfaction" (Marx 1988, 199). Indeed, "it is precisely the productivity of labour, the mass of production, of population and of surplus population created by this mode of production that constantly calls new branches of industry into being" (1977, 1035). Individual firms producing use values with their profitable vendibility in mind do not limit themselves to use values satisfying previously expressed needs. They not only compete for the customers previously served by *other* firms but also try to create new market sales, through cost- and price-cutting strategies as well as by differentiating their products and developing new ones satisfying new needs. With the deskilling and mechanization of production and, hence, the employment of large agglomerations of fixed capital, "continuity of production becomes absolutely necessary" for competing enterprises, providing further impetus to sales efforts and the creation of new needs in production and consumption (Marx 1987, 530). In this way, "instead of the scale of production being controlled by existing needs, the quantity of products made is determined by the constantly increasing scale of production dictated by the mode of production itself" (1977, 1037–38). Even though each capitalist's "aim is that the individual product should contain as *much unpaid labour as possible*, . . . this is achieved only by *producing for the sake of production*" (1038). This, along with the "creation of new branches of production" mentioned above, means that capitalism cannot help but create "a constantly expanding and constantly enriched system of needs" (Marx 1973, 409).

The human potentialities Marx sees in this process of need creation cannot be reduced to an antiecological mass consumerism. To begin seeing this, consider a passage in the *Grundrisse* where Marx lists three ways in which capital's "production of surplus value, based on the increase and development of the

productive forces, requires the production of new consumption; requires that the consuming circle within circulation expands as did the productive circle previously." Marx states: "Firstly quantitative expansion of existing consumption; secondly: creation of new needs by propagating existing ones in a wide circle; *thirdly*: production of *new* needs and discovery and creation of new use values" (1973, 408).

Notice that of these three requirements, only the first is purely quantitative. The second is qualitative insofar as it involves a broader access to use values (more below on this point). Meanwhile, the third requirement (the one Marx emphasizes) is purely qualitative, referring as it does to enrichment of the *composition* of use values rather than increases in the general level of consumption. Taken together, the three requirements are consistent with a vision of qualitatively *less restricted* human consumption, not only in the sense that consumption opportunities are broadened to those previously excluded from them but also in the sense of a richer, more variegated natural and social *content* of these opportunities and the needs they satisfy. Indeed, shortly after the above listing, Marx specifies the human potential prefigured by capitalism's "discovery, creation and satisfaction of new needs" in just such qualitative terms, as

> the cultivation of all the qualities of the social human being, production of the same in a form as rich as possible in needs, because rich in qualities and relations–production of this being as the most total and universal possible social product, for, in order to take gratification in a many-sided way, he must be capable of many pleasures, hence cultured to a high degree. (1973, 409)

This qualitative interpretation is also consistent with Marx's assertion that "the greater the extent to which historic needs–needs created by production itself, social needs–needs which are themselves the offspring of social production and intercourse, are posited as *necessary*, the higher the level to which real wealth has been developed" (1973, 527). The qualitative enrichment Marx is referring to here is actually twofold, since it involves the socialization not only of needs in general but of

"necessary" needs in particular, that is, the needs of the direct producers. Implicit in capitalism's socialization of the producers' needs is the potential for a less socially and naturally restricted development of these producers as human beings. Marx develops this point in terms of the supersession of prior antitheses between luxury and necessity: "*Luxury* is the opposite of the *naturally necessary*. Necessary needs are those of the individual himself reduced to a natural subject. The development of industry suspends this natural necessity as well as this former luxury" (1973, 528).

Through its development of an extensive and complex network of labor more and more universally and intensively enmeshed with natural conditions, and the attendant increases in the combined wealth-creating powers of labor and nature, capitalism loosens prior social and material restrictions on the universality of needs in general. But it does more than that: it also negates the historical rationale for the monopolization of relatively less restricted needs by a minority, surplus-appropriating class. In both ways, capitalism creates a basis for a "suspension" of the luxury/necessity dichotomy.

This line of argument leads to another historically progressive aspect of capitalism's mode of consumption, one that further highlights the class-relational basis of Marx's argument. According to Marx, capitalism's social separation of the producers from necessary conditions of production paradoxically entails an advance in the social status of the laboring class as regards the sphere of consumption–compared, that is, to systems in which workers and their consumption are socially tied to particular material conditions (cf. Fine and Leopold 1993; Fine 1994). Unlike feudalism, for example, where the worker's "way of life [is] prescribed purely by the (feudal) estate," under capitalism "the worker can do what he likes with his money"–so in this sense, at least, capitalism is the first system in which "everything patriarchal falls away" and the laborers first become "free of their subjection to a given relationship" (Marx 1976, 436–37). Indeed, once a worker obtains money-wages in exchange for his or her labor power, the worker "as its possessor maintains . . . the same relationship in the general circulation as any other"

possessor of money (Marx 1987, 507). Just as it does for all other market agents, this money (at least "within the scope of its value magnitude") represents "universal wealth, wealth in its universal social form . . . a possibility of all gratification" (507):

> Since he exchanges his [labor power] for the general form of wealth, he becomes co-participant in general wealth up to the limit of his equivalent. . . . [H]e is neither bound to particular objects, nor to a particular manner of satisfaction. The sphere of his consumption is not qualitatively restricted, only quantitatively. This distinguishes him from the slave, serf etc. (Marx 1973, 283)

In short, the wageworker's "consumption . . . falls outside the economic relation" between capital and labor, and this "essentially modifies his relation by comparison to that of workers in other social modes of production" (Marx 1973, 283–84). Some implications of this modification for ecological struggles are taken up elsewhere (Burkett 1999, chap. 13); what is relevant here is Marx's qualitative, relational approach to the consumption opportunities opened up to the laboring class by the capital-labor relation. His main emphasis is on the less restricted, richer character of workers' consumption opportunities, not on the mere quantity of material goods available to and consumed by workers. When discussing how the worker can widen "the sphere of his pleasures at the times when business is good," for example, Marx does not refer to binges of hedonistic material consumption but to "the worker's participation in the higher, even cultural satisfactions, the agitation for his own interests, newspaper subscriptions, attending lectures, educating his children, developing his taste etc., his only share of civilization which distinguishes him from the slave" (1973, 287). There is, in short, nothing inherently antiecological about this aspect of capitalism's historical progressivity in the realm of consumption.

In sum, it is true that Marx ranked capitalism's development of a social and material basis for a higher level and improved quality of working-class consumption as one of the more important aspects of this system's historical progressivity. Who can fault Marx for insisting on this point, given the abysmally low

level and quality of consumption among workers in his time or even among the majority of the earth's workers today? Nonetheless, it is only by ignoring the qualitative and relational character of Marx's argument that he can be pictured as supporting capitalism's antiecological forms of mass material consumption as a historically progressive basis of human development. This becomes clearer when one considers Marx's critical analysis of the quality of working-class consumption opportunities under capitalism. The basic starting point of this analysis is that whereas "in exchange," the worker appears as "an equal vis-à-vis the capitalist, like every other party in exchange," in fact "this equality is already disturbed" by "the worker's relation to the capitalist . . . outside that of exchange," in production (1973, 284).[12]

How is working-class consumption "disturbed" by the capital-labor relation? In the first place, in order for the worker to acquire a money wage at all, the exploitation of the worker's labor power in production must be a profitable proposition for the capitalist. This restricts the money wage the capitalist can pay, thereby restricting workers' consumption insofar as it requires purchases of commodities. It is not only the quantity of consumption that is constrained here but also the quality, since the restricted level of wages forces workers to consume inferior goods:

> Why are cotton, potatoes and spirits the pivots of bourgeois society? Because the least amount of labour is needed to produce them, and, consequently, they have the lowest price. Why does the minimum price determine the maximum consumption? . . . [I]t is because in a society founded on *poverty* the *poorest* products have the fatal prerogative of being used by the greatest number. (Marx 1978, 57)

Although capitalism tends to dissolve prior material and social restrictions underpinning the luxury/necessity dichotomy, "it does so only in *antithetical form*, in that it itself only posits another specific social standard as necessary, opposite luxury" (Marx 1973, 528). This "specific social standard" of "necessity"

is restricted by capital's absolute material requirement: the reproduction of an exploitable labor force and conditions for its profitable exploitation (Burkett 1999, chap. 5). As a result, the antithesis between luxury and necessity is reproduced in a new form, as the luxury consumption of capitalists and other surplus-appropriating classes becomes necessary for capital to realize the surplus value extracted from workers in production. "In so far as machine labour . . . increases the quantity of commodities which are produced in the same labour time," for example, this rising productivity is often utilized as "an increase in the amount of labour . . . applied to produce commodities that do *not* enter into the consumption of the workers," thus "extend[ing] the basis, upon which can be reared a large upper class" rather than loosening restrictions on the quality and quantity of working-class consumption. As Marx says, "luxury goods are absolutely necessary for a mode of production which creates wealth for the non-producer and which therefore must provide that wealth in forms which permit its acquisition only by those who enjoy" (1977, 1046).[13] Capital's tendency to produce a wider, less restricted circle of consumption thus runs into a barrier posed by its own class-exploitative nature, namely that the "extension of the sphere of needs and the means for their satisfaction is conditioned by the worker's being chained to the necessary requirements of life" (Marx 1988, 199). In this sense, capitalism's "multiplication of needs and of the means of their satisfaction breeds the absence of needs and of means" among the producers themselves (Marx 1964, 149).

Capitalism's restriction of working-class life encompasses a dequalification of workers' *natural needs* in both production and consumption. As for consumption, Marx notes that, especially among the lowest-paid workers:

> even the need for fresh air ceases for the worker. Man returns to a cave dwelling, which is now, however, contaminated with the pestilential breath of civilization, and which he continues to occupy only precariously, it being for him an alien habitation which can be withdrawn from him any day–a place from which, if he does not pay, he can be thrown out of any day. For this mortuary he has to

> *pay*. . . . Light, air, etc.–the simplest *animal* cleanliness–ceases to be a need for man. *Filth*, this stagnation and putrefaction of man–the *sewage* of civilization (speaking quite literally)–comes to be the *element of life* for him. Utter, *unnatural* neglect, putrefied nature, comes to be his *life-element*. None of his senses exist any longer, and not only in his human fashion, but in an *inhuman* fashion, and therefore not even in an animal fashion . . . even his *animal* needs cease to exist. (1964, 148–49)

This reduction of workers to a subnatural state by the capitalistic dequalification of their natural consumption needs is an important, even central, theme throughout the writings of Marx and Engels (see, for example, Marx 1967, 1:654–67; Engels 1973, 1979, 40–46). Meanwhile, the dequalification of workers' natural needs in the realm of production is central to Marx's analysis of capital's inbuilt tendency toward an unnatural extension of work-time (Burkett 1999, chap. 10). The reduction of the worker to a subhuman "beast of burden" is also shown by capital's economization on fixed capital and other outlays at the expense of workplace safety–subjecting workers to avoidable industrial "accidents," "lack of ventilation," and "poisoned air, etc." (Marx 1971, 257; 1967, 3:94).[14] Such "dissipation of the labourer's life and health" in production itself reduces the quality of workers' free time and consumption to subnatural levels (1967, 3:86). Indeed, insofar as work-time involves a "robbing" of the worker's "normal, moral and physical, conditions of development and function" (1967, 1:265), how can it *not* vitiate the quality of consumption, free time, and home life?[15] The alienation experienced in production, where "the worker's activity is not his spontaneous activity [but] is the loss of his self," tends to create a situation in which

> the worker only feels himself freely active in his animal functions–eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal. Certainly eating, drinking, procreating,

> etc., are also genuinely human functions. But abstractly taken, separated from the sphere of all other human activity and turned into sole and ultimate ends, they are animal functions. (Marx 1964, 111; cf. Engels 1973, 141–42)

The resonation of alienated labor in free time and consumption thus further alienates workers from their own natural being and from nature, as Engels points out using the example of mechanized factory labor:

> The worker's activity is made easy, muscular effort is saved, but the work itself becomes unmeaning and monotonous to the last degree. It offers no field for mental activity, and claims just enough of his attention to keep him from thinking of anything else. And a sentence to such work, to work which takes his whole time for itself, leaving him scarcely time to eat and sleep, none for physical exercises in the open air, or the enjoyment of Nature, . . . how can such a sentence help degrading a human being to the level of a brute? (1973, 158)

For Engels, one of the tragedies of industrial working-class life is that the worker "never gets the slightest glimpse of Nature in his large town with his long working-hours" (1973, 275). This perspective is certainly difficult to square with antiecological interpretations of Marx and Engels. Here again, however, the overarching point is that Marx and Engels treat the capitalist development of needs and consumption in dialectical, qualitative and relational terms. While recognizing the *less restricted* forms of human development potentiated by capitalism, they point out how this system's class-based limits on need satisfaction prevent it from realizing this potential qualitatively *or* quantitatively. The stark difference between this approach and Promethean, mass-consumerist interpretations is further illustrated by Marx's critical comments on the kinds of use values capable of embodying value and surplus value.

First of all, "with the development of capitalist production" and increases in labor productivity, "there [is] an increase in the *quantity of goods*, in the *number* of articles that must be sold";

hence "a constant *expansion of the market* becomes a necessity for capitalist production" (1977, 967). Capital's efforts to fulfill this necessity are assisted by value's formal abstraction from the particularity of use value, which means that "the nature of the use value, the particular use value of the commodity is, as such, irrelevant" to capital (1973, 284; cf. Burkett 1999, chap. 7). Since all that matters is the commodity's ability to be profitably vended–to serve as a vehicle for the monetary realization of surplus value–its "use value for society, i.e., the buyers," may be "real or imagined" (1988, 315). Accordingly, capital constantly tries to overcome the limitations its own class relations place on effective demand and "searches for means to spur [workers] on to consumption, to give his wares new charms, to inspire them with new needs by constant chatter etc." (1973, 287). In this way, capitalism's "extension of products and needs falls into *contriving* and ever-*calculating* subservience to inhuman, unnatural and *imaginary* appetites" (1964, 147). The capitalist

> puts himself at the service of the other's most depraved fancies, plays the pimp between him and his need, excites in him morbid appetites, lies in wait for each of his weaknesses . . . all so that he can demand the cash. . . . Industry speculates on the refinement of needs, but it speculates just as much on their *crudeness*, but on their artificially produced crudeness, whose true enjoyment, therefore, is *self-stupefaction*. (148, 153)

With capitalism's crassly commercialized consumption relations, "victories of art" are increasingly "bought by the loss of character," and "production for production's sake appears as its precise opposite . . . not as the development of human productivity; but as the display of material wealth in antithesis to the productive development of the human individual" (Marx 1969, 500; 1994, 109). This alienation of use value represents a further development of the social power of money "as purely abstract wealth, in which every specific use value is extinguished"; in "every individual relation between possessor and commodity," this power tends to convert the individual into "an abstract person, relating to his individuality as totally alien and extraneous"

(Marx 1987, 451). Given that the social power of money is rooted in capital's power over labor and nature in production, it should not be surprising to find Marx relating this alienation of use value to "the absorption of the labour process *in its material character* as a mere moment of the realization process of capital" (1973, 693; emphasis added). Indeed, capital's mechanized "production in enormous mass quantities . . . destroys every connection of the product with the direct need of the producer, and hence with direct use value." Marx insists that this outcome "is already posited in the form of the product's production and in the relations in which it is produced, i.e., that it is produced only as a conveyor of value, and its use value only as condition to that end" (694):

> As the universally necessary form of the product . . . the commodity palpably comes into its own in the large-scale production that emerges in the course of capitalist production. The product becomes increasingly one-sided and *massive in nature*. This imposes upon it a social character, one which is closely bound up with existing social relations, while its immediate use-value for the gratification of the needs of its producer appears wholly adventitious, immaterial and inessential. (1977, 953)

Marx could not have foreseen the precise antiecological forms that capitalism's "increasingly one-sided and massive" production and consumption would eventually take on during the twentieth century. But Marx and Engels did point out the unhealthy disturbances to the natural circulation of matter and the tendency to overstretch (human and extrahuman) natural limits, which inevitably result from the conversion of labor and nature into conditions of competitive monetary accumulation (Burkett 1999, chaps. 7–10). Marx's critical comments on capital's mode of consumption–especially on its artificial creation of needs so that its "mass product" can be "absorbed into commerce" (1977, 953)–certainly bear additional insights into capitalism's fundamentally antiecological character. All of this demonstrates the distorted one-sidedness of the Promethean interpretation, according to which Marx uncritically envisions

life under communism as basically a quantitative enhancement of capitalistic mass production and consumption.

Conclusion

Marx argues that even though capitalism creates the potential for a less restricted form of human development, this potential can only be realized with communism's qualitative transformation of the forces and relations of production developed under capitalism. The Promethean interpretation arbitrarily converts Marx's qualitative vision of less restricted human development into a desocialized, mainly quantitative conception of human progress as mass production and consumption at nature's expense. This false identification ignores Marx's qualitative and class-relational critique of capitalist production and consumption. Perhaps what throws Marx's critics onto the wrong track here is their failure to recognize that the socially antagonistic character of human development, up to the present, stems from its class-exploitative character. By negating the material-scarcity rationale for class exploitation, capitalism negates the historical necessity of such social antagonisms:

> The bourgeois mode of production is the last antagonistic form of the social process of production–antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism but of an antagonism that emanates from the individuals' social conditions of existence–but the productive forces developing within bourgeois society create also the material conditions for a solution of this antagonism. The prehistory of human society accordingly closes with this social formation. (Marx 1970, 21–22)

Although Marx does not make the point explicitly in his 1859 Preface, his analysis of capitalism suggests a correspondence between class antagonisms and antagonistic people-nature relations. It would then follow that capitalism closes the prehistory of human society in the additional sense that it is the last form of human production based on antagonistic people-nature relations. Just as human development under communism will no longer occur at the expense of the majority of individual human beings,

so it will no longer occur at the cost of a vitiation of the natural conditions of human existence.[16] Indeed, given the natural and social character of human beings in Marx's view, these two features of the movement out of human prehistory necessarily coincide (Burkett 1999, chaps. 4 and 14).

Department of Economics
Indiana State University, Terre Haute

NOTES

1. See Foster 1995, 108–9, for a useful set of additional references to Left-Green charges of "Prometheanism" against Marx.

2. In referring to the interpretation held by Marx's ecological critics as "Promethean," I do not mean to endorse the by now standard interpretation of the Promethean myth as representing the productivist and antiecological domination of humanity over nature. As Foster points out, "in Marx's own work, Prometheus is invoked more often as a symbol of revolution than as a symbol of technology"—and it is in the former role that Prometheus "was the predominant cultural hero of the entire Romantic period" (1995, 110). "Indeed, the fact that the very idea of human creativity, as symbolized by the Greek myth of Prometheus, has come to be identified in the eyes of many of today's postmodern critics with crude productivism and the technological subjugation of nature provides a startling indication of the extent to which the dominant world-view of capitalism has penetrated such thinking" (111). Similarly, after a detailed analysis of the Promethean myth and its uses over the centuries, Sheasby concludes that "it is doubtful" whether "the canard of Prometheus as a symbol of economic gigantism or megatechnology . . . could have become commonplace without the context of the cold war" (1999, 34). Despite present terminology, I heartily support these efforts to unbind Prometheus from postmodern criticism.

3. Hence capitalism's "development of the objective conditions of labour appears as a growing power of these objective conditions over living labour, instead of as a growing power of labour" (Marx 1994, 196). For Marx, a key "characteristic of the capitalist production process" is that "the objective conditions of labour confront labour in *alienated* and *independent* form, as powers in their own right" socially represented by capital (196). More below on this point.

4. "When we consider bourgeois society in the long view and as a whole, then the final result of the process of social production always appears as the society itself, i.e. the human being itself in its social relations. . . . The conditions and objectifications of the process are themselves equally moments of it,

and its only subjects are the individuals, but individuals in mutual relationships, which they equally reproduce and produce anew. The constant process of their own movement, in which they renew themselves even as they renew the world of wealth they create" (Marx 1973, 712).

5. The ecological relevance of Marx's vision of "long struggles" for a qualitative transformation of production is indirectly supported by Roy Morrison, who projects that the "struggle for the creation of an ecological commons is the struggle for the building of an ecological democracy—community by community, neighborhood by neighborhood, region by region. It represents the struggle and work of fundamental social transformation from below" (1995, 188).

6. See Noble 1977 and Du Boff 1989 on the history of this process in the United States.

7. As Marx indicates: "With the real subsumption of labour under capital, . . . the development of the productive power of labour takes place, in that the productive forces of social labour are developed, and only at that point does the application of natural forces on a large scale, of science and of machinery, to direct production become possible" (1994, 106).

8. See Levins and Lewontin 1985 for a detailed Marxist critique of the inadequately dialectical, that is, inadequately relational *and* holistic, character of modern scientific theory and practice.

9. See Burkett 1999, chap. 14, for a discussion of the possible role of pre-capitalist technologies in communism's general union of the producers and the conditions of production.

10. The correspondence between the mode of consumption and the mode of production follows from the determinant role of production posited by Marx (1973, 88–100, especially 92). For an illuminating discussion of this aspect of Marx's thinking, see Fine and Harris 1979, 8–12.

11. This in turn follows from the fact that capitalism entails "the supersession of the mode of production in which personal consumption is the main purpose of production, and in which only the surplus is sold as a commodity" (Marx 1988, 69). See Burkett 1999, chaps. 5 and 7.

12. As Marx puts it in the draft of his *Contribution*, the "buying of the [worker's] labour capacity" by the capitalist "naturally places the buyer and the seller in the act of its use in another relationship to each other than that in the buying of objectified labour existing as an object outside the producer" (1987, 506).

13. There is a discernible continuity on this issue from Marx's earliest writings onward. In his Paris Manuscripts of 1844, for example, Marx notes how capitalism "produces sophistication of needs and of their means on the one hand, and a bestial barbarization, a complete, unrefined, abstract simplicity of need, on the other" (1964, 148). Marx's *Capital* similarly refers to "the intimate connexion between the pangs of hunger of the most industrious layers of the working-class, and the extravagant consumption, coarse or refined, of the rich, for which capitalist accumulation is the basis" (1967, 1:657). In a draft of the same work, one finds this passage: "The surplus produce increases in quantity and value with the accumulation of capital; it is therefore possible for an ever greater part to be reproduced in the form of luxury products . . . means of

consumption which do not enter the consumption of the working classes" (1988, 226).

14. Marx's environmental consciousness is evident from passages like the following:

> We shall here merely allude to the material conditions under which factory labour is carried on. Every organ of sense is injured in an equal degree by artificial elevation of the temperature, by the dust-laden atmosphere, by the deafening noise, not to mention danger to life and limb among the thickly crowded machinery. . . . Economy of the social means of production, matured and forced as in a hothouse by the factory system, is turned, in the hands of capital, into systematic robbery of what is necessary for the life of the workman while he is at work, robbery of space, light, air, and of protection to his person against the dangerous and unwholesome accompaniments of the productive process, not to mention the robbery of appliances for the comfort of the workman. (1967, 1:425–27)

15. This illustrates how the "use of products is determined by the social conditions in which the consumers find themselves placed, and these conditions themselves are based on class antagonism" (Marx 1978, 57).

16. "Although at first the development of the capacities of the *human* species takes place at the cost of the majority of human individuals and even classes, in the end it breaks through this contradiction and coincides with the development of the individual" (Marx 1968, 118).

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Marxism and Sustainable Development: The Ecological Limits of Capitalism

Donald Judd

Marx's critique of capital provides us with an important starting point to analyze the possibility of sustainable development under capitalism. But first, what is meant by sustainable development? Some have assumed that sustainable development means the sustainable development of capitalism as an economic system. It is not clear, however, that capitalism is compatible with the central tenets of sustainable development.

Oliver S. Loud, a professor of physical science, defines sustainable development as "development that can continue indefinitely into the human future without generating such constraints as resource depletion, environmental injury, burgeoning human populations, or repression." He goes on to argue that sustainable development "would address the urgent problems of present generations without penalizing future generations" (1991, 49–50).

John Bellamy Foster offers three conditions that must be met if sustainable development is to be achieved: (1) The rate of utilization of renewable resources has to be kept down to the rate of their regeneration; (2) the rate of utilization of nonrenewable resources cannot exceed the rate at which alternative sustainable resources are developed; (3) pollution and habitat destruction cannot exceed the "assimilative capacity of the environment" (1994, 132).

Taken together, these observations offer us a reasonable understanding of sustainable development, one that does not

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accept unquestioningly the sustaining of capitalism as a necessary component of future development.

This is an appropriate place to consider Marx's insights into capitalist production. Marx begins his critique of capital by examining the commodity and its development and movement through the economic system. In that examination, Marx draws some important conclusions that must be considered in reaching an adequate understanding of the problem of sustainable development.

The production of the commodity in the capitalist economic system is predicated on the exploitation of the worker. Value, Marx argues, comes from two things: nature and labor. Supply and demand are only secondary aspects of the market. Without both nature to supply raw materials, and labor to turn those raw materials into socially usable goods, no value is created. Classical economists are not able to explain away this issue. The capitalist utilizes the labor of others to create a certain commodity, with its intrinsic value. When the commodity is sold, the capitalist retains part of that value and pays the laborer a wage, which is necessarily less than the value created by the worker. This social arrangement has particular results.

One result is that the capitalist economy creates wealth that tends to be pooled into the hands of fewer and fewer people. In other words, while capitalism creates wealth, it also creates poverty. Recent trends indicate that the bottom 60 percent of families in America lost ground in terms of income measured in constant dollars between 1977 and 1992, while the top 1 percent saw an average increase in income to the tune of $676,000 a year (Collins 1996, 112–13). Perhaps it is more telling to look at who owns capital-producing wealth. Here the top 10 percent of families own more than 90 percent of such wealth, while the top ½ percent own approximately 50 percent (Kloby 1987, 6). In 1989, some 200 corporations controlled half of the nation's economy. With the frenzied pace of recent corporate mergers, we can only assume that this number is significantly smaller today. Also at that time the economist Thomas Dye estimated that "around 3500 corporate leaders in business [controlled] the bulk of the

economy" (Clark 1989, 349). Again we can only assume that this number has also decreased.

The second result is increasing economic instability for a growing number of workers in our country and around the world. A study in 1984 indicated that 25 percent of working families in the United States fell below the poverty level at least once in ten years (Eitzen 1978, 245). And while the unemployment level is relatively low right now, we are seeing an increase in what are called the working poor: people who work full-time jobs yet still are unable to keep their families out of poverty. The possibility of sustainable economic expansion, according to Federal Reserve Board Chair Allen Greenspan, is grounded in the "atypical restraint on compensation increases [that] appears to be mainly the consequence of greater worker insecurity" (quoted in Chomsky 1999, 104). In other words, as Greenspan acknowledges, the benefits accruing to the corporate world are in direct proportion to the benefits withheld from, and the instability forced upon, the working class.

The third result of the relations of production under capitalism is that the producer of the commodity is confronted by that commodity in the market as an alien object. The commodity does not exist as an objectification of the worker's creative capacity. The worker's labor is controlled by managers and technocrats with only token input from workers. In other words, the worker is alienated from his or her creative expression by the relations of production required by the capitalist system.

The fourth result is that because the capitalist must use the worker as nothing more than another commodity, as an interchangeable tool, people also experience a degree of alienation from one another. Society is seen as atomized, and individuals are seen as intrinsically independent of one another rather than as integrally related social creatures. This atomized view of society, once accepted, justifies the abandonment of workers during periods of recession. Just as commodities are produced to realize greater profits rather than to meet human needs, workers are employed to generate more profits, not to provide workers with the necessary means to flourish as physically healthy and

intellectually well-rounded citizens capable of meaningful interaction with one another and significant involvement in a democratic system.

Human beings are also alienated from nature, but where does this alienation stem from? One thing that contributes to our alienation from nature is our notion of private property. The philosophical justification for private property comes from John Locke. Locke's argument goes something like this: First, there are the commons, which belong to no one and to everyone. The implication is that the commons are that which is required for our survival; this is why they belong to everyone. By virtue of being a citizen of the planet, each individual has a right to the commons. So how do the commons get converted into private property? Locke contends that when someone commingles his or her labor with nature–for example, clearing land, preparing the soil, and cultivating a crop–the commons have then been converted into private property (1928, 65–69). But I argue that Locke is guilty of a *non sequitur*. It *does* follow that the laborer has a right to the fruits of his or her labor–the crop itself. But it *does not* follow that what was once necessary for the survival of all–the land or natural resources–is now the private property of an individual. This is much like the situation in a lifeboat. A ship goes down at sea, and some people make their way into a lifeboat. On board they find a supply of food and water that will keep them alive. After a short time, a few more people are pulled into the boat. The question now arises: Do the newcomers have any right to the supplies on board? Almost anyone today would argue that the newcomers have as much right to the supplies as those who arrived first. Yet we have no problem excluding people from the natural resources of the world today–simply because they came on board later in the voyage.

Nature is viewed under capitalism as nothing more than another commodity that must yield to the logic of capital. Nature is seen, not as something necessary for our survival, but rather as a free gift to the capitalist in the form of tap or sink: to be used up, or filled up with waste. From the perspective of capital, the efficient use of raw materials is not as important as the efficient production of profit. For example, the Enron corporation has

recently constructed power plants that were purposely built to be inefficient. The reasoning was this: inefficient power plants were cheaper to build than more efficient ones. Once they were in place, because they were relatively inexpensive to build, they could sit idly, producing no power until a power shortage occurred, when prices for energy are traditionally higher. At that time, workers could be employed to operate the plants, reaping high profits for stockholders. The workers, however, are out of a job as soon as the demand for energy declines. Such thinking illustrates the capitalist notion of nature as a free gift to be used without any regard for the needs of future generations.

Consider the banning by California of the cancer-causing gasoline additive MTBE (Methyl Teriaty Butyl Ether), which "has been leaking into the ground water, lakes, and some 10,000 wells throughout California" (Hightower 1999, 4). Because of chapter 11 of NAFTA, which prohibits governments from interfering with the profit-making potential of investors, California will have to rescind its new law, or the U.S. taxpayers will have to pay as much as a billion dollars to Methanex, Inc., a Canadian firm that produces one of the components in the additive. According to this logic, the pursuit of profit supersedes the need for a healthy environment. Nature becomes a sink into which corporations can dump toxins with impunity, regardless of the impact on human life.

The general acceptance of the sanctity of private property contributes to ecological problems. The owners claim the right to dispose of or do as they please with the natural resources they possess. And apart from a few laws that protect certain types of resources or land, such as those to protect wetlands, nothing compels the owner to consider privately owned natural resources from the perspective of the health of the ecosystem, let alone from the perspective of our survival. And of course when the commons are too dispersed or too encompassing to be owned by an individual–such as the air, streams, rivers, lakes, and oceans–then capitalists see nothing wrong with shifting part of the cost of the treatment of waste and pollution onto the commons that still do belong to everyone, thus forcing us to

subsidize their private enterprise with public funds when the government begins cleaning up some of these areas.

Now the idea and practice of private property have been around in different cultures for a long time. And it must be admitted that other cultures with other economic systems have dramatically impacted the earth. But it is only with the advent of capitalism and the industrial revolution that we have arrived at a time where we can potentially change the earth to such a point that our survival is in question. Barry Commoner has developed a formula for environmental impact. Environmental Impact = Population × Affluence × Technology (1972, 41–46). Commoner shows that population accounts for 12 to 20 percent of the total environmental impact. Technology by itself does not have to stand as a threat to the environment. Unfortunately, most technological development is directed by corporations, for the production of goods, and by governments, for the production of weapons, with little or no regard for environmental impact.

But when Technology and Population are coupled with Affluence, we now have the means to impact the world on a global scale in a relatively short time. And capitalism has created vast amounts of wealth which, if we are to avoid economic down turns, must be put to work garnering more profits. Traditionally that has been done through the continual production and consumption of goods as the market penetrates and commodifies further the human experience, but some are quick to remind us that we are now in the information age, as if we have left the industrial age behind. This, however, does not mean that we no longer produce consumption goods that require a depletion of natural resources and usually result in further pollution of the ecosystem. Rather, it means that many industrial jobs have moved to countries with weaker environmental laws and cheaper labor forces. We are producing more consumer goods now than ever before. And the delivery of services and information associated with the information age requires at least the consumption of energy and usually the consumption of other resources as well.

This brings me to my final point about capitalism. It is imperative, since production is only for profit and not for human

needs, that the economy increase its production every year in order to realize greater profit. A slow year leads to recession. A year of no growth leads to depression. The system left to itself tends to spiral into ever-deeper depression, because as the demand for goods declines, fewer workers are needed to produce goods or provide services. The result is that more people are pushed into unemployment. There are fewer people who can afford goods and services, leading to a further decline in the production of goods, a further increase in unemployment, and a general exacerbation of the situation. Or as Robert Heilbroner points out,

> a "stationary" capitalism is subject to a falling rate of profit as the investment opportunities of the system are used up. Hence, in the absence of an expansionary frontier, the investment drive slows down and a deflationary spiral of incomes and employment begins. (1980, 100)

So what has all of this to do with environmentalism and sustainable development? The need for continual growth in a capitalist economic system is central to our concerns. Growth in such a system is not merely additive, but rather exponential. You may remember the example of a piece of grain and a checkerboard used to explain exponential growth. If you place one piece of grain on the first square and then double that for the next square and double that doubling for the third square and so on, by the time you get to the sixty-fourth square you will have "approximately 500 times the 1976 annual worldwide harvest of wheat!" (Clark 1989, 44).

We do not experience a doubling every year, but with a 7 percent annual growth rate (which is still higher than usual), we would have a doubling every ten years. Now imagine that the entire world was made of oil or coal that we were using for energy production. How long would it take at a 7 percent annual growth rate to consume the entire planet? The answer is somewhere between 350 and 360 years. An interesting aspect of exponential growth is that 10 years before we had used up the entire planet, there would still be half of it left. When we take into consideration exponential economic growth, the claims

made by many that we still have plenty of oil, coal, or other nonrenewable resources become suspect, to say the least. When it comes to minerals and metals, many believe that recycling is the answer; however, keep in mind that we cannot recycle 100 percent of any metal or mineral. Some part is always lost. Moreover, recycling is energy intensive.

The problem boils down to this: Does it make sense to believe that, in a world of finite resources, we can continue to produce and consume goods (not to mention the pollution concomitant to that production and consumption) exponentially for an unlimited time into the future? The answer to this question, I believe, is NO! The logic of capitalism is contradictory to the logic of the ecosystem. Moreover, the problem of growth is not something that can be fine tuned out of capitalism. Continual, exponential growth is the structural imperative of the capitalist economy.

Many studies suggest that serious ecological crises are endemic to our present course of action. *Our Common Future*, a three-year study on environment and development sponsored by the United Nations, called on all nations to integrate sustainable development into their goals. Within the business community itself, the prestigious Business Council for Sustainable Development has acknowledged that "[w]e cannot continue in our present methods of using energy, managing forests, farming, protecting plant and animal species, managing urban growth, and producing industrial goods. We certainly cannot continue to reproduce our own species at the present rate" (quoted in Sweezy et al. 1992). Elsewhere, Professor Loud argues that significant changes must be made within the next five generations, of which three are alive now (1991, 53). And *The Global 2000 Report to the President* concedes that "[l]ong lead times are required for effective action. If decisions are delayed until the problems become worse, options for effective action will be severely reduced" (5). Interestingly enough, the Business Council for Sustainable Development made one startling yet frank admission:

> The painful truth is that the present is a relatively comfortable place for those who have reached positions of

> mainstream political or business leadership. That is the crux of the problem of sustainable development, and perhaps the main reason why there has been great acceptance of it in principle, but less concrete actions to put it into practice; many of those with the powers to effect the necessary changes have the least motivation to alter the status quo that gave them that power. (quoted in Sweezy et al. 1992)

However, as *Our Common Future* points out, the kind of change that must take place is not a top-down change, but rather a change from the bottom up. Marxism gives us the tools to understand the problems we face today, but it does not give us the masses to initiate change. We cannot force-march the masses to challenge the status quo; rather we must make ourselves available to the masses, tapping into their concerns, and through education showing them how their concerns are tied into the whole capitalist enterprise. Broad coalitions, consisting of groups concerned not only with the environment and class issues, but also with such issues as gender, race, health care, and a living wage, are needed to generate the social pressure necessary for meaningful change. We cannot arrogantly demand a position of leadership; rather, we must serve the needs of the masses, for if authentic change is to come, it must come from the people.

Department of English
University of Nevada, Reno

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Grassroots Organizing, Coalition Building, and Electoral Politics: Building a Movement for Progressive Social Change in Nevada

Bob Fulkerson

When I am introduced as an Eagle Scout and a former staffer for Senator Paul Laxalt, a leading Nevada conservative who served in the U.S. Senate in the Reagan era, it really helps disarm audiences like the Rotary Club. Later on in my talk they find out that I am also a queer leftist! I should like to touch on my personal involvement in grassroots organizing, and also address the nature of statewide progressive coalitions, such as the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, which I helped build, and what we are up against in our efforts to achieve significant economic justice and social change.

From the White House to the Congress, and from the Nevada legislature to Reno city hall, extremely well-financed, well-entrenched corporate and special interests view the land and people as currency to be manipulated in order to extract the greatest profit possible. To change this, both politics as usual and conventional economics must be challenged and transformed.

By "politics as usual," I mean the way offices from town council to president are sold to the highest bidder, which creates a corporate elite that finances campaigns running the show. Public financing of elections will change this.

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By "conventional economics," I mean the corporate capitalism that has caused mass species extinction and islands of wealth in seas of poverty. It has created a world in which governments spend a trillion dollars a year on armaments that could trigger a nuclear war while twelve to fifteen million children perish every year of malnutrition and preventable diseases. Ameliorating child suffering would require resources amounting to no more than those spent on armaments in a week or two.

Changing conventional economics and politics as usual is an overwhelming, almost impossible task that will take a long time. But as Wes Watkins of the Land Institute in Kansas says, "If you can accomplish your dream in your lifetime, you are not dreaming big enough."

An organizer knows how to cut issues. It may not be possible for me to have even a small impact on global capitalism, but I can get involved in how my community and my state treat their most vulnerable people, the land, and the water, and how they divide the public wealth.

I want to talk about my small role in helping to shape a movement in Nevada that challenges politics as usual and conventional economics, and the fun I have had in being a paid professional activist for both a grassroots environmental organization and a statewide coalition, and also about some of the issues we work on.

In terms of my personal involvement in progressive social-change organizing, I began college as a Reagan Republican in 1980. But I was raised with good left leanings. When my dad was in Vietnam in 1970, my mom hung a banner from our house that said "Give Peace a Chance," much to the chagrin of our conservative working-class neighbors.

My conservative Republicanism changed in the early 1980s as I learned more about the MX missile system and the arms race, my mom's involvement with the battered women's movement, and finally U.S. intervention in Central America. But the most significant turning point was the MX, which would have turned five million acres of the Great Basin into a massive nuclear weapons theme park. The Air Force proposed digging an underground railroad system to shuttle thousands of nuclear

missiles around hidden from Soviet attack. Our family ranch in central Nevada, where I spent the best days of my childhood, would have been destroyed. As a fifth-generation Nevadan, I didn't take kindly to military officials who cared nothing about how their plans would destroy Indian lands here, suck up our precious water resources, and transform rural communities into military outposts. I read more about the MX and the arms race and had no choice but to fight militarism and the nuclear weapons industry. This is a personal example of what I would later would learn is the key motivating force behind getting individuals involved in organizing (as Saul Alinsky observed)–self-interest.

After volunteering for a short time for Citizen Alert, a statewide environmental watchdog organization founded in 1975 in response to federal plans for nuclear waste dumping at the Nevada Test Site, I was hired as the executive director, a job I worked from 1984 to 1994. I worked with ranchers, miners, Native Americans, and environmentalists on land and water issues such as nuclear-weapons testing, and fought military expansion on public lands and airspace.

One of our most adventurous campaigns was closing down the Navy's largest U.S. bombing range, called Bravo 20, in central Nevada. We learned the Navy had been bombing it for years without any legal authority and that it was a sacred Paiute spiritual area. We worked with rural Nevadans, and Paiute and Shoshone Indians from the area, and walked onto the range just before scheduled bombing training runs were to begin. We notified the Navy once we set up a protest camp and forced them to stop dropping live 2000-pound bombs on this beautiful desert area. We spent time in Churchill County jail, received national press coverage, and built strong relationships with rural and indigenous people.

This is an example of one of the ad hoc coalitions we developed during my ten years at Citizen Alert. But all the single- issue coalitions we built, whether to stop damaging water-importation projects or new coal-fired generating plants, dissolved once the issue was won.

Five years ago, I left Citizen Alert to help start the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN) because I felt compelled to work on broader issues affecting the people and economy here, such as civil rights, economic justice, and worker health and safety. I still cared about environmental "bird and bunny" issues, but I could not stand by and watch the continued exploitation of low-wage workers, discrimination against gays and lesbians, and policies in my state with disproportionate impact on poor people, women, people of color, and immigrants.

When I was at Citizen Alert, we had fairly good successes working across issue lines in the Nevada legislature with other progressives, most notably in the women's community, in fighting the proposed high-level radioactive-waste dump at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Citizen Alert, since I as its director was an openly gay man, also assisted the gay and lesbian community in passing legislation to repeal Nevada's archaic sodomy law that criminalized gay sex in the privacy of the bedroom.

Yet we at best suspected, at worst despised, labor unions, which we looked upon as wanting to continue nuclear-weapons testing, nuclear-waste dumping, and every other noxious project foisted upon the state solely to create jobs for union members. Nevertheless we did work with some construction-trade unions in opposing power plants built with nonunion labor. Although we in the environmental community had some relationships with other various elements of the progressive community, they were spotty and shallow.

At the end of the 1993 legislative session, I talked with the lobbyist for low-income women and the League of Women Voters about starting a progressive statewide coalition that would become a permanent vehicle for moving a social-justice agenda in Nevada. We received seed funding from Maya Miller, a well-known progressive philanthropist in Nevada, to do exploratory meetings and lay the groundwork over the next year. In March 1994, PLAN officially incorporated in the state of Nevada with a membership roster of twelve organizations from the gay and lesbian community, labor, women, and environmentalists.

Five years later, our coalition has grown to thirty-eight member organizations and now includes organizations of low-income

people and Latinos, groups that PLAN helped start since they were not represented at our table.

PLAN was created out of the clear need to initiate communication among groups and constituencies that have been shut out of public policy making by monied and corporate interests. No statewide coalition of progressive organizations or leaders existed in Nevada before PLAN. The environmental community did not communicate with the antipoverty advocates, who did not communicate with the labor community, which did not communicate with women's groups, which did not talk to the native American tribes, which did not communicate with the gay and lesbian community. All that has changed with the arrival of PLAN. It is no longer unusual to have environmentalists show up at prounion rallies, or labor leaders testify alongside of low-income advocates.

PLAN assists our member groups in working together in building bridges across differences of class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and region, as well as in working together to build power. PLAN provides a combination of resources and training to develop the capacity to mobilize a broad, diverse membership base of progressives whose passion and voices cannot be ignored by the powers that be in Nevada.

We have a solid track record of initiating organizations to empower traditionally vulnerable populations. PLAN assisted the progressive Latino community in creating Latinos for Political Education, and the low-income women's community in starting the Nevada Empowered Women's Project. Both organizations are now fully staffed and autonomous, and actively participate in PLAN. We are currently in the beginning stages of creating a youth organization to stimulate youth involvement in PLAN and its member groups.

One of the more dramatic and successful campaigns we have won recently was precipitated by a terrible explosion at a dynamite-production factory in January 1998 in which four workers were killed and over a dozen workers injured. The plant employed undocumented workers from Mexico, provided them little if any training, and paid them by the piece to work

eighteen-hour shifts making dynamite charges for use in Nevada's mines.

PLAN brought together surviving workers and their families from the plant, environmentalists, Latino immigrants, and low-income advocates for the first time. On the steps of the county courthouse in Reno, we issued a warrant for arrest of Sierra Chemical Company, the plant owners, and received statewide media attention. We bird-dogged every step of the state's 'investigation into the accident. We successfully lobbied for comprehensive worker health-and-safety legislation. While other states were pondering or passing "English only" laws, Nevada passed a law to require companies to train workers in their native language.

Another successful campaign involved passing legislation to protect the rights of gays and lesbians in the workplace, making Nevada the twelfth state in the nation to make it illegal to fire people simply because they are gay or lesbian. Gay-rights groups in Washington and Oregon, two states known for being progressive, have been stymied in their attempts to pass this kind of legislation. We were successful in Nevada because under PLAN, we had not only gay activists, but labor, trial lawyers, environmentalists, and the women's community actively supporting the bill.

For our ongoing work, we are organized into several committees representing a cross section of the constituencies we work with to inform the organizing and program work of the coalition. One of these is our Economic Justice Committee, which is broadly cut to also include access to health care.

Exploitation of low-wage workers is a painful and bitter issue in Nevada. In Reno, it is not unusual for two parents to work full time yet still remain below the federal poverty level, thanks to the basement wage levels in the casino industry. While the cost of living in northern Nevada is above national levels, the wages are not.

The two lowest-paying sectors, retail and hotel/gaming, employ almost half of all workers in the Reno/Sparks area. Both industries pay below the average weekly wage in the county. In Las Vegas, a union town, the hotel/gaming wage is $117/week

higher than in Reno, even though the cost of living there is significantly lower than in northern Nevada.

Poverty rates on Nevada's twenty-one Native American colonies and reservations ranges from 20 to 90 percent. Nearly one-fifth of Hispanics in Nevada live in poverty, and half of all poor Hispanics in the state are under 18 years old.

Nevada has the highest suicide rate in the country, including the highest rates for teens, adults, and the elderly–almost twice as high as the next leading state. We are the highest in binge drinking, with the most alcohol consumption, both youth and adult. Nevada has one of the highest rates in the nation of teen pregnancies. We are fifth in the nation in terms of adolescents killed by firearms. In tobacco use and drug abuse, we are in the top three states.

Why does Nevada lead in these bad social indicators? A big reason is that the state is stingy when it comes to providing services to deal with the causes. Nevada ranks dead last of all the fifty states in per capita health-care spending. Nevada's incarceration rate remains among the nation's highest. The high incarceration rate itself imposes an additional burden on the state budget that could be ameliorated if the causes of such problems were addressed.

PLAN coordinates its coalition partners to exert political pressure on legislators, the governor, and other decision makers who deal with these issues. We use every organizing tool at our disposal to make our point, including the media, research, publications, lobbying, picketing, and protesting. Indeed, some of our members were ejected from the legislature during the last session during a protest to urge the governor to support mental-health reform. We are laying the groundwork for a living-wage campaign and actively support efforts of organized labor to increase the number of Nevadans who belong to unions, which is key to raising wage and benefit levels of low-wage workers.

Another committee of PLAN is our Sustainability/Sprawl Committee. A recent national report rated Las Vegas as number 1 and Reno as number 9 for the worst American cities in failing to deal with urban sprawl. In northern Nevada, the region's main deer herd has declined from a high of nearly 12,000 in 1963 to

about 2,400 in 1994; 240 species of birds native to our area are listed as threatened or endangered. No mechanisms are currently in place to preserve habitat in our region, nor is there a dedicated-funding source for open-space acquisition. Release of toxic wastes into the local environment has been steadily increasing, and it nearly doubled between 1989 and 1995.

Finally, we are the only state in the United States being considered as a dump for thousands of tons of radioactive garbage from other states. Under the guise of studying the Yucca Mountain site, the federal government–under enormous pressure from the nuclear-power industry–has completed excavating a massive underground storage facility. Most Nevadans (70 to 80 percent in polls over the past ten years), with the bitter memory of above-ground bomb testing here in the fifties and sixties, remain adamantly opposed. The federal government has been very clever, however, in making lucrative financial deals with supporters of the dump at the county and city level, and even within the University of Nevada system.

PLAN is working to address these issues by getting many people–not just environmentalists–involved. We also apply a justice analysis to issues like sprawl by showing how the people who can least afford it are paying more taxes for decaying infrastructure while the wealthy pay relatively less taxes and enjoy better schools, roads, and other public services.

Rush Limbaugh would accuse us of "inciting class warfare." So be it. The wealthy conservatives have done a great job of scapegoating, blaming problems on poor people. We need to urge people not to look at the bottom of the economic ladder for the cause of economic injustices, but to look up.

Finally, a key public-policy issue now and in the years to come will be how the state reacts to the massive increase in the nonwhite population, projected to be nearly half the state's population in the next twenty-five years. The state gave up official racism only a generation ago. Reno and Las Vegas are very segregated cities, with little mixing of communities of color and whites. In Reno and Las Vegas, there have been numerous complaints by people of color about police misconduct. Although

communities of color currently represent nearly ten percent of the state's population, the county commissions, city councils, and the state legislature are nearly all white. Building a progressive movement with a strong commitment to racial justice is paramount here.

PLAN requires all board and staff members to participate in at least one dismantling racism training lasting two and a half days. We do not want PLAN's structure, staffing, or decision making to replicate the racism of the dominant culture. Such replication is difficult to avoid, given how racism pervades all U.S. institutions–including the nonproft sector. But it is essential, because racism is the Achilles heel of the progressive movement in America.

Given these enormous problems, no single-issue organizing campaign could do the job. The people in power–here and in the global corporate arena–are well served by a system in which decisions are based on short-term economic gain and in which the decision makers are beholden to them for their reelection.

Although the names are different, the political reality is that special financial and corporate interests dominate international markets, the Congress, the Nevada legislature, and the Reno city hall. Public-spirited and dedicated politicians exist, but they are rare exceptions to the rule. The vast majority are beholden to the corporations and businesses that finance their campaigns, and must, even if reluctantly, do the corporations' bidding in order to get reelected.

And their bidding is not to advance a progressive agenda that would help poor people get good jobs and health care, or that would protect the environment, as we have seen. But progressive coalitions have been formed in over half the states, and a grassroots base remains committed to keeping up the fight to organize, take power, and create significant economic and social justice.

Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Reno, Nevada

The Need for a Working-Class Environmentalism

Virginia Warner Brodine

A great deal has been written about the Marxist theory of alienation, some of it heavily psychological and completely cut loose from the theory's roots in the private ownership of the means of production. Most writers have focused on the alienation of workers from their own work, to the exclusion of the alienation of workers from nature, although that was also addressed by Marx and Engels and the two are indissolubly linked.

In 1844, Marx wrote:

> The worker can create nothing without *nature,* without the *sensuous external world.* It is the material on which his labour is realised, in which it is active, from which and by means of which it produces.
>
> But just as nature provides labor with [the] *means of life* in the sense that labour cannot *live* without objects on which to operate, on the other hand, it also provides the *means of life* in the more restricted sense, i.e., the means for the physical subsistence of the *worker* himself. (1975, 273)

The process by which capitalism removes the worker from the natural source of the objects on which to operate, and from nature's direct subsistence is starkly revealed today in Central American countries. There subsistence agriculture once kept people alive. Overtaken by the world market, people have

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become landless laborers producing crops for that market, and although they are close to the natural source of the grain, the fruit, the vegetables, and the flowers they produce, they have no control over these products. When the market slumps, they have neither the work nor the land to keep them alive.

In industry, the natural source of the objects on which labor operates is further removed, and when jobs are lost, the old ability to rely on subsistence from nature is long gone. In the depression of the 1930s, while people in the cities were starving, heaps of potatoes in Idaho were dyed purple to keep people from eating them, and California fruit was stacked and burned to keep the prices up. Fruits and vegetables were regarded as commodities that had been overproduced, rather than as food for the hungry.

The social legislation that was the outgrowth of mass struggle in that period began to provide a money source of subsistence for the unemployed and the elderly. These measures articulated the right of workers to subsistence even when not working, and were, in essence, an important effort to close the gap capitalism creates when it interposes private ownership and capitalist production between people and the subsistence nature can provide.

At each stage of history, as Marx and Engels said in another discussion of the interaction of production and nature, "there is found a materialist result: a sum of productive forces, an historically created relation of individuals to nature" (Marx and Engels 1985, 59).

It is essential that Marxists look at the historically created relation of the worker to nature that has developed in the last 150 years. We need to examine how capitalism's use of productive forces has intensified and deepened the alienation of labor and how it may affect the struggle for social change. This brief presentation can do no more than open the subject for discussion.

In the manufacturing sector, alienation has reached the point that nature appears to have nothing to do with the work. Those workers who wish to have a connection with nature think of it as something apart, which they must seek out when they are not working.

The objects on which to operate in a factory often pass through a variety of processes that further obscure their initial

source in nature. We talk of "man-made" or "artificial" materials as if they did not originate in the oil that feeds the petrochemical industry. Workers in one country may be assembling parts manufactured in another, with the energy operating the machines coming from a third. The "high tech" industry seems to function in a different realm from the rocks that supply the silicon for its chips.

The extractive industries appear to be closer to nature, yet the logger cannot fell a tree or the coal miner dig coal unless hired to do so, and neither the trees nor the coal can provide the worker's living without that job. Farmworkers in the factories in the field are in the same boat. Even the farm family's relationship to the soil that provides its living is dependent on machinery and chemicals, on a massive social division of labor, and on the prices in the world market.

These are all further intensifications of the alienation noted by Marx. Beyond these are some aspects of capitalist production that have changed markedly since Marx's day. Neither in his discussion of alienation, nor in his discussion of machinery, did he pay much attention to what he referred to as "natural forces"–meaning in his day primarily the energy of coal, harnessed by the steam engine. Although he noted that machinery required the substitution of natural forces for human energy, he referred to the contribution to production of these forces as "gratuitous" (Marx 1967, 386, 388). Certainly, the cost of their effect on nature and efforts to control it was scarcely observable in the mid-nineteenth century.

As the extraction from nature and the use of sources of energy–coal, oil, gas, and uranium–have increased exponentially, a changed relation of productive forces to nature has been revealed. As Engels observed toward the end of that century, referring to our "conquests" of nature in general, "Each of them, it is true, has in the first place the consequences on which we counted, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects" (Engels 1940, 292).

The use of energy, for example, has had the intended result of making possible ever more production and ever more profits, but also the "quite different, unforeseen" effects of producing

emissions that are polluting the air we breathe and destabilizing the climate of the globe. The same applies to many manufacturing and waste-disposal processes that harm the workers in the shop, pollute the communities in which they are located, and move across the world in wind and water.

This takes us to the heart of the historically created relation of individuals, of our entire society, to nature in our own time. Because of capitalist ownership of all the resources of nature, and because of capitalism's drive toward growth, production has been destabilizing, poisoning, and exhausting nature, thus interfering with its ability to continue to support the very economic system that relies on it, while simultaneously destroying it. Capitalism has become an unsustainable system.

One sector of industry may perceive a self-interest in environmental change, but that will not basically alter the drive of the system. The insurance industry, for example, has found its costs increasing as global warming has increased the number and intensity of storms. Although its spokespeople are willing to argue for a lessening of the emissions of the gasses responsible for the warming, their immediate reaction is to raise the cost or cut the benefits of storm insurance.

In the long run the danger is to the entire human race, but this danger has particular force for the working class. The cost of production is rising through the increased expense of extracting energy, the scarcity of some materials, the cost of environmental controls, and the climatic chaos of global warming. Corporations adjust by cutting the cost of labor, abandoning nature in one part of the world only to exploit it more intensely in another, grasping more tightly its private ownership of every aspect of nature and its political power to place the burden on the working class.

The working class has an immediate need to challenge the "right" of management to use workers as guinea pigs, subjecting them to thousands of new, untested chemical compounds every year. It has a long-term need to replace a system that requires people to work in order to live, but denies them any voice in how the production in which they are involved affects their own lives and the future life of their class. In effect, it requires them to work against their own interest.

Capitalism places workers in the untenable position of having to choose between the right to live today and the right to live tomorrow. The historic task of the working class, based on its exploitation by capitalism, to replace that system with socialism now has additional urgency.

Thus the need for a working-class environmentalism has emerged, an environmentalism embodying both immediate reform and systemic change. Environmental issues have become part of the class struggle. Yet workers in their unions and even in Communist parties around the world have been slow to recognize this need. This should not be surprising, considering the long alienation of the worker from nature.

Society's dominant ideas–which are of course, capitalist class ideas–reinforce alienation. Environmental issues are regarded as something apart. Environmental organizations assume that their issues are nonclass issues.

Even more basic is that intense and ever-present need for a job. Workers know that the claim that they are free to choose their jobs is false. If a plant closes or a mine shuts down, they are "free" for a period of searching for another job, and finding one may require uprooting a family, losing ties with fellow workers and within a community. The plant may move abroad to tap the reserve army of the unemployed that now exists on a world scale. In that case the plant is gone forever, taking jobs with it and increasing the pool of unemployed at home.

Unions have rightly emphasized that every worker has a *right* to a job. In practice, this often means the right to *the* job the worker now holds. A union will fight against the company to protect the jobs of its members, but may fight as an ally to that same company if convinced that this factory or this industry is threatened by environmental change and that jobs will be lost. Yet those jobs may be in an industry, and certainly in a system, that is undermining the future jobs, the future ability to live of themselves, their class, and their fellow human beings.

Because workers must cling to their jobs, they do not want to admit that in doing so they are spending their lives doing something damaging to their own interests and their own future. When environmentalists challenge a whole industry, it is only

natural that holding onto their jobs leads workers to defend the industry's usefulness, to deny the charge that it is harmful. This is happening to coal miners who see their whole industry threatened by claims that burning coal is one of the main causes of global warming. The United Mine Workers AFL-CIO has accepted the denial of global warming put forward by industry-bought scientists because it is a defense against the loss of jobs. In the wood products industry as well, from logging to paper manufacturing, industry public relations has convinced many workers that the environmentalists who call for change are the enemy.

Military production was the first industry whose conversion to socially useful and environmentally benign products and processes was proposed. In this case, the peace movement has been more involved than the environmental movement. The Machinists' Union (IAM AFL-CIO) has struggled with the problem for years. Two writers on the subject summarize the reasons for the success or failure of various efforts:

> Unless people have a realistic expectation that military losses will be replaced by comparable, secure jobs, they remain hostage to the military economy. (MacDougall and Rose 1998, 337)

The Labor Party Program adopted in 1996 rejected "the false choice of jobs or the environment" but wound up supporting change in "what we produce and how we produce . . . if and only if the livelihoods of working people . . . are fully protected." Protection was to be provided by a Just Transition Income Support Program "paid for by taxes on corporate polluters." This would finance full income and benefits for workers displaced by changes in production for environmental reasons as these workers make the difficult transition to alternative work (Labor Party 1996, 86–87).

Although the Labor Party acknowledges the need of workers for "a clean and safe environment," the action plank of the program is basically defensive, protecting jobs against change coming from outside. The implication is that jobs are more important than the environment. The point is not to blame unions

or the Labor Party for inadequate support of environmental protection, nor to blame the environmental movement for failing to take the jobs question into account. There have been some positive moves by both of great importance, but these are outside the scope of our present discussion.

The point here is that workers must fight both for their right to live today and their right to live tomorrow. A working-class environmentalism is needed that recognizes this fact of life under capitalism and realizes that production changes for environmental reasons can be in the self-interest of workers. Rather than a defensive stance, its starting point would be fighting for jobs in environmentally sound production. Instead of reluctant acceptance of production changes for the sake of nature, with a Band-Aid over the resulting wound, it would recognize and plan for the necessary production changes in each industry and the jobs this would supply, with attention to the needs of workers in the transition from one job to another. Such a labor-based environmentalism could be a powerful force for the kind of environmental change and the jobs we need.

Actually, two other planks in the Labor Party program lead in this direction and are more positive steps toward environmental change than the environmental plank. One deals with occupational safety and health hazards, and includes such demands as the testing of all chemicals for their impacts on human health and the environment before their introduction into the workplace; advance notice to unions before such introduction; and union power to block their introduction. Another plank, "Reclaiming the Workplace," demands a labor role in shaping the development and implementation of technology. This, too, deals with the need for worker power over the work environment (Labor Party 1996, 87).

Every effort to increase worker power is fought by the bosses as an encroachment on their right to run their businesses. When workers take even small steps toward reclaiming their work relationship to nature, it will shake a fundamental pillar of private ownership.

That means a hard struggle—one that cannot be fully won under capitalism—and is all the more reason why a working-class

environmentalism integrated into the class struggle is a crucial need of our times.

Roslyn, Washington

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Labor Organizing in a Nonstatic Workforce

Jonathan Isler

In the social-scientific literature of work and social movements is an assumption that groups of workers occupy static positions in their jobs, making the task of organizing them a straightforward one. Indeed, there is good reason to assume that this is often the case, as many employers want their employees to work for them far into the future. Although the decreasing incidence of lifelong commitment of employers to their workers in this country and in others during the past thirty years has led many to question this assumption, it is still clear that most work sites have relatively static conditions. Most workers who are around one month are still around the next; more importantly, the concept of "career" leads people to believe that workers will work in the occupation they choose until they retire, die, or are downsized or fired. In the task of organizing workers, therefore, the notion of a static workforce has usually been taken for granted.

Two exceptions can be noted to these assumptions: changes at a work site during the different seasons of a given year, and long-term changes over a period of years. Seasonal laborers often move from one setting to another over the course of the year, but it is usually assumed that they are permanent or career seasonal workers. Little consideration has been paid to the possibility that workers will leave their jobs en masse because of career advances.

Graduate student employees indeed seem to occupy both of these categories at once, with their work patterns reflecting both

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seasonal and long-term career changes. Since they are employed on a quarter-by-quarter (or semester-by-semester) basis, a great discontinuity arises in the way they occupy the workplace. A graduate student who is a teaching assistant for the fall and winter quarters may find that there is no available employment within the department in the spring. Each quarter brings a new assignment, a new professor to work with, and typically new chores, work hours, and schedules as well. With graduate students continually doing research, completing course work, graduating, or even dropping out of school, there is rarely a time that the same work is being done by the same person from one year to the next. In the words of one graduate student in the Human and Community Development department at the University of California, Davis: "I support a union [here at UC Davis], but I'm leaving [after the school year] so I think it's irrelevant." In essence, the graduate students' workplace and organizing conditions are dynamic rather than static.

A graduate student employee will not make a career of being a teaching or research assistant. Built into the work arrangement between the student and the university is the assumption that he or she will graduate (or otherwise leave the school) after a certain amount of time and will go on to work in other universities, in the government, in the private sphere, or elsewhere. The ultimate destination of the vast majority of graduate students is away from the particular university at which they are working currently, and those who do remain always have different job titles once they have graduated. Built into the work arrangement is a sense of impermanence and transcendence that pervades all work-related decisions made by both the student and the school's administration and faculty. It is abundantly clear that the strategies of organizing graduate student employees cannot take for granted ideas about permanence and career trajectories.

In order to organize such a group successfully, a tacit understanding of the structural surroundings of these workers is necessary in order to thwart the efforts of those who do not want this group to organize, namely the university's administration. It is my goal here to illustrate how the singular case of graduate student employees demonstrates that not only working

organizations, but other social movements must develop strategies to deal with memberships that are in flux or transition. Any social movement that assumes its membership is in stasis when it is in fact an ever-changing body will learn quickly that strategies for organization must be adapted to better fit the more dynamic setting.

Most importantly, I am interested in mapping the possibility of organizing such a group in the face of stark opposition, and to address the following questions: Can a collective consciousness be built under such conditions of transition and opposition? Why are some group members more amenable to the idea of group organization than others? Among the eligible population of graduate student employees, who supports unionization and who does not? And why or why not?

University administrators have relied upon notions of *mentoring* and *apprenticeship*, and have defined graduate student employees as students, rather than employees, in order to deny the right of these nonemployees to unionize. They also argue that graduate students are not workers in the same way as others employed at the university, and therefore should not have the right to unionize. In fact, the administration's lawyers put forth the following argument: Because the vast majority of the individuals supporting the petition [to form a union on campus] are in positions which are barred from organizing under the Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act, it is inappropriate to consider those individuals in determining whether there is sufficient support to proceed with the dispute concerning the remaining minority (letter from Corbett and Kane, a law firm of the UC Davis administration.)

I should also like to mention the existing literature on temporary work that applies to the case of the graduate student employee movement. Polly Callaghan and Heidi Hartmann have written about the "contingency worker" who is usually female and from a low socioeconomic background. Contingent workers "are those who are employed in jobs that do not fit the traditional description of a full-time, permanent job with benefits" (1991, 1) Although graduate student employees are semipermanent workers (at least during the course of the school year), there are more

similarities between graduate student employees and contingent workers than would appear at first glance. Clearly the demographics of the two groups differ, but there is a sense that employment opportunities are fleeting, and in some departments competition is fierce for teaching assistant assignments and instructor positions (especially during the summer). Vicki Smith has studied labor organization of temporary workers, and concludes that capacities for collective action, or a social movement that might pose a critique of the current transformation of employment relations into a system increasingly characterized by nonstandard jobs, is limited by structural features and by individual embeddedness in stratified occupational systems (1998, 411).

Graduate student employees are limited in their ability to organize by structural constraints as well as by personal ideological beliefs. The fact that all graduate students have a limited tenure at the university makes it extremely difficult to convince them that organizing is worthwhile. As one graduate student told an organizer: "I like the idea of a union, but I will finish the program next year because it's an MA program. Most grad students in the Linguistics department are two-year MA students." Thus it is clear that even supportive graduate students do not see much point in organizing a union if they do not feel they would personally benefit from such organization.

"Structural features" such as high or low amounts of available grant money in various departments make some graduate students more likely to organize than others. Time limits concerning the expected time of completion of graduation requirements also make organizing more difficult in many departments. Smith also mentions that "cohesion and unity within the ranks of employees who lack protection and certainty may continue to decline with the proliferation of organizational mechanisms that simultaneously put the burden of risk for well-being on the shoulders of the workers themselves and absolve businesses of that responsibility" (426). As the perception of falling wages and benefits hits many graduate student employees (as well as the potential threat of losing existing benefits, which can legally be taken away at any time), the urge to unionize has grown.

What is the role of the teaching assistant? The definition of a teaching assistant—whether it be the definition employed by the University of California or by the United Auto Workers (UAW, the union representing the teaching assistants)—that is convincing to judges and state legislatures ultimately dictates whether or not the union is successful in achieving its goal of recognition. Since the chancellor on each University of California campus has the right to recognize the union or not, there are extralegal ways to achieve union recognition (as UC Berkeley's local union indeed accomplished in 1993.) Despite this fact, the president of the University of California system instructed each chancellor to fight unionization on the campuses. At this point the statewide "Coalition of Unions" was formed by the UAW.

Because of the opposition to graduate student unionization statewide, both the UAW and the University of California have decided to use the state court system and the Public Employment Relations Board to settle their disputes. Not only have court battles been waged, but appeals to the state legislature and the governor of California have been made for several years as well. Key administrators at the UC Davis campus (as well as statewide) have continually focused on the word "apprenticeship" to describe the role of the teaching assistant. If the graduate student employee is both a student and an employee, the administration stresses that the role as student is more important. The statewide stance against graduate student unionization is reflected by the comments of Chancellor Vanderhoef at a brown-bag discussion on 23 November 1998 at UC Davis, just days before an impending graduate student strike: "TA-ships are apprenticeships. Only secondarily are they employee-employer relationships. The faculty mentor relationship is key—collective bargaining will [negatively] affect academic relationships."

Not only does the chancellor stress that the graduate student is much more an apprentice than an employee, he argues that a teaching assistant union will adversely affect student-faculty relationships. Appealing to faculty members, the larger campus community, and to graduate and undergraduate students in his speech, the chancellor places the blame of future calamity on the

shoulders of graduate students who he believes have no right to form a union.

Just as the union needs to make powerful allies in order to legitimate its definition of a teaching assistant, the chancellor as well needs to convince others that the administration's definition is valid in order to maintain existing relations. The most straightforward argument for union recognition has been put forward in a flyer that was distributed by the Association of Graduate Student Employees and was published in the Graduate Student Association newsletter in the spring of 1998. Here is a short passage from that flyer:

> We hold that TAs, RAs [research assistants], readers and tutors are employees, and we deserve the same rights accorded to all other employees on UC campuses. TAs teach the majority of contact hours at UC Davis and are the primary instructors for undergraduates, especially those in lower-division courses. The university would be unable to fulfill the educational and research mission outlined in its own statement of purpose, The Master Plan, without the important services we provide. By denying us our right to have a say in our own working conditions, the administration is ignoring a democratic and majoritarian decision and ignoring the value of our labor.

This flyer aptly describes the union's position. Appeals are made to a sense of fairness and democratic procedure, as the majority of graduate students at UC Davis have signed union cards seeking union recognition (in fact, this has been done twice, both in 1993 and in 1997–98). A more convincing argument, perhaps, is the high percentage of the time of instruction of undergraduates performed by the teaching assistants. The union also claims that it has followed all legal avenues to ensure that graduate student employees achieve recognition status, and argues repeatedly that legal victories are granted only to have the UC administration appeal in court, delaying the eventual recognition of the union. Since many graduate students are only teaching assistants for seven years or less, the administration can afford this stalling tactic, knowing that a new batch of organizers

must emerge on all campuses if the union is to gain recognition.

The main concern of graduate students was the role of the UAW. Many were leery of an international union's involvement, and questions of local autonomy and control were constantly mentioned. One chemistry graduate student noted: "I support collective bargaining for graduate student employees, but I oppose big unions in general." Many people who at first supported the idea of a union expressed general suspicion when told that the local union was affiliated with the UAW. This is a concern of core organizers as well, and, in fact, the lack of autonomy has caused great frustration for many activists who have had alternative ideas on how the union should work, and who often would take matters into their own hands when possible.

A second concern of graduate students, directly related to the idea of a social movement in transition, was the response that a union was a good idea, but since the respondent was graduating soon, no personal benefit would be gained. "I like the idea of a union, but I'm going to finish the program next year because it's an MA program. Most grad students in the Linguistics department are two-year MA students" (teaching assistant in the Linguistics department). Implicit in this response is the fact that even if a union were to be recognized, nothing would be gained for graduate students if it were successful, since their tenure here is so short. Countless individuals (in the Master's program and in the Ph.D. program alike) reflected this student's attitude. A key obstacle to successful union organizing at the campus is the fact that many graduate student employees will have left the university before they would reap the benefits of collective bargaining, and, consequently, have little motivation (besides personal political and ideological leanings) to organize or even join the union.

Certainly some of the most active departments (English, Spanish, Comparative Literature) are as active as they are because of a combination of poorer working conditions and ideological reasons. Other departments (Sociology, Economics) make their decisions to support or oppose the union almost purely on ideological grounds. Although I have not empirically

tested this, I have noticed several instances of first- or second-year graduate students being much more active in organizing than those who are closer to graduation. Obviously, this is partly because many close to graduation are occupied with finishing their theses or dissertations, but another reason is that those who just enter graduate school are much more likely to reap the benefits of having a successful union. Thus a combination of ideological, material, and practical factors make some graduate students more likely to be union members than others.

Why is this important? With the emergence of the "corporate University," an overwhelming trend to base secondary education on the corporate model of education has emerged. The University of California, with its billions of dollars of corporate sponsorship and its function as a "factory" of sorts to provide skilled labor for businesses around the country, has taken on the corporate model of educating its undergraduate students. Relying more and more upon untenured faculty, temporary staff, and poorly paid graduate student employee labor, the UC has indeed sacrificed quality of education for quantity. Profits, rather than public service, have become the motivation for the University.

In this environment, student activism, the fight to maintain tenure, and the emerging workers' movements throughout the campus are clear signs that those being taken advantage of will not accept these changes without a fight. What cannot be stressed too much is the fact that many of the graduate students who have joined the union have done so in order to uphold a standard of undergraduate education that the University has promised to deliver, as well as to fight for their own rights as workers.

Department of Sociology
University of California, Davis

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Public Marxist Intellectuals: Barrows Dunham, Howard Selsam, and Harry K. Wells

Edwin A. Roberts

Marxism and intellectuals: An identity crisis

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels argue that a major event in the transition toward socialism will be when many bourgeois intellectuals begin to switch allegiance and join the workers' cause (1988, 29). In order for this act to be both unexpected and socially significant, these intellectuals will have to be of the type that Antonio Gramsci labeled *traditional intellectuals*–that is, lawyers, doctors, artists, and educators whose role it had been up to that point to maintain and secure the hegemony of the values, norms, and general ideological framework of the old order. When such intellectuals begin to break ranks and challenge the validity of the very doctrines over which they were the guardians, we can say that we would be witnessing some type of mass identity crisis.

The identity crisis of traditional intellectuals begins when their intelligences tell them to do one thing, while their traditional social instincts insist that they should do something else. To break free, traditional intellectuals must become intellectuals in revolt, in revolt against the system that assigned them their role as intellectuals and against the ideals that they themselves have helped to refine and protect. Marx and Engels were such intellectuals, having gone through the process of breaking with the young Hegelians and abandoning the fundamentals of

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classical German philosophy. Out of this they developed their own point of view, which became the foundation for their revolutionary discoveries in the social sciences. Since the time of its founders, Marxism has benefited greatly from the revolt of traditional intellectuals for both its growth and development.

Recently, however, an argument has emerged claiming that Marxist intellectuals in the United States have fallen into an identity crisis of a different sort. This crisis is said to involve specifically the failure of these intellectuals to maintain a public identity as accessible and engaged thinkers, helping to shape the general direction of social and political thought among the people at large.

The lost world of public intellectuals

The idea that U.S. Marxist intellectuals are suffering from a loss of their public identity is derived from the claims put forth by Russell Jacoby in his influential study, *The Last Intellectuals* (1987). Jacoby argues that since the 1960s the United States has witnessed the virtual disappearance of public intellectuals. Thus, he says, "We have lost a whole generation of publicists, editors, pamphleteers and general interest writers, who could explore topics of social, philosophical, and economic concern with clarity and vigor, which would appeal to a large audience among the broadly educated public" (12).

Although Jacoby's definition seems quite broad and is meant to cover intellectuals in general, any close reader of the book and its semisequel, *Dogmatic Wisdom* (1994), will realize that Jacoby's real lament is for the fundamental decline of the "left" public intellectuals following the end of the 1960s. For these intellectuals and their successors, in Jacoby's eyes, gave up their public persona for the cloisters of the academy. Before accepting such criticisms, we must acknowledge (and Jacoby concurs) that the fact that many left and specifically Marxist intellectuals have been able to secure positions in universities, following decades of relentless purges, is a remarkable achievement (Ollman 1993, 119–20; Schrecker 1986). Knowing this, Jacoby still excoriates such well-known and respected Marxist scholars as Fredric Jameson, Eric Olin Wright, and Richard Wolff, for (in his view)

abandoning the public and retreating into a world of professionalized, private academic jargon. This, Jacoby claims, is totally alien to the public's needs and understanding (1987, 168, 188; 1994, 170–71). It is Jacoby's belief that a broadly educated public might readily appreciate what these scholars have to say, if only they could develop a public voice.

The dilemmas of Marxist intellectuals

Setting aside some of Jacoby's harshest criticisms, we can agree that a left element is missing in nearly all major public debates in the contemporary United States. Many William Kristols, Charles Murrays, and Dinesh D'Sousas, however, shape the direction of public debate on the right–all acting through generous endowments from right-wing think tanks (Alterman 1999). While it is true that many Marxist scholars have found it easier than formerly to obtain academic positions, at the same time they find that in order to maintain their status, they must concentrate on areas of academic work remote from public concern. They find themselves constantly on the defensive with regard to Marxism's status as a serious subject and methodology. In trying to make their case, they often must rely on academic language and fashion to keep up appearances with their peers.

An essential dilemma here goes back to the earliest days of academic life in the United States: mainstream social sciences within the universities have, since their very beginnings, encouraged the ideals of detachment and neutrality. Marxists and other radicals have always pointed out that this was an ideological cover for a very partisan attachment to the status quo, but that has not mattered. As long as they have occupied minority positions in academic departments, Marxists and other radicals have had to play their hand very carefully if they wanted to be in the game at all (Ollman 1993). Thus the commitment to being both a serious scholar and an effective public activist is one that takes a great deal of planning and forethought.

What U.S. Marxist intellectuals need in order to rebuild their public identity are two things: (1) a more systematic explanation of what a public intellectual is and how to operate as one, and (2)

some examples of U.S. academic intellectuals who operated within the Marxist tradition and were both good scholars and good public intellectuals.

Understanding public Marxism

A tradition of a critically engaged public Marxism in the United States does exist. Those within this tradition have usually seen themselves as attempting to combine complex and powerful ideas with an accessibility that could reach into the minds of ordinary people who lacked the luxury of constant contemplation. This tradition owed its growth and development to Marxisms and Marxists of varying stripes, from the pragmatically oriented social engineers of the Debs era (Lloyd 1997), to the pro-Soviet Popular Front, to the Trotskyist world of the New York intelligentsia (Wald 1987). What many of these intellectuals shared was the fact that they had somehow managed to establish their credentials among their more usually apathetic and uninvolved peers, while turning their talents in the direction of political activism and the development of Marxist theory. We may call this tradition one of public Marxism, due to the fact that its practitioners committed themselves to maintaining the inseparability of rigorous scholarship and general accessibility.

Looking back on this tradition, I believe a definition of public Marxism has five essential components. First is the *popularization of complex ideas or fields of study*. This involves the writing of handbooks or introductory guides on such topics as history, philosophy, and modern literature, or on the role of law or education in capitalist society. Such works need to give their readers a sense that they are advancing their general education on an important subject as well as introducing them to the power of Marxist analysis.

Second is the *challenging of the common sense of the present order*. This relates to a problem that the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu calls *doxa* or the transformation of ruling ideologies into natural, routine, and habitual behavior to the degree that not thinking and acting according to them seems impossible (1977). The challenge in attacking a *doxa* is to drive it out of its space as

self-evident truth and move it back into the realm of grounded ideological apologia.

Third is the *overthrow of the value system of the ruling class*. Contemporary capitalism has shown an amazing capacity to accommodate an array of contradictory views, from nihilist and libertarian to reactionary, each of which claims to embody essential values of the system such as consumerism, individualism, and patriarchy. The public Marxist can challenge these assumptions, expose their contradictions, and demonstrate that capitalism no longer has any viable or stable value system at all.

The fourth component of a public Marxism is the *framing of an alternative vision of the nature of the human condition*. It is the nature of public intellectuals that they act as barometers of their epochs. Traditional intellectuals operate in this manner in order to let us know that we are where we need to be, that no one has ever been so lucky, happy, smart, or blessed as we are under the rule of the status quo. In bourgeois society it is the task of public Marxists to create room for people to envision a happier, healthier, more human way of life.

All of this comes together under the fifth component, the *assemblage of an alternative canon of great ideals and personalities* that reinforce the wisdom of the alternative vision put forth in the first four components. One of the great disadvantages that all radicals (especially Marxists) have in the contemporary United States is that most people have no idea of their contributions to the cause of human betterment. I have had firsthand experience of seeing people have their consciousness raised by being exposed to the lives and writings of figures such as Tom Paine, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, W. E. B. Du Bois, and William Z. Foster. Often I have been told directly by students that they had no idea such people existed. Much of the force of the *doxa* of the present moment comes from the belief that the so-called "best and brightest" among us accept things the way they are, "so why shouldn't I?" By exposing people to the lives of those who have not accepted this maxim, and by being such an example in their own right, the public Marxists plant the seed of the future within the present.

U.S. public Marxism: Three examples

In order to explore the criteria just outlined, I shall apply them to the lives and works of three figures I believe exemplify the goals of a public Marxism. Barrows Dunham, Howard Selsam, and Harry K. Wells were all Communist-oriented philosophers whose period of greatest fame was from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. I choose these particular men for several important reasons. First, they all combined solid academic credentials with a firm commitment to political activism and public writing. Second, they all operated within the time frame that Jacoby marks as the last great period for public intellectuals. Finally, all three were associated at one time with the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA). There has been a real flowering of scholarship on U.S. Communism within the past decade (Isserman 1982, Kelly 1990, Brown et al. 1993). Very little, however, deals with the contributions of Communist intellectuals. Therefore, a secondary objective of this paper will be a contribution toward rectifying this omission.

Barrows Dunham: Debunking as a revolutionary science

The work of Barrows Dunham (1905–1995) stands as a classic example of the best a public Marxism has to offer. Dunham, a graduate of Princeton University (A.B. 1926, A.M. 1929, Ph.D. 1933), became professor and later chair of the philosophy department at Temple University. He started out as a scholar of aesthetics and a devotee of Enlightenment rationalism. The Great Depression helped push him first politically and then intellectually toward Marxism. He was a member of the CPUSA, however, for only a short time, from 1938 to 1945 (Parsons 1995a, 253). Nevertheless, in what would be his most productive period, from about 1948 to 1965, Dunham wrote as a fairly orthodox pro-Soviet Marxist.

Two of Dunham's books stand out as exemplary works of public Marxism. These are *Man Against Myth* (1947), a general critique of the social and philosophical illusions that sustain capitalist society, and *Heroes and Heretics* (1963), a study of dissent in the Western tradition. Dunham was an encyclopedic authority

on Western philosophy, and he possessed an outstanding gift for elegant prose and vivid description that makes his books not only very accessible, but exhilarating to read. It was Dunham's most fundamental conviction that philosophy should become a tool for ordinary people to improve their lives. In order to do this, it needed to break from its reputation as alien, unreal, and foreboding (1953, 17).

Man Against Myth reads like a virtual self-defense manual against capitalist ideology, making a number of highly subversive claims that often read like simple common-sense anecdotes. Dunham called the book "a guide to good sense against flummery, obscurantism, and prejudice" (1947, 1). He does an excellent job of framing topics so that the reader can recognize the claim being attacked and follow its logic toward its ultimate refutation. The myths Dunham examines are placed under headings such as "You Can't Change Human Nature," "The Rich Are More Fit Than the Poor," and "You Can't Be Safe and Free." In addition, we find more elaborate claims such as "There Are Always Two Sides to Every Story," "Thinking Makes It So," and "All Problems Are Verbal."

In explaining why he wrote the book, Dunham gives insight not only into his purpose, but his method as well.

> To establish the meaning of a myth, to show what the myth implies, and to show the effect of the myth on people who accept it as true, is to be exposed to the three most important areas of philosophy: ethics, epistemology and political philosophy. (1947, 29)

Such claims are what make Dunham's work so compelling; he is operating at one level (high theory), while producing results at another (popular exposition). For example, in a chapter on the myth of racial superiority, Dunham makes some very sophisticated observations about the weak scientific status of the category of race. These are, however, imbedded in some very droll witticisms convincing readers that they are being persuaded by a simple appeal to fair play. In developing this discussion, however, Dunham goes on to argue that every racial badge of distinction, from anatomy to physiology to psychology, points

out generalities that are found within every racial group, leading one to question the ignorance rather than the rationale of the classification (106–7).

Dunham's discussion often has an underlying dynamic that reveals a more complex set of issues. For example, the chapter titled "All Problems Are Verbal," is actually a critique of logical positivism, offering what is essentially dialectical materialism as an alternative outlook for solving the problems of modern philosophy. Yet the chapter is so written that the reader is not required to have any prior knowledge of either outlook in order to grasp the essential lesson that all problems are *not* verbal, but practical and historical. If the reader is aware of the deeper issues involved, however, so much the better. Thus the novice and the more sophisticated alike can profit from the same text.

Man Against Myth was not only a well-written book, but also a successful piece of public Marxism. It became a best-seller, going through eleven editions, was favorably reviewed in major newspapers, and was endorsed by such luminaries as Albert Einstein, John Dewey, and J. D. Bernal. Despite such success, however, Dunham fell victim to the anti-Communist purges of the McCarthy period. In 1954 he lost his job at Temple University for failing to cooperate with the House Un-American Activities Committee. Despite the tragic consequences of his defiance, it would inspire Dunham to write what I believe is one of the classic texts of U.S. Marxism, *Heroes and Heretics.* Subtitled "A Social History of Dissent," the book opened up an area that had been all but forgotten in the United States of that time. When it was published, the noted civil libertarian, Corliss Lamont, hailed it as "a much needed comprehensive survey of a highly neglected area" (1975, 121).

Today someone glancing at a book consisting of chapters on Socrates, Augustine, Spinoza, Voltaire, and Darwin might take it for a standard text celebrating the Western canon. Such books, however, are not generally written under the guidelines of historical materialism, and do not usually contain arguments on behalf of dialectical materialism as the most advanced form of contemporary philosophy. Yet this is what we find: a general history of Western thought in which it is argued that the greatest

achievements of this tradition have been made by those who were dissenters. Indeed, when Dunham, a victim of blacklisting and academic purges, says, "The history of Western thought proves that objective demonstrable values will always triumph over illogic and prejudice *if given an open hearing*," it has real force (1963, 15, my emphasis). For he is taking something (the Western canon) often used in the past to stifle and control critical thought, and using it as a means of vindicating its most subversive potential.

In the main, Dunham uses the book to showcase his great learning as a means of presenting a kind of *contradox*, where the great thinkers of the Western tradition are liberated from the status of being apologists for the present order. The most admirable elements of their lives and thoughts are held up as inconsistent with celebrating the veiled maxims of a society based on exploitation and alienation, a society that needs to stifle both dissent and human creativity in order to survive. Dunham makes an obviously partisan, but well-argued, case for Marx as the true inheritor and continuer of what is best in the Western tradition. He is thus able to conclude:

> The goals of Marxian socialism are a society without orthodoxy or heresy. That Marx made it possible to rationally contemplate how to achieve such a society is his greatest gift to mankind and the fulfillment of the promise of Western philosophy. (466)

Still, Dunham ends the book on a somewhat melancholy note, saying that although we now have the material requirements for socialism, there is still one problem standing in our way. "Is mankind ethically and psychologically prepared for socialism?" This was a problem that Dunham admitted had been brought home by the Stalin revelations, which he praised the Soviet leadership for being open and self-critical enough to face. In drawing attention to these areas, Dunham was making the right connections to the elements missing in his own work, but essential to any would-be public Marxism. (See also the interview Dunham gave late in his life [Whitehead 1990].)

Our next two subjects did deal with the issue of ethics and human psychology, respectively, and it is to their stories that we now turn.

Howard Selsam: Marxism and the ethics of the future

Although it is likely his name is little recognized today, Howard Selsam (1903–70) played a significant role as the leading philosophical authority within the CPUSA during the Party's heyday from the late 30s to the end of World War II. Like Dunham, he came out of a solid academic background, with degrees from Franklin and Marshall College and Columbia University, where he obtained a Ph.D. with a dissertation on T. H. Green. This became his first book and is his only non-Marxist text (Selsam 1930). His teaching career included a stint at the American University in Lebanon, and ten years as an assistant professor of philosophy at Brooklyn College. Selsam's most significant position, however, was as a cofounder of the noted Jefferson School of Social Science in New York City. The Jefferson School was an alternative school affiliated with the CPUSA, where literally thousands of men and women took college-level courses in everything from economics and psychology to fine arts and cosmetology (Gettleman 1990, 389). Selsam was the school's director from its birth in 1943 until its was closed down by New York's Subversive Activities Control Board in 1956. As a scholar, Selsam's output was modest. He authored four books, and edited three collections of classic writings from Marx, Engels, and Lenin. His books covered essentially two subjects, the role of Marxism in the history of philosophy, and the establishment of an ethical system for a future socialist society. A prominent element in all his books, this question of the ethic of the future would dominate Selsam's work.

In defining the importance of ethics for Marxism, Selsam wrote,

> Marxist philosophy answers the questions–what is the origin of ideas? and what is the direction of social evolution? Based on these we must answer the questions–what is the good life? and what should we do to bring it about? These are the central questions of ethics. (1938, 153)

Selsam believed that historical materialism takes us to a point where we have to learn how to make the right decisions about how to push the historical process forward to guarantee the victory of socialism in a manner consistent with socialist principles. This was the topic of his most significant book, *Socialism and Ethics* (1943). The importance of this text is that it presents Selsam's Marxism at its most scholarly and its most public. It tries to make a case for viewing World War II as an ethical dilemma for capitalism and an opportunity for socialism. He illustrates how the contradictions of capitalism led first to imperialism, then to fascism, and finally to world war. The value systems associated with the old order, such as religion, traditional conservatism, and individualism, were unable to help prevent these dehumanizing developments.

People in the contemporary United States are likely to have grown accustomed to hearing public intellectuals of the Right pontificating on the need for virtue and family values, which they then associate with the progress of unrestrained capitalism (see, for example, Gilder 1981). For those in his own day who took such a position, Selsam makes the point that while capitalism does not deny "personal moral values–integrity, honesty, kindness, generosity, cooperativeness, and just plain humanity–as things in themselves, there is no way that these values can be judged as vital to or important for capitalism as a *system* (1943, 34). Marxism, on the other hand, is depicted by Selsam as openly partisan in deference to the progressive values of humanity, which are identified to include such things as self-determination of all peoples (179), sexual equality (149), racial justice (186), and economic development (199). This is the type of open, direct, and forthright intellectual challenge that a public Marxism must pursue. I believe that today such an intervention into debates about "values" would be not only unexpected, but clearly welcomed.

Nevertheless, Selsam's defense of Marxist ethics was not without problems. Initially, it faltered badly on the ever-contentious issue of means and ends. Selsam deals with the issue by arguing that a goal can be judged good only because of what it has achieved. Therefore, it is in being achieved that good has

been established. Take the example of the defeat of slavery in the U.S. South. "Did the struggle against slavery increase human freedom?" asks Selsam. If so, he argues, the act of overcoming slavery and whatever *actually contributed to its defeat* can be judged as ethical goods (209–10).

Although we can admire the valiantly unambiguous and direct way Selsam sought to make this point, his follow-up example of how this principle has been vindicated by the practices of the Soviet Union gravely undermined his case. For Selsam ended up trying to prove that some of the worst aspects of the Stalin era, such as the great purge trials and the destructive collectivization drives of the early 1930s, were vindicated by positive outcomes, namely the death of traitors and the end of famine in the USSR (201). The problem with this is that these so-called positive outcomes have been discredited by historical records, not the least of which were provided by the reports of the twentieth and twenty-first congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, during its drive for de-Stalinization (Deutscher 1970, 52–73, 237–52).

There is a problem when a movement that seeks to occupy the ethical high ground finds itself looking for a way to reconcile high motives with low actions. The question is quite large, and it occupies too great a space in the history of ethical theory to be resolved here. Still, we can say that for a revolutionary movement, if one's value system really is superior to that of the status quo, then this has to be reflected in the deepest commitment to avoiding what many in the public will view as the same old hypocrisy of people seeking power being as bad as those they oppose.

Toward the end of his career, Selsam seems to have learned this lesson. In his last major work, *Ethics and Progress*, Selsam argued:

> Any Marxist understanding of the good must include a theory of obligation and personal integrity. Our first loyalty is to mankind, our permanent concern is to be honest and avoid hypocrisy, and we must always think through the long term consequences of our beliefs. (1963, 74)

This sort of admission shows a quality vital to a public Marxist, the ability to grow and learn by drawing the right conclusions from one's own past while avoiding being crippled by the mistakes and setbacks that inevitably come from being a politically engaged intellectual. Like Dunham, Selsam felt that his work was challenged by problems to which he had not paid enough attention. For Selsam, the problems were those of psychology. "As we prepare people for radical change, are we ready to deal with the problems of creativity or the lack of it, of emotional stability, of hostility and general frustration?" (105). These are the issues that fall under the concern of our fourth criterion for a public Marxism, the ability to present an alternative view of the human condition. This subject was the special interest of the last figure we will look at, Harry K. Wells.

Harry K. Wells: Marxism and the ideals of mental health

Like his compatriots, Harry K. Wells (born in 1911) has become largely a forgotten figure, but in the early Cold War period he was considered second only to Selsam as the leading Communist philosopher in the United States. Wells had a somewhat unusual background for one who would achieve such a status. A graduate of Harvard, he was the star quarterback of its winning football team. After receiving his B.A. in 1933, he taught high school for ten years before serving in the U.S. Army during World War II. Taking advantage of the G.I. Bill, he attended Columbia University and received an M.A. in 1947 and a Ph.D. in 1949 with a critical dissertation on Alfred North Whitehead. Wells then secured a position at Hartwick College, in Oneonto, N.Y., where he achieved the rank of associate professor with a dual appointment in philosophy and psychology.

As a Communist philosopher, Wells saw his role as that of a critic of the dominant ideological trends among the ruling intellectuals in the United States. This is clearly seen in his best known work, *Pragmatism: Philosophy of Imperialism* (1954), a vigorous (and often effective) polemic against the movement that had become like a secular religion for the Cold War liberal intelligentsia. The book was hailed by leading Communists on its publication as one of the most significant contributions to

Marxist thought ever produced in the United States (Selsam 1954, 7). How ironic, then, that Wells was to abandon this line of study entirely in order to concentrate for the rest of his career on the issues of psychology, a subject in which he admitted he had no formal training (Wells 1960, 9).

From the late fifties until the midsixties, Wells pursued with great dedication no less a challenge than changing the direction of psychological theory and psychiatric practice in the United States. He argued that both were failing the people in pursuit of the cause of curing mental illness. The problem, he believed, was in the approach.

> American psychology is dominated by those who would deal with mental illness through a verity of sociological, religious, symbolic, philosophical and mystical theories, instead of dealing with it as the purely physical and biological problem that it is. (1956, 12)

Specifically, Wells believed that the psychological establishment, and U.S. culture in general, were too much under the sway of Sigmund Freud. It was Wells's belief that after pragmatism, Freudianism was the chief intellectual foundation of life in the United States. This in fact was only a partial truth, for while it is true that in the United States in 1950s Freud's work enjoyed a sort of common-sense currency, so that when most people thought of psychology at all, Freud was the only name that came to mind, it is also true that the main body of Freudian culture was confined to the milieu of the New York intelligentsia. In addition, Freudian theory produced a variety of movements from the nihilistic, to the conventional, to the highly subversive (Wald 1987). None of this mattered to Wells, who saw any Freudian influence as baleful.

Against Freud, Wells advocated the ideas and practices of Ivan P. Pavlov, whose theory of reflexology, Wells argued, formed a more proper basis for a materialist science of mental health. Wells's goals and the nature of his work fit the guidelines for a public Marxism; nevertheless I believe that neither were successful, because of the uncompromising stance Wells took to his subject. This resulted in his taking a position that today

replicates the views of the most conservative elements of the psychological establishment, while most Marxists have gone in the opposite direction (see *NST* special issue, Parsons 1995b).

Wells's work in psychology had its admirable elements; he showed a talent for discussing complex and highly technical material in a manner that is quite accessible and informative. Yet his work still suffers from what in hindsight appears to be an extreme myopia brought on by his political commitments. Wells's adoption of Pavlovian theory seems to have been in line with the general developments in the world Communist movement at the time. In 1950, the Soviet Union officially adopted Pavlov's theory of higher nervous activity as the foundation for a materialist outlook in the medical sciences (Wells 1956, 39). This act was similar to its adoption of Lysenkoism in biological theory a few years before. From that point on, all non-Pavlovian schools were denounced and their practices shut down. This same position was later adopted by China and other socialist countries.

Pavlov, however, was no Lysenko. A Nobel Prize winner in physiology in 1904, he was a pioneer in neurological research. He is most famous for his theory of the conditioned reflex, from which we get the well-known image of Pavlov's dog, whose salivary glands could be activated by the ringing of a bell that the dog had been conditioned to associate with food (43). In this experiment, Pavlov demonstrated that some higher animals produced thoughts and sensations *not* as internal properties, but as external reactions. Soviet authorities concluded that Pavlov had proved that humans were highly malleable in their general nature and thus could be reconditioned into becoming the new Soviet man. As Wells himself admitted, however, Pavlov never claimed that his theories were either Marxist or dialectical materialist in nature, nor that his work actually applied to humans. In fact, after sixty years of research in this area, Pavlov stated the connection between the conditioned reflex and the development of human psychology was tentative at best (Wells 1956, 74). Nevertheless, Wells went on to champion Pavlovian theory as the future of psychology and the key to ending the problems of mental illness.

Wells's critique of Freud and Freudianism was absolute and uncompromising, yet his opposition was somewhat multilayered. His fundamental rejection of Freud stemmed from the fact that Freud was an outright reactionary in his social and political views. Wells rejected the entire edifice of Freudian theory, however, arguing that the theories of dreams, repression, instincts, and the unconscious, were designed to promote the idea that humans possessed an *inner* self, which Wells denounced as mystical and unscientific. Most importantly, Wells found that there was no compatibility between Freud's work and that of Pavlov, who was for Wells the first and the last word in psychology. Freud was given virtually no respect by Wells, who repudiated him as "the founder of a perverted sexology and spurious socio-psychological anthropology" (1960, 235). Wells did admit that Freud had talent, but as "an ingenious, artistically creative divisor of a fantastic fiction, in which the rational-logic, thought and reason, is transformed into the affective-instincts, drives and emotions" (121). He condemns Freud's work for misleading psychologists into a fictive realm called the human mind, instead of keeping things where they belong in the physiological space called the brain.

Pavlovianism was for Wells a mechanical procedural means for the medical treating of mental illness, the causes of which were quite simple. "Cerebral malfunctioning caused by overstrain of nerve cells due to overpowering stimuli is the cause of mental illness" (239). How do we deal with this? "Reverse or eliminate the malfunctionings" with interventions that could be either "verbal, psychotherapy, or medicinal, drugs, sleep, hypnosis, etc." (121). From these premises, Wells argued that the psychological and ethical problems of building socialism could be overcome by programming people to adjust to socialist norms and values through the proper conditioned responses. Thus he praised the Soviet Union for its policies of reeducating dissidents and the socially maladjusted (1956, 168–70).

Wells not only rejected Freudianism as it stood, but he also argued that as a theory it was irredeemable. Thus he also attacked the works of Freudian revisionists, even those representing what is today known as the Freudian Left. In fact, his last

book on the subject, *The Failure of Psychoanalysis* (1963), might have been retitled *Against Fromm,* for it is Erich Fromm, the German/U.S. psychoanalyst who pioneered the idea of a Marx-Freud synthesis, whose works constitute the bulk of the study. Wells devoted fully six of the book's eleven chapters to a critique of Fromm's work. This criticism was significant in that Fromm was exactly the type of intellectual Jacoby had in mind when he spoke of a lost generation of public intellectuals. Indeed, Fromm was probably one of the last Marxist-oriented thinkers to have been well known by the generally educated public. He differed from Wells, however, in being a more critical intellectual.

Wells made clear his recognition that Fromm's work was informed by the principles of historical materialism and Marx's critique of political economy. Still, Wells believed that Fromm's attempt to import insights drawn from psychoanalysis into the critique of capitalism was simply the wrong type of criticism, because for Wells psychoanalysis had no insights from which to draw. Wells argued:

> Fromm stresses the role of alienation in modern capitalism, in that the system fosters feelings of powerlessness, fright, anxiety, hopelessness and frustration. Thus we are to oppose capitalism because it produces a sick society of mass neurotics who are in need of psychoanalytic cures. This view is to be opposed, because of its notions that the individual mind is motivated by internal compulsions, which is contrary to the materialist theory of knowledge and the science of higher nervous functions. (1963, 114)

This criticism is, I believe, wrongheaded, since Fromm's work was clearly as much Marxist as Freudian. Wells need not have rejected Fromm's possible insights merely because they are partially influenced by a source of which he does not approve. People may feel a sense of inner alienation, even if neuroscience demonstrates that it is only a physical conditioned reflex. They will then act on these feelings (real or unreal), and that will have an actual effect on the course of their lives.

Wells's most important trait may have been his fierce consistency, but it often inhibited the depth of his critical thinking. Where Fromm argued that capitalism frustrates our innate capacity to love and form friendships, instead of responding that this may be an astute observation about the contradictions of contemporary life, Wells answers coldly, "Love and friendship are simply externally acquired skills produced through conditioning" (177). Even if we reject Fromm's claim that people innately need to be loved, that does not mean that people are not deeply attached to the idea. Thus the ability to show that this attachment is frustrated by the conditions of life under capitalist rule is a powerful tool in the struggle to counter the *doxa* that leads people to equate life under the status quo with the human condition as such.

The important point for a truly critical intellectual is not only to present a consistent challenge, but to be continually self-challenging in refining and developing his or her own ideas. That Wells was ill-served by his iron attachment to Pavlovian reflexology can be demonstrated in several ways. For example, he never came to terms with the issue of why so many Marxists over the years have found Freudian theory so compelling. As two scholars of the subject have pointed out, the contributions of psychoanalysis to Marxist theory in the understanding of fascism, racism, and sexism have been substantial (Bramel and Friend 1982, 183). Secondly, the USSR itself turned against Pavlovian theory not long after Wells had written his last book on the subject. In the midsixties, the Soviets rehabilitated the work of L. S. Vygotsky, a psychological researcher who in the thirties developed an explicitly Marxist psychology that unfortunately did not find favor with Stalin. Vygotsky argued that the mind goes through two stages of development, one biological and the other cultural-historical. Thus he claimed the human mind is an active participant in shaping and being shaped by its own environment (Lethbridge 1992, 69–74). Vygotsky was also a strong critic of Pavlov and argued that reflexology was a mechanistic and undialectical theory (Billing 1983, 403).

To clarify, it is not the fact that Wells was proven wrong in his prediction that Pavlovianism would obliterate the influence

of Freudianism and all other psychological theories that makes his work a negative example of public Marxism. It is the fact that he lacked a generous spirit in dealing with opponents. His own very rigid cast of mind led to a myopic understanding of the elements necessary to counter the *doxa* of the present order.

Lessons for Marxist intellectuals

Looking back on the three examples presented in this paper, we can point to positive lessons taken from all three figures. From Dunham, we have his respect for both the depth of his subject matter and the needs of his audience, along with his powerful commitment to bringing both together into a higher synthesis. From Selsam, it is his clarity of purpose and ability to draw the right lessons from his past in order to grow and demonstrate the value of the dialectic of self-reflection. Even Wells, whom I used mainly as a negative example, must be commended for his ability to take a complex subject and explore it with depth and accessibility.

The most important lesson we can learn from what I have called the public Marxism of these men is that Marxist intellectuals must always be public intellectuals. In being public intellectuals, they must be open to everything interesting and stimulating in the larger public conversation in which they are engaged. Even if the points of view they are contending with are rooted in ideas they generally oppose, they need to understand the power that a certain fad or fancy may have over the public's imagination. This understanding becomes a means of mastering its significance as a social force. From that point, it is only a matter of moving the public mind from fads to facts.

This may never be an easy task, but Marxists must remember that Marxism is itself part of the larger conversation that is the history of human thought. The case it must demonstrate is that it is a means of going beyond the conventional, the self-assured, and the ideological. Marx called what he practiced "the critique of critical criticism." Thus he combined intention (critique), with action (critical), with understanding (criticism). As defined, this means an action which in being accomplished surpasses its own goals. So the lesson is that in trying to practice a public

Marxism, we must actually advance Marxism itself. If we make mistakes along the way, this is good. As long as we have a clear sense of what the project is, we will be advancing our goals as we regroup and make new ones.

Department of Political Science
California State University, Long Beach

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Writing a Marxist Memoir: Red Diaper Baby?

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

In an attempt to popularize Marxism and relate its potential influence on the reality of working-class Americans, I decided to write a literary memoir. I offer the first chapter to demonstrate what I did, then some excerpts from other sections of the book regarding class/race/gender.

Chapter one: From Red Dirt: Growing Up Okie

> The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few who make up the employing class have all the good things of life. Between these two classes a struggle must go on, until all the toilers come together on the political as well as on the industrial field, and take and hold that which they produce by their labor.
>
> From the Constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World, 1905

I was born Roxie Amanda Dunbar. "Dust Bowl baby," they called me, and my nickname was "Baby." I was a surely unwanted last child after my two brothers–Laurence, eleven, and Hank, two–and a sister, Vera, nine. I would ask Daddy if they had wanted me when he told me about those hard times, and he would say, "Sure, else I wouldn't have paid a doctor ten dollars to come and birth you." Once I understood how really destitute

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they had been, I realized he meant what he said. Yet on my birth certificate Daddy listed his occupation as "proprietor of feed store" and Mama's as "housewife," sounding so secure.

My life began on a hot late summer Saturday, September 10, 1938, in San Antonio, Texas. I was born in the one-room shack where the five of them lived behind my uncle's house. For the first three days my name was Marvel, named after Mama's best friend, a failed opera singer who sang in honky-tonks. But Mama had a fight with Marvel and decided not to name me after her. Daddy came up with the name Roxie. He always told me he saw that name on a marquee in New Orleans' French Quarter when he went there with some other cowboys as a teenager. He said that the Roxie club was named after a beautiful stripper. Mama always said he was making all that up.

My mother never talked about that time in San Antonio when she was pregnant with me. But I can imagine how she suffered. I know the facts because Vera has told me many times. She was nine and remembers it well. In June of that year my grandmother sold the feed store Daddy was running and they were evicted from the house they rented. During those last three months before I was born they were homeless, and it was a scorcher of a summer as always in south Texas–humid, unbearable. They took refuge with Daddy's oldest brother, a veterinarian in San Antonio. My uncle was bankrupt himself but let my family live in a one-room storage space behind his house, windowless, an oven. All that summer Mama and Daddy and the three children were stuffed in that hot, windowless room. . . .

My father's name is Moyer Haywood Pettibone Scarberry Dunbar. When I was growing up he would read to me from the framed 1905 IWW Constitution, and tell me: "I was born two years after the IWW, and Papa named me after the founders: William Moyer, Big Bill Haywood, and George Pettibone. They were on trial, framed up for murder in Boise, Idaho, during that summer of 1907 when I was born, same year Oklahoma got statehood. Clarence Darrow got them off. One Big Union, that's what your grandfather fought for." Then Daddy would rail against the current trade unions.

Hanging on the bedroom wall beside the IWW Constitution was a framed photograph from 1912 of my father's entire family, my grandfather and grandmother sitting on the wide front porch of their spacious two-story house. All ten children were dressed in their Sunday best. Daddy was five years old in that picture. . . .

Next to the photograph was Grandpa Dunbar's diploma in veterinary medicine from St. Joseph, Missouri, dated 1910. He had moved his family from Missouri to Piedmont, Oklahoma, in 1907, just after Daddy was born, and returned alone to Kansas and then Missouri for three years to study medicine. During those years, Grandma was practically a single mother caring for five little children in Piedmont, where her entire extended family had settled. Grandpa had joined the Socialist Party when it was founded in 1901–eastern Kansas and western Missouri formed the southwest center of the Socialist Party–but was attracted to the more radical IWW once it was founded. Already a committed Wobbly when Daddy was born, Grandpa continued his involvement while in medical school and returned to Piedmont an organizer as well as a highly respected professional. Daddy said Grandpa rotated three teams of horses to make his doctoring calls around a fifty-mile area–cattle and horses were his specialty.

Beside the veterinarian's diploma and the picture, a worn, thin red book–my grandfather's IWW union book–hung from a string, "Emmett Victor Dunbar" scrawled inside

"Why did Grandpa take you all to Texas?" I'd ask.

"Danged Klan ran us off, some of them same folks you see in church on Sunday. They're pretty brave when they got sheets over their heads. Nothing but cowards. Papa had to sell out lock, stock and barrel."

Daddy was fourteen when the family moved to the border town of McAllen in the Texas Rio Grande Valley. Grandfather Emmett died in 1934, kicked by a horse he was doctoring. But my father held the KKK responsible because a dozen years before they had beat my grandfather half to death and left him with brain damage.

Daddy told me over and over about those years before the First World War when the Wobblies controlled the town and the county where I grew up, and practically all of the mines and fields and woods of western North America: the glory days. My father liked to tell stories about them while he cleaned his hunting rifle; the smell of gun oil and flint went with the story.

"Your Grandpa organized all the sharecroppers and tenants and cotton pickers and wheat thrashers, all of them migrants from here to you. Papa got himself elected to the school board, that same school you go to. One time a bunch of landlords tried to take the school with guns, waving their red white and blue flags. Papa and all us brothers held up there five days shooting it out with them, and we whipped them good."

"How old were you then, Daddy?"

"About your age, ten, eleven, but I was a good shot. Papa always chose me to ride shotgun on his wagon when he made his rounds doctoring."

"What did the Wobblies want?" I asked. No matter how many times he told me, I loved to hear his agenda of Wobbly dreams: abolition of interest and profits, public ownership of everything, no military draft, no military, no police, the equality of women and all races. "The O-B-U, One Big Union," he would say and smile to himself, lost in memory.

The Wobblies were mostly anarchists and suspicious of the electoral system, but many of them like my grandfather voted for Eugene Debs and the Socialist Party all five times he ran. Daddy explained: "It was different here in Oklahoma than some places. Why by nineteen and fourteen Oklahoma had more dues-paying members of the Socialist Party than any other state in the Union–twelve thousand. That year they elected over a hundred Socialists to office."

"So what happened that the Klan drove you all out?" I asked.

"That son-of-a-gun Woodrow Wilson, him and that gangster Palmer and his goon J. Edgar Hoover wiped out the IWW, put them all in jail or kicked them out of the country. The dadgummed rich wheat farmers bankrolled the Klan. They swelled up like a tick–night riding, killing stock, burning barns

and crops, lynching, burning crosses. Good Christians they were."

Daddy, like his father, was a free-thinker. I would lower my head whenever he talked about Christians because I was a devout Baptist. Mama was a hard-shell Baptist convert, and I never missed a church service once we moved to town: Sunday morning and night, Wednesday-night prayer meeting, and summer Bible School, camp and tent revivals. My parents tried not to fight about it, and Daddy would even give me a dime to put in the collection plate. But he would break out singing "Pie in the sky bye and bye," from Wobbly troubadour Joe Hill's "Preacher and the Slave," to the tune of the hymn "The Sweet Bye and Bye," and Mama would steam.

Next to the Klan and Christian hypocrites Daddy scorned any kind of law-enforcement authorities. The Wobbly Constitution said that any worker who joined the army, a militia, or even a police force would be denied membership forever.

Despite my grandfather's former affluence, when my parents married in 1927 they returned to Piedmont as sharecroppers.

"Why are we so poor if Grandpa was rich?" I asked.

My father would shift his eyes away from the IWW Constitution and stare at his gnarled hands. He didn't like being reminded that we were poor.

Down the street lived two of his mother's sisters, among the wealthiest families in town, meaning they had two-story houses with running water and bathrooms. The big family house where my father grew up still stood, one of the seven big houses in town, but it no longer belonged to our family.

"I did all right until the Dust Bowl and the danged Depression. Why even rich bankers were jumping out of windows back then. Danged Roosevelt dumped our crops in the ocean and got the bankers back on their feet, then tried to drive us all off the land. I wasn't about to be run off to no California."

Oscar Ameringer became the Socialist Party organizer in Oklahoma in 1907. He was doubtful about organizing farmers. In his 1940 autobiography, *If You Don't Weaken*, Ameringer wrote that he had once regarded farmers as capitalists, not exploited wage laborers, as the owners of the means of

production with a great deal to lose from socialism. But after a meeting in Harrah, the town where my mother grew up, he was astonished to discover an America he did not know existed, starving farmers poorer than the white and black workers he had been organizing in New Orleans.

Between 1906 and 1917, the Wobblies and the Socialist Party won converts on a mass scale in Oklahoma. My grandfather was one of the first. They adopted the religious evangelists' technique of holding huge week-long encampments with charismatic speakers, male and female, usually near small towns (indeed, many evangelists were themselves converts to socialism). Socialists were elected as local officials and the lampposts of many towns were hung with red flags. In 1915 alone 205 mass encampments were held. The Socialists never won a statewide race in Oklahoma, but their percentage of the vote increased from 6 percent in 1907 to 16 percent in 1916 voting for Socialist Party candidate Eugene Debs. In 1914 the Socialist candidate for governor won 21 percent of the vote and the Socialists won 6 seats in the Oklahoma legislature, along with a majority of local offices in many counties. But it was not a peaceful process.

"There was a lot of shooting?" I asked Daddy.

"You can say that again and not just shooting. Wobblies cut telephone wires and dynamited pipelines, water mains, and sewers. It was all around here but mainly over in the eastern part of the state. Them Seminole Indians in it, Negroes too. Down in San Antone and the Valley them Magon brothers from Old Mexico. Boy, the Wobblies sure put up a fight."

In speaking of blacks and poor whites and Seminole Indians rising up together in eastern Oklahoma, I know now that Daddy was referring to a spontaneous event, separate from IWW or Socialist Party organizing, the "Green Corn Rebellion" during the summer of 1917.

In December 1994, when I was poking around in southeastern Oklahoma trying to understand that rebellion, I met an elderly Seminole Muskogee Indian woman who said that she had been only nine years old at the time, but she remembered it, and that her uncle, who she said had been a leader of the rebellion and

was imprisoned afterwards, had told the heroic story over and over.

"The full moon of late July, early August it was, the Moon of the Green Corn. It was not easy to persuade our poor white and black brothers and sisters to rise up. We told them that rising up, standing up, whatever the consequences, would inspire future generations. Our courage, our bravery would be remembered and copied. That has been the Indian way for centuries, since the invasions. Fight and tell the story so that those who come after or their descendants will rise up once again. It may take a thousand years but that is how we continue and eventually prevail. . . . "

I asked her to explain the significance of the Green Corn ceremony to the Muskogees: "That is our most sacred ceremony, and you could call it our new year, the time of new beginnings. It occurs whenever the green corn comes, sometimes as early as late June, or as late as early August. During that year, 1917, the green corn came late, during the last week of July and early August. It was on August 3, 1917, at the end of our four-day Green Corn ceremony that we rose up."

My father portrayed the Green Corn Rebellion as a great moment of heroism, a moment of unity, betrayed by the "electric-light city" Socialists, who scorned it. Of course nothing about Wobblies and Socialists appeared in my US or Oklahoma history textbooks (and very little appears in Oklahoma textbooks even now), so I began to doubt my father's stories, especially about the Green Corn Rebellion.

When I moved to California and was swept up in the sixties as a student, I gained a new pride in my Wobbly/Socialist heritage, but nearly forgot the Green Corn Rebellion until it reappeared in my field of vision in the mid-1970s while I was working on the book The Great Sioux Nation, which grew out of the 1973 Lakota uprising at Wounded Knee. A Muskogee medicine man from Oklahoma, the late Philip Deere, told me a story in 1974 that sounded familiar. At first he did not name the event but described his memory of it and what he was told growing up. He would have been about the same age as my father in 1917, ten or eleven years old. Philip recalled the rebellion as Indian-conceived and led.

I searched for published information, trying to verify Philip's version, but found very little indeed that even mentioned the Green Corn Rebellion. Finally, I found the typescript of a 1959 undergraduate Harvard University history thesis by John Womack, Jr., himself from Oklahoma, the biographer of Mexican revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata, and now a senior professor of history at Harvard.

By 1890, before the Native American republics of Indian Territory were dissolved by the 1898 Curtis Act that violated treaties with the Native nations and forced their communal holdings into individual allotments, white tenants had already come to outnumber the Indians two to one in Indian Territory. Breaking the law, violence and corruption were thus the rule, not the exception, in that region, setting the stage for an agrarian rebellion.

And times were hard. Over 60 percent of mortgaged farms were lost to foreclosure during the two years before the Green Corn Rebellion. More than half the farms were worked by tenants. The rates were even higher in the Southeastern counties where the rebellion took place (Pottawatomi, Seminole, Hughes and Pontotoc counties). Only a fifth of the farms in that region were worked by their owners, and half of those were under heavy mortgages that carried usurious interest rates of 20 to 200 percent.

Farming in Oklahoma was commercial, with tenants as wage laborers and cotton the king; cotton production doubled between 1909 and 1919, making Oklahoma the fourth-largest cotton producer among the states and firmly establishing a cash-and-credit economy. The other major industries were oil production and coal mining, which spawned boom towns and attracted large populations of transient workers.

When the government began to draft soldiers for the First World War, the white, black and red farmers in southeastern Oklahoma decided to resist conscription. Their strategy was to come together and seal off an area from outside interference, persuade their neighbors to join, and then march all the way to Washington D.C., picking up recruits along the way. There they would overthrow President Wilson, stop the war, and reform the domestic economy to "restore to the working classes the full

product of their labor." In preparation for the great march they burned bridges across the Canadian River to keep their liberated area isolated. They cut telephone and telegraph wires so the besieged could not call for help. They planned to confiscate property in the towns and on the surrounding farms. Anyone who opposed them was to be conscripted in the same way that the federal government conscripted its troops. They agreed that any local authorities who tried to stop them would be met with gunfire, and poisoned food and well water. They believed they would be joined by the working people's armies of other states and that the IWW and the four Railroad Brotherhoods would support them for a victorious march on Washington, where they would then take control (since most of the US military would already be in Europe or fighting Pancho Villa in Mexico).

I learned from Professor Womack's account that a group of African-Americans set off the rebellion. In early August 1917, a sheriff and his deputy were fired on by some thirty black rebels. Hundreds of poor whites and Muskogee Indians were involved. The rebels were well organized. They divided themselves into details, some to recruit all who had not yet joined the rebellion, others to burn barns, another to blow up the Texaco pipeline, several groups to destroy railroad bridges and cut telephone and telegraph wires, and others to tear down fences and free farm animals to trample cotton fields. After a long summer day of destruction the 500 or so rebels congregated in their new liberated zone to feast, celebrate and rest.

However, the reaction of local townspeople against the rebels was fierce. They organized huge posses to hunt them down. When faced with angry, armed citizens, the rebels dispersed, guerilla-style. During the following days, more wires were cut and bridges hit, while more and more rebels were captured. Pitched battles took place, and hundreds were arrested.

US entrance into the European war in 1917 produced a wave of patriotism and a brutal backlash against the antiwar Wobblies and Socialists in Oklahoma. The Socialists blamed the repression in Oklahoma on the Green Corn rebels. Fiery crosses burned all over the state, and the ranks and resources of the Ku Klux Klan burgeoned. The Klan seized political power in Texas and

Arkansas and came close in Oklahoma. My grandfather was one of their victims.

When a core group of native white Americans, the very foot soldiers of empire, began turning socialist and anti-imperialist, even inching away from white supremacy, the government and other centers of power acted swiftly, viciously and relentlessly to crush the movement. A wave of propaganda accompanied the repression. The D.W. Griffith film extolling the KKK, The Birth of a Nation, had already appeared in 1915. After the victories of the Russian and Mexican revolutions, Red Scare propaganda flooded newspapers and magazines, and formed the main text of sermons. The landless agrarians of Oklahoma were left with a recollection of hard times and hatred for big government and for the rich and powerful, but also with the memory of a failed movement.

And repression: Oklahoma was kept under careful surveillance long before the McCarthy era. As reported by George Milburn in 1946:

> It is a criminal offense, for example, in Oklahoma, to have a copy of Karl Marx's Das Kapital in one's library, and anyone suspected of possessing seditious literature is liable to search, seizure, and arrest. Indeed, certain scholarly citizens have been prosecuted criminally and faced with penitentiary sentences, because sober political treatises, regarded as classics elsewhere, in Oklahoma are even more illicit than a bottle of bootleg booze.

So talk about my grandfather and the Wobblies and the Green Corn Rebellion thinned as the new Red Scare escalated: A Red in the family tree was no longer something to be proud of. The rage about our poverty was covered over with pride for just being white and "real" Americans.

I myself grew fiercely patriotic. Tears brimmed in my eyes when I heard the "Star Spangled Banner" or pledged allegiance to the flag. I won first prize in a county speech contest for my original oration, "America Is Great Because America Is Good." I spent the summer of 1954 avidly watching the Army-McCarthy hearings on television, rooting for McCarthy, adoring the young

Ray Cohn. I doubted my father's stories. And my father no longer told the stories.

During the Korean War I sold Veterans of Foreign Wars crepe paper roses. Several young men in town were drafted and came home wounded. One of the boys who returned sat with my brother and me and our cousins and told us about Korea: "Why, we're rich here in Oklahoma by comparison. They're lucky to eat a spoonful of rice once a day. We went through this one little village and seen an old man, looked to be a hundred, all dried up and wrinkled, just died in front of us. I stopped to pay my respects and as I was looking at him wondering what his life had been like, out comes this giant white thing from his mouth, a damned tapeworm five foot long." And we felt lucky to be free Americans fighting communism, proud of our country for helping others.

Today my father says he believes his father regretted having been a Wobbly and Socialist, and that he had been hoodwinked by communists. I don't believe it for a minute; rather, I think he wants to forget his father's, and my, idealism, which could get me into trouble. . . .

Daddy shocked me recently when he told me how brutally his father had beat him as a teenager. I had never before heard him utter a single negative word about his father. "Boy, it hurt and sometimes put me in bed. He used a horsewhip. After I was about twelve seems like he had it in for me, and that's why I run off when I turned sixteen. I couldn't take it no more," he said, tears filling his fading blue eyes.

That would have been 1919 to 1923, when the Wobbly and Socialist movements were being crushed and the Klan was on the rise, and my grandfather and his family were targets of KKK violence. Grandpa Dunbar had taken out his frustration on his most devoted disciple.

San Francisco

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Reflections of U.S. Imperialism in Haitian Literature

April Ane Knutson

The history of Haiti is both glorious and tragic. As the French colony Saint-Domingue, it was the most productive colony in the history of the world, producing three-quarters of the world's sugar in the eighteenth century and more wealth for France than all the British colonies in the Americas combined. In 1791, a slave insurrection began that destroyed the sugar-cane plantations. A radical revolutionary government in Paris abolished slavery in all French territories in 1794 and Toussaint L'Ouverture, a former slave and leader of the Haitian revolution, named himself Governor of Saint-Domingue. In 1802, Napoleon reinstated slavery and the slave trade in the French empire and sent a naval force of twenty thousand men under the command of LeClerc, his brother-in-law, to regain control of Saint-Domingue. Toussaint was captured and taken to a prison in the French Alps where he died, but his lieutenants and the self-emancipated population continued the struggle, defeating the French forces. In 1804, Jean-Jacques Dessalines proclaimed Haiti an independent country. Haiti, meaning mountainous land, is the Taino name for the country. The Tainos, along with the Arawaks, were the indigenous peoples living on the island before Columbus arrived in 1492.

Haiti was the first black republic in the history of the world, and Haitians are the only people in the history of the world to emancipate themselves from slavery and colonial rule. The

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imperial powers determined that they would be the last and with a concerted effort succeeded in isolating and impoverishing Haiti. The United States, the first colony to win independence in the Americas, did nothing to help Haiti. Quite the contrary, for the United States, still dependent on slave labor on its own plantations, was terrified of contact between African slaves in the U.S. South and their Haitian brothers and sisters.

In the twentieth century, the United States, having finally emancipated its slaves, and having established its own colonial possessions in the Caribbean, reversed its policy of isolation of Haiti to active intervention, occupying Haiti from 1915 to 1934. U.S. troops were sent to Haiti in 1915 to put down peasant revolts that "threatened the stability of the region." Recognizing the profit potential of the fertile land and the abundant cheap labor, U.S. corporations moved into Haiti with the troops and stayed. Today U.S. companies are still by far the largest investors in Haiti, constituting 90 percent of all foreign investment. U.S. clothing manufacturers have garments assembled in sweatshops in Haiti, where the average wage is two dollars a day. All the world's baseballs are stitched in Haiti, and many of the Disney dolls, including Pocahontas, are assembled and clothed in Haitian sweatshops.

The second U.S. occupation of Haiti is still in effect, even though Clinton had announced that all U.S. troops would be withdrawn by the end of 1999. After dithering around for three years, the United States landed troops in Haiti in 1994, finally reestablishing the democratically elected populist government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide and ending the bloody coup that had toppled him in 1991. The United States seized all the documentation of the political assassinations, massacres, and terrorism during the coup and has refused to turn them over to Haitian authorities. In the five years of this second U.S. occupation, the sole accomplishment appears to be the training of an independent police force now skilled in "crowd control." The roads are little more than gravel paths, with huge craters every hundred yards; there are no public hospitals or public schools. Haiti is a tragic case of maldevelopmentas as a result of a deliberate policy of

imperialism to retard, deform, and destroy public institutions for the general welfare.

Haitian writers have produced a rich literature reflecting the beauty and the horror of this land and her people's history. At the beginning of the twentieth century, on the eve of the first U.S. occupation, Jean Price Mars founded a literary journal called *La Revue des Griots* dedicated to the rediscovery and revalorization of the oral tradition of Haitian culture. Up to this time, most Haitian literature had been a pale imitation of French literature, as only the writings of the Paris-educated elite were published. *Griot* refers to the traditional African storyteller, the historian of the tribe. At about the same time, Jacques Roumain, agricultural engineer, ethnologist, and political activist (he founded the Haitian Communist Party in 1934), began publishing intensely political poetry, committed to social progress and the independence of Haiti. His most famous work, the novel *Gouverneurs de la Rosée* (translated as *Masters of the Dew*), is an epic account of the struggle of Haitian peasants against poverty and superstition to regain control of their land and their lives. Interestingly enough, although Roumain was actively engaged in the struggle against the U.S. occupation, the U.S. presence and influence over the Haitian economic and political system are not shown in the novel. The forces impeding social progress are represented by voodoo priests, local sheriffs, and feuding heads of rival families in the desperately poor, drought-stricken village.

Some novels written during the first U.S. occupation do reveal the effects of U.S. control of the land and the people, both physical and psychological domination. As Myrian Chancy writes, "The occupation changed Haitian literature which had not up to that point textually engaged its northern neighbor" (1997, 17). Many writers were radicalized by this first-hand experience with colonization and devalorization.

Two of the more notable writers of this period were women: Virgile Valcin and Annie Desroy. Valcin published novels and poetry and founded a feminist journal, *Voix des femmes*. Desroy wrote plays, two of which were produced under the U.S. occupation, and four novels. Valcin's novel *La Blanche négresse*

recounts the history of a light-skinned French-Haitian woman who marries an American during the occupation; he is horrified when he discovers her African ancestry. The novel reveals the heightened racism brought by the U.S. occupation, when questions of race trumped class: the heroine's privileged class status in Haitian society–and all the social, cultural and educational advantages she enjoyed–suddenly were wiped out by the fact she was black.

In his selected essays, *Racism, Imperialism, and Peace* (1987), Herbert Aptheker demonstrates that eras of imperialist conquest in U.S. history coincide with eras of increased racist repression in the colony and at home. The mass lynchings of African American males in the South occurred right after the U.S. victory in the Spanish-American War and the annexation of Puerto Rico and the Philippines.

Annie Desroy's novel, *Le joug* (*The Yoke),* published in 1934, examines in a more complex fashion the effects of the U.S. occupation on the Haitian psyche. Through the lives of two couples, one American and the other Haitian, Desroy traces the dynamics of racial, sexual, and class oppression during the occupation. Through the character of an American officer, Harry Murray, who considers himself a liberal and a protector of the Haitian people, and can hardly wait to be taken to a voodoo ceremony, Desroy exposes the eroticism and profound condescension of the U.S. fascination with Haitian culture. Moreover, Desroy demonstrates that class and racial privilege exists side-by-side with a sexist ideology that posits Haitian women as erotic creatures who respond to acts of violence.

These remarkable novels of women's experience during the U.S. occupation are rarely read or taught today, even in courses on Haitian or francophone Caribbean literature. One novel set in this period that is aknowledged by francophone scholars is *Compère général soleil* (1955) by Jacques Stephen Alexis, a descendant of Dessalines, a poet and populist political leader, who was captured, tortured, and disappeared in 1961 during the Duvalier regime. This novel, his masterpiece, has been praised by French and Caribbean scholars for its evocation of the beauty of the Haitian countryside, its realistic portrayal of the misery of

the urban slums, its incorporation of Haitian musical rhythms and orality into prose style, and above all, the creation of a picaresque hero who incorporates multiple characteristics of the major figures of the Caribbean carnaval, figures whose roots can be found in the joyous, macabre, world-turned-upside-down sensuality of the medieval carnival. One aspect of the novel rarely mentioned by critics is the explicit presence of U.S. soldiers in the text. In the opening pages in a passage that evokes the capacity of the Haitian people to rejoice in a new day despite their misery, Alexis catalogs the hardships of life under the occupation. The very first item in a list that includes the lack of food, clean water, and meaningful work is the presence of American soldiers on the streets (35).

And even earlier, in the prologue, as the main character, Hilarius Hilarion, wanders through Port-au-Prince at night, he is accosted by drunken U.S. marines. Numerous references to the U.S. military throughout the text make it clear that the poverty and violence of life in Haiti must be seen in the context of U.S. domination which frames the story.

Under the current occupation, women are again writing the most trenchant testimonies of the noxious effects of U.S. troops on their soil. Two novelists, both women, are publishing today in Haiti. Haiti now has several publishing houses, so Haitian writers are no longer dependent on French editors for publication of their works.

Yanick Lahens was born in Haiti and educated in France, but, unlike many of the Haitian intelligentsia and cultural workers, returned to Haiti after completing her degree in literature and stayed in Haiti. She has worked as a teacher, an editor, and director of cultural programs on Haitian radio, and has published several important articles on Caribbean literature. In 1994 a progressive French publishing house, L'Harmattan, which specializes in Caribbean literature, published her first literary work, a collection of short stories entitled *Tante Résia et les dieux* (*Aunt Resia and the Gods*). In 1999, the Haitian publishers Editions Mémoire published her second collection of stories, *La petite corruption*.

The first collection, *Tante Résia et les dieux,* celebrates Haitian culture and the strength of Haitian women. Tante Résia is the perfect symbol of the woman Lahens wants us to know–not the tragic mulatresse of the Haitian elite; not the exotic, erotic savage caught up in the delirium of the voodoo ceremony–but a competent, healthy, independent woman, the pillar of her community, who plays a pivotal role in the Haitian economy as a trader bringing goods in from the outside (the Dominican Republic, and other Caribbean nations) to sell in her store in Acul du Nord, a seacoast town in the north of Haiti. She is also representative of the cultural heritage of Haiti, preserving the customs of the ancestors and the voodoo religion. All the actions of this heroine are presented in a positive light, including her attempts to dissuade her nephew from underground political activity against the Duvalier regime (88). On the other hand, Tante Résia has hidden political organizers and schoolteachers targeted by the Duvalier regime and given them money to escape the country.

Several of the stories in this collection depict the terror of the Duvalier regime. "Les survivants" is an account by an older man of his rebellious adolescence and his involvement in an anti-Duvalier cell. His memory focuses the narration on a precise date–15 May 1968–and a precise place–a poor neighborhood in Port-au-Prince, where his best friend is caught and killed by the Tontons Macoutes. In "La chambre bleue" the narrator, a young woman, recounts a haunting memory from her childhood when the blue bedroom of her grandparents' home, where she had lived happy and safe all of her six years, suddenly becomes a place of terrible secrets. Forbidden all of a sudden to enter a room where she had always played, the child tries to find out who or what is inside. Hiding in the hallway, she finally gets a glimpse of a man horribly wounded, lying in the bed. The date is August 1963, and the reader as no doubt that this traumatic memory from her childhood resulted from the violence of the Duvalier regime.

What Lahens fails to show even obliquely in the stories of this first collection is the role of the United States in supporting and encouraging the violent repression of the Duvalier years. In

her second collection of stories, published in Haiti in 1999, the U.S. presence is clear and U.S. soldiers are key players in the dramas.

The first story, "Le désastre banal," recounts the coming-of-age story of the teenager Mirna, one of seven children in a desperately poor family in Port-au-Prince, who sees the coming of the U.S. soldiers as her opportunity to acquire the clothes and makeup she sees in old-fashioned magazines stolen from second-hand stores—*"Pour elle, cette occupation serait un cadeau de destin"* [For her, this occupations would be a gift of destiny] (20). She begins dating U.S. soldiers; one of them, fifty-year-old William, takes her to a hotel by the sea where she has sex for the first time. In the bathroom afterwards, Mirna *"chercha plus tard à renouer les fils épars de son esprit"* (later tried to stich together the separated threads of her spirit). Thinking of the dirty, smelly streets of her neighborhood, of her brothers and sisters always under foot, of the absence of hope and privacy in her home, she is able to swallow the nausea she was feeling after sex with William and walk back to his bed wearing a mask "that would replace her face for the rest of her life."

Lahens entitles this story "The Banal Disaster," implying that it is commonplace and perhaps of little interest compared to tales of terror and massacre. But it is nevertheless a disaster and devastating for the very reason that it is common. That young women are selling their bodies and souls for a chance to wear a pretty dress and sleep in a luxurious bedroom.

The title story, *"La petite corruption,"* is a fast-paced thriller that reveals the noxious effects of the U.S. culture of drugs and violence on a group of young men who have been caught up in drug deals, robbery, murder, and gang warfare.

The last story of the collection is perhaps the most interesting, from both a thematic and structural point of view. "Une histoire américaine" recounts the travels to the U.S. South of a young Haitian woman who had escaped the violence of the Duvalier regime to study in New York City. There she met a civil rights activist from Alabama, a law student, who urged her to come with him on a tour of the South to speak to church groups and youth groups organizing for equality. The year is 1963. The

story, told in the first person by the young Haitian woman Jocelyne, chronicles the difficulties and humiliations of travelling through the South where Blacks were not served in restaurants and could not stay in motels. Every morning, before leaving one city, they must pack enough to eat and drink for the day's drive to the next speaking engagement. In Birmingham, one of the organizers of the meeting at which they speak is slain that night by a white mob. These episodes alternate with italicized passages of Jocelyne's memories of her adolescence in Haiti, where her first boyfriend is forced underground by the Tonton Macoutes. Textually, the message is clear: in the 1960s, political terror was practiced both in Haiti and in the United States, and the system that supported the Duvalier regime fosters racism, political repression, and terror at home.

As with all emerging literatures, the literature of Haiti raises questions of identity, memory, and language. Colonialism gobbled up territory and minds, eradicating culture, language, identity. Who are we? Who were we? Who will we become? And in what language should we express our experience? Lahens intersperses her stories with phrases in Creole, as does the second woman novelist publishing in Haiti today, Jan J. Dominique, whose *Mémoire d'une amnésique* was published in 1984. She is a journalist with Radio Haiti. Her memoir is composed of alternating chapters, with two alternating narrative voices, one the author, one a woman named Paul. Preceding both narratives is a tale about a little boy who refuses to drink his milk until one day, out of desperation, his mother yells, "If you don't drink it, the Americans will take you away!" The little boy rushes out on the balcony and cries to the U.S. soldiers in the streets below, "No!! Don't hurt me, Americans! I'll be good! I'll drink my milk." Dominique is deliberately playing on the boogeyman story, told in many cultures to frighten children into obeying adults. But in Haiti, the boogeyman is called "Tonton Macoute," also the name given to Duvalier's private guards who intimidated, tortured, and assassinated any person considered an opponent of the regime.

Edwidge Danticat, a Haitian-American author, writes in English, interspersed with Creole phrases, and publishes in the United States. She has been living in Brooklyn, New York, since

the age of twelve. She has published a collection of short stories *Kric? Krac!* and two novels, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) and *The Farming of Bones* (1998). The first novel chronicles the journeys back and forth between Haiti and Brooklyn of a young Haitian-American woman in search of her identity and the meaning of her mother's nightmare memories of rape and torture under the Duvalier regime. Although the narrator fully recognizes and relates the racism of the U.S. treatment of Haitian refugees, the direct support that the United States gave to the Duvalier regime of terror is not recounted.

The Farming of Bones is a historical novel of the 1937 slaughter of Haitian immigrant workers in the Dominican Republic by General Trujillo. The text of the novel does not indicate the U.S. support of the Trujillo regime, but the inside covers reproduce letters written in French by the Haitian President Vincent to the Haitian Foreign Secretary, who was in New York, asking him to secure U.S. help to stop the massacres. The United States did nothing. Danticat notes that these letters can be found in the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library. These letters are not reproduced in the paperback edition of the novel, and Danticat's reference to them and the FDR Library are expunged from the acknowledgements.

Silence and censorship, including self-censorship, are further proof of repression and domination.

Department of French and Italian
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

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ABSTRACTS

Paul Burkett, **"Was Marx a Promethean?"**–In projecting capitalism's creation of the necessary conditions for communism, Marx purportedly embraced the view that human progress inevitably occurs at nature's expense, as technological advance subjugates nature to human purposes. Marx actually suggested, however, that the transition to communism requires a long struggle by the producers and their communities for a new kind of social union with the natural conditions of production.

Donald Judd, **"Marxism and Sustainable Development: The Ecological Limits of Capitalism"**–Marx's critique of capital helps us understand our alienation from nature. More importantly, Marx's insight that capitalism must grow at all costs exposes the logic of capital as incompatible with the logic of ecology. Continual growth is a structural imperative of the system. Sustainable development is only possible once capitalism has been swept away.

Bob Fulkerson, **"Grassroots Organizing, Coalition Building, and Electoral Politics: Building a Movement for Progressive Social Change in Nevada"**–Pressing social and economic problems faced by the traditionally disenfranchised, as well as environmental degradation, can be fought and won through statewide coalition building and grassroots organizing. This article focuses on the fifteen-year experience of the author director of a statewide environmental organization and founder of a permanent progressive statewide coalition in Nevada.

Virginia Warner Brodine, **"The Need for a Working-Class Environmentalism"**–Workers who wish to have a connection with nature think of it as something apart, which they must seek out when they are not working. Through its destructive impact on the environment, capitalism places workers in the untenable position of having to choose between the right to live today and

the right to live tomorrow. The starting point for a working-class environmentalism is fighting for jobs in environmentally sound production rather than supporting a policy of defending jobs at the expense of the environment.

***Jonathan Isler,* "Organizing a Nonstatic Workforce"**–The author discusses the role of graduate students as university workers and the experiences derived from the effort to gain collective-bargaining rights for teaching assistants at the University of California, Davis.

***Edwin A. Roberts*, "Public Marxist Intellectuals: Barrows Dunham, Howard Selsam, and Harry K. Wells"**–The author deals with the complaint that U.S. Marxists have all but lost their ability to act as "public intellectuals" able to communicate to a broadly educated public at large. He examines the work of three activist-oriented academics between the late 1940s and early 1960s–members of or allied with the Communist Party USA–who successfully promoted a brand of Marxist philosophy addressed to a broad general audience outside academia.

***Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz,* "Writing a Marxist Memoir: Red Diaper Baby?"**–The author presents a chapter from her book *Red Dirt: Growing Up Okie* to illustrate how a political memoir that discusses race, class, and gender issues can be used to popularize Marxism and demonstrate its potential to effect social change.

***April Ane Knutson,* "Reflections of U.S. Imperialism in Haitian Literature"**–The history of Haiti began with the historic defeat of French imperialism and the establishment of the first Black republic in world history but has degenerated into tragic maldevelopment under U.S. imperialism, including two periods of military occupation. Haitian literature, especially in novels written by women, reflects the racist and sexist oppression of the U.S. military presence in the Caribbean.

ABREGES

***Paul Burkett,* «Est-ce que Marx était Prométhéen?** – En transposant la création des conditions requises par le capitalisme

au communisme, Marx renforce la vision que le progrès de l'humanité se fait au dépens de la nature, dans la mesure où le développement technique subjugue la nature aux usages de l'homme. En réalité, Marx a suggéré que les producteurs et leurs communautés doivent se battre lors de la transition vers le communisme, pour un nouveau genre d'union sociale avec les conditions naturelles de production.

***Donald Judd,* «Le Marxisme et un développement que l'on peut maintenir: Les limites écologiques du capitalisme»** – La critique de Marx du capital fournit la base pour comprendre notre aliénation de la nature. Encore plus important, l'exposé de Marx, que le capitalisme doit croître à tout prix, démontre que la logique du capital est incompatible avec la logique de l'écologie. La croissance perpétuelle est un impératif structurel du système. Un développement que l'on peut maintenir, n'est possible qu'une fois le capitalisme abandonné.

***Bob Fulkerson*, «L'Organisation à la base, la mise en place de coalitions et politique électorale : la construction d'un mouvement pour une amélioration sociale progressiste dans le Nevada»** – Par une organisation à la base à l'échelle de l'état, et grâce à des coalitions, il est possible de résoudre les problèmes urgents, au niveau social et économique, auxquels sont confrontés ceux qui sont traditionnellement privés du droit de vote. De la même manière, on peut aborder la dégradation de l'environnement. Le directeur et fondateur d'une organisation écologiste dans le Nevada, fort de ses quinze années d'expérience, construit actuellement une large coalition, permanente et progressiste, à l'échelle de l'état.

***Virginia Warner Brodine*, «La Nécessité d'un mouvement écologiste au sein de la classe ouvrière»** – Il concerne les ouvriers qui souhaitent vivre en harmonie avec la nature, la considèrent comme une valeur à part; quelque chose qu'on doit retrouver quand on ne travaille pas. Par son impact ravageur sur l'environnement, le capitalisme place les ouvriers devant un dilemme intolérable : il leur impose de choisir entre la possibilité d'exister aujourd'hui, et le droit de vivre demain. Un mouvement écologiste de la classe ouvrière devrait prendre son essor à

travers une lutte pour des emplois dans une production écologiquement «propre», et non en faveur d'une politique qui maintient l'emploi au détriment de l'environnement.

***Jonathan Isler,* «La Syndicalisation d'une main d'oeuvre transitoire»** – L'auteur examine le rôle des étudiants diplômés comme travailleurs à l'université, et décrit leurs expériences dans la tentative d'obtenir une convention collective des enseignants auxiliaires à l'Université de Californie.

***Edwin A. Roberts,* «Les Intellectuelles marxistes grand public : Barrows Dunham, Howard Selsam et Harry K. Wells»** – L'auteur parle du reproche que les marxistes aux Etats Unis ont quasiment perdu leur capacité d'agir comme intellectuels capables de communiquer au hasard avec un public largement éduqué. Il examine le travail de trois universitaires activistes dans la période entre la fin des années 1940 et le début des années 1960, tous membres ou alliés du Communist Party USA. Tous les trois ont promu avec succès un genre de philosophie marxiste qui pourrait être aussi compréhensible qu'utile pour une large audience diversifiée, à l'extérieur de cercles académiques.

***Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz,* «Ecrire des mémoires marxistes : Red Diaper Baby?»** – L'auteur présente un chapitre de son livre «Saleté rouge : Okie en train de grandir» pour démontrer comment une dissertation politique qui soulève des questions de race, de classe et de sexe, peut être utilisée pour rendre le marxisme populaire, et prouver sa capacité à provoquer un changemenyt social.

***April Ane Knutson*, «Réflexions de l'impérialisme américaine dans la littérature haïtienne»** – L'histoire d'Haïti a commencé avec la défaite historique de l'impérialisme français et l'établissement de la première république noire dans l'histoire du monde, mais elle a dégénéré en maldéveloppement tragique sous l'impérialisme américain, qui comprenait deux périodes d'occupation militaire. La littérature haïtienne, surtout la littérature écrit par des femmes, reflète l'oppression raciste et sexiste de la présence militaire des Etats-Unis aux Caraïbes.