

**Nature, Society, and Thought**

**NST**

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**a Journal of Dialectical and Historical Materialism**

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VOL. 13, NO. 2 (APRIL 2000)

Sent to press May 14, 2001

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Cover design by Prockat

VOLUME 13, NUMBER 2

APRIL 2000

*NST: NATURE, SOCIETY, AND THOUGHT* (ISSN 0890-6130). Published quarterly in January, April, July, and October by MEP Publications, University of Minnesota, Physics Building, 116 Church Street S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455-0112. Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *NST: Nature, Society, and Thought*, University of Minnesota, Physics Building, 116 Church St. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455-0112.

*Subscriptions.* U.S.A./Great Britain, one year, individuals \$15/£14, institutions \$28/£23; two years, individuals \$28/£26, institutions \$56/£45.50. Other countries, add \$5 for postage for each year. Single copies: individuals \$5/£3.50, institutions \$10/£6.

Subscription and editorial address: *NST*, University of Minnesota, Physics Building, 116 Church Street S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455-0112 (tel. 612/922-7993).

Contents are indexed in *Sociological Abstracts* and *Alternative Press Index*. A complete index of all articles ever published in *Nature, Society and Thought* is given on <[www.umn.edu/home/marqu002](http://www.umn.edu/home/marqu002)>.

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## **In Memoriam: Dirk Struik (1894–2000)**

### **For Dirk Struik on His 100th Birthday**

it was nineteen fifteen  
in rotterdam. the awesome  
god mars, not to  
be outdone by history  
had been chewing carrion  
non-stop for over a  
year with no sign of  
let-up. the local  
socialists had called  
a forum and, you, dirk  
had been asked to chair  
the assembly by your  
comrades. not even they  
showed up at the appointed  
evening. only you were  
there—with one other:  
a lone soul, balding,  
in his mid-forties, a  
goateed russian exile  
visiting from geneva.  
his presence lifted you  
out of embarrassment.  
his lone presence changed  
the question from what  
is to be done to:  
what next and  
are we ready?

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it's been seventy-nine  
years since that lonely  
night. ulyanov, the  
visitor lies in his  
mausoleum, his spirit  
awaiting the jailbreak  
from the box in the  
hands of the high priests  
of catechismic marxism.  
there are no hagiographic  
oil paintings depicting  
the revolutionary master  
bestowing his mantle  
upon the shoulders of  
a twenty-one year old  
dutch scientist.

but you lived this long!  
you taught math  
you taught marxism. and  
in the hallowed halls  
of mickey mouse tune  
m.i.t.-p.h.d.-m.o.n.e.y  
you told all who would hear  
that your beliefs were  
grounded not only in science  
but in your faith in  
humanity's future. in your  
quiet but unerring way  
you taught us by example  
how to fight with the precision  
of a college professor who  
before the exam tells us  
in broad contours but not in  
detail what lies ahead. and  
then you ask: are we ready?

Gary Hicks

## **In Memoriam: Howard L. Parsons (1918–2000)**

Howard Parsons, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, University of Bridgeport, received his B.A. in 1942 and his Ph.D. in 1946, both from the University of Chicago.

His major teaching positions were at the University of Tennessee from 1949–1957, Coe College from 1957–1965, and the University of Bridgeport from 1965–1988, where he served as chairman of the philosophy department. In 1980 and 1990 he was a visiting professor at Moscow State University.

Professor Parsons's scholarly work focused on social philosophy, ethics, philosophy of religion, and Marxism. He was a prolific writer who authored and edited several books and contributed over two hundred articles and seven monographs to philosophical, religious, and educational journals. His major works were: *Humanism and Marx's Thought* (1971); *Man, East and West* (1975); *Self, Global Issues, and Ethics* (1977); *Marx and Engels on Ecology* (1977); *Marxism, Christianity, and Human Values* (1981); and *Christianity in the USSR* (1987). He was an associate editor of *Nature, Society, and Thought*, and he edited a special issue of this journal on Marx and Freud (vol. 8, no. 1, 1995).

Throughout his life Professor Parsons was concerned with many social issues, especially peace, poverty, ecology, and nuclear disarmament. The perspective brought to these and other issues made a major contribution to Marxist literature.

Howard Parsons presented papers and organized symposia at every World Congress of Philosophy from 1963 to 1993. In addition to presenting papers at various conferences in the United States, he also made presentations in India, Germany,

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Poland, Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Japan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cuba, and the Soviet Union. He was also a frequent participant in Christian-Marxist dialogues. Professor Parsons was a highly respected Marxist philosopher with an international reputation.

Howard Parsons was a founding member of the Society for the Philosophical Study of Marxism, where he served as president on several occasions. Through his efforts, Marxist philosophers from the Soviet Union, Cuba, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Poland, Canada, and the United States were presenters at the annual meetings of the society. He coedited the proceedings of these meetings in *Dialogues on the Philosophy of Marxism* (1974); *Marxism, Revolution, and Peace* (1976); and *Diverse Perspectives on Marxist Philosophy* (1995). He hosted many international Marxist philosophers and was instrumental in acquainting the U.S. public with the world Marxist philosophy movement. Professor Parsons was considered among Russian and Cuban philosophers as one of the most important U.S. Marxist philosophers of the twentieth century.

Edward D'Angelo  
*Quinnipiac University*  
*Hamden, Connecticut*

# Political and Radical Aspects of the Rastafarian Movement in Jamaica

Charles Reavis Price

*Most people probably think of relations between religion and the left as nonexistent or antagonistic. In reality, however, this is not and never has been the case. In earlier times radical ideas and movements usually had a religious form or at least strong religious overtones.*

—Sweezy and Magdoff 1984, 1

Jamaica's Rastafarians have often been portrayed by academics and other observers as a patriarchal, messianic, and escapist-oriented cult (e.g., Lanternari 1963; Kitzinger 1966; Burrige 1969). Largely because of Rastafarians' desire to separate themselves from the dominant system<sup>1</sup>—called "Babylon" by them—and to protect themselves against Babylon's enforcers, the police, Rastafarians are said to avoid involvement in politics. Such portrayals help to perpetuate views that make secular-minded progressives believe that Rastafarians are apolitical, and maybe even reactionary. Indeed, leftists have tended to maintain distance from religious-oriented groups (see Sweezy and Magdoff 1984; Tabb 1986a). This is to some extent a function of the antirevolutionary role churches have assumed in various popular struggles for social change, and to a narrow reading of Marx's remark about religion being the "opium of the people."<sup>2</sup> But Marx and Engels recognized the affinities between religion and socialism, noting a main difference being the

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socialists' concern with history and the here and now as opposed to an afterworld or otherworldly interventions.

Leftists have given much attention to antisystemic movements,<sup>3</sup> but these movements tend to fit a description of being "rationally" structured and organized. Although passing reference has been made to the antisystemic tendencies of some millenarian movements (e.g., Wallerstein 1990), focus on a narrow range of "legitimate" movement attributes implies that spontaneous and "irrational" movements (i.e., messianic, millenarian, revitalization) are not congruent with secular socialist or communist goals of developing an egalitarian society geared first toward meeting people's basic needs. However, to so characterize Jamaican Rastafarians is misleading, and overlooks a potentially strong and committed ally in the struggle for a different social order. More broadly speaking, such thinking denies a recognition that different kinds of spiritually oriented movements can potentially strengthen secular left-oriented movements. As Tabb points out,

New religions—from Judaism to Christianity to the many other religions of the world—are created when an articulation of what is wrong with the current order coincides with a statement of an alternative vision so powerful that it compels large numbers of people to accept its truth. (1986b, xiv–xv)<sup>4</sup>

Many Rastafarians are instilled with a strong sense of righteousness, justice, and respect for human rights. This is not simply a moral commitment but an ingrained part of their sense of self and identity. Some of today's older Rastafarians participated in and supported the Jamaican labor movements of the 1930s, national liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, trade-union activities, and community activism. Many of them have fought not only for their movement's needs and aims, but for poor people in Jamaica. Some of these Rastafarians are quite clear in their preference for a socialist or communist society, and have developed their own indigenous critique of colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism.

Although postmodernism appears to be fading from the intellectual scene, its impact on social theory and politics lingers, as suggested by the phrase “politics of identity.” Unfortunately, the postmodern view converges with the Left’s refusal to engage the progressive potential of some spiritually oriented movements. A postmodern account would laud the resistance to capitalism inherent in the ideology and practice of Rastafarians, and celebrate the seemingly acephalous character of the movement as individualistic, decentered, and fragmented, without necessarily seeking to analyze the concrete political possibilities of this kind of “resistance.” The postmodernist perspective converges with the leftist because both would leave the Rastafarians alone to do their own thing, albeit for different reasons. Both perspectives are philistine and cynical.

Since shortly after their emergence, the Rastafarians have inculcated an anticolonial, anti-imperialist, and anticapitalist ideology that is embedded within their sense of self-identity. Many simultaneously espouse a discourse that has been called antimodern, anti-Western, antistate, and almost anarchist, indicating potentially reactionary elements.<sup>5</sup>

I shall examine in this essay some historical and contemporary dynamics of the Rastafarian movement relating to ideology, identity, and political impulses. First I shall give some background to the history, culture, religion, and group dynamics of the Rastafarian movement. Second, I discuss two phases of their involvement in and withdrawal from political action. I then highlight the intragroup tension between their spiritual and pragmatic dimensions, and conclude by suggesting why groups like the Rastafarians complement and do not retard the global struggle for progressive social change. I end with a postscript on issues surrounding Rastafarian participation in revolutionary politics in Grenada.

### ***Background: Ethnogenesis, culture, and religion***

Although they date back to 1931, the first recorded appearances of Rastafarians were about 1933, in the rural parish of St. Thomas. They had coalesced around the charismatic persona of

one of the first Rastafarians, Leonard P. Howell.<sup>6</sup> Howell was a seaman who traveled across the Americas during the 1920s, and was greatly influenced by the dominant black nationalist ideologies of the time, such as Garveyism and Ethiopianism.<sup>7</sup> Evidence suggests that Howell, during his time in New York City in the late 1920s, came into contact with Communists like the Trinidadian George Padmore (Hill 1984). Given Howell's later references to "socialistic living," and his building of a commune, it seems fair to assume that Padmore, the Harlem Communist Party, and other Caribbean radicals had some impact on his thinking.

The word *Rastafarian* derives from the name of the Ethiopian nobleman, Ras Tafari, crowned emperor of Ethiopia on 2 November 1930. Upon receiving the crown, the emperor changed his name to Haile Selassie I, and assumed several titles, including Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, King of Kings, and Son of the Holy Trinity. Any reader of the Bible will recognize that in the Book of Revelations, these refer to the second coming of Christ. Critics of Selassie I emphasize (justifiably or not) that he was a monarch of what they call a fiefdom, that he had an idiosyncratic personality, that he lived lavishly, and that the Ethiopian Amhara ruling class has often been oppressive.

To the believers in Selassie's divinity, such criticisms are a distraction. They point out that His Majesty (as Selassie is affectionately called) drew up a constitution for his people that extended their rights, fought against slavery, abolished public executions, and tirelessly advocated the protection and extension of human rights and civil behavior by nations. As J. A. Rogers pointed out in 1936, Selassie "instituted a parliament and modern courts, has built roads, hospitals, schools, installed electric lighting in the streets, improved the commerce and international relations, all the while steering a diplomatic course between the opposing factions and religions in his own land." Biblically speaking, those who believe in Selassie's divinity point out that Christ's first coming was symbolically expressed as that of a sacrificial lamb, while his second coming would be that of a lion

and leader of people (that is, a king). When the Italian fascists invaded Ethiopia a second time in 1935, many Jamaicans clamored to fight on the side of Ethiopia to help defeat the fascists. Selassie I, in recognition of the support of Jamaicans and others of the African Diaspora, promised to make Ethiopia accessible to the Diaspora.<sup>8</sup>

From their beginning the Rastafarians were persecuted in Jamaica. These struggles helped to shape their antisystemic identity. Jamaican colonial authorities convicted Howell, an ardent anticolonialist, of sedition, and imprisoned him several times. The police and the citizenry regularly brutalized the first generation of Rastafarians in their effort to eliminate what could then be called a cult.<sup>9</sup> They were a religiously inspired and spirited anticolonial movement with strong anti-Western and antielite tendencies. The colonial police infiltrated Rastafarian meetings during the 1930s, keeping a record of what they saw and heard. Howell was articulating a perspective that condemned the race and class structure of colonial Jamaica, advocating the return of a black messiah, and advising the poor to withdraw support from the colonial state by not paying taxes. But Howell was speaking to a long-standing tradition of protest against taxes, colonialism, and oppression in rural St. Thomas.<sup>10</sup> Thus, messianic millenarianism, black nationalism, and religious radicalism were inextricably intertwined with active protest. These early Rastafarians often led demonstrations to protest their mistreatment by non-Rastafarians.

As Robert Hill shows, the early Rastafarians were a political threat to the British colonial possession (Jamaica) because they urged black people to withdraw all loyalty from the crown. In 1934 Howell was convicted on two counts of sedition and imprisoned for two years (Hill 1984). Even in Howell's absence the movement kept growing, becoming increasingly radical and activist. The social conditions of Jamaica then as now made the Rastafarian message compelling. The Rastafarians provided a critique of colonialism, imperialism, and classism, while offering an ideology portraying biblical history as a black legacy. And all

of this was couched in rhetoric of black redemption. They made black identity positive in an environment that denigrated everything black and African.

By the mid-to-late 1940s, a number of Rastafarians had begun to grow dreadlocks, uncombed hair that turns into long, matted tresses. This distinguished them from some of the first Rastafarians, and from another faction, the Combsomes (a term referring to their occasional combing of their Afro-like hair). This divergence occurred as a result of a particular reading of the Old Testament Nazarite vows and of dynamism and conflict within the movement as younger adherents, the dreadlocks, rebelled against what they thought to be the regressive aspects of the older Rastafarians, such as their mixing of other indigenous religious practices like speaking in tongues, sorcery, and spirit possession, with the new beliefs. For the younger Rastas of the mid-to-late 1940s, this was backwardness, and they tried to purge the movement of these tendencies. In all fairness it must be said, however, that the earliest Rastafarians had merely overlaid the new beliefs on the existing religious edifice in Jamaica, where African traditions blended with European (and later North American) Christian teachings.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Two phases of engagement in and withdrawal from political action***

The roots of Rastafarian reluctance to engage in governmental politics can be traced to two crucial phases of political defeat and the cynicism that accompanied these disappointments. It must be emphasized that contemporary Rastafarian claims of not “dealing” with politics typically refer to participation in and support of formal politics, not political somnolence.

From the beginning of Jamaica’s contemporary political system in 1938, the Rastafarians favored socialism and the provision of basic needs by the state.<sup>12</sup> The first Rastafarians took an activist position from the outset, when the People’s National Party (PNP) was formed in 1938. Some Rastas participated in strikes, as 1938 was a year of major labor-related rebellions in

Jamaica and throughout the Caribbean. When I asked then-86-year-old Rasta Ivy (probably the oldest living Rastafarian woman) why she participated in the labor and poor people's protests of 1938, she told me, "We [Rastafarians] had to fight for truth, righteousness, and the people's rights. The people dem [them] don't have no rights [in those times]." <sup>13</sup> Hill suggests that "Rastafarian millenarian ideology functioned as an active catalyst in the developing popular consciousness that led to the labor uprising of 1938 by virtue of its radical vision of black dominion" (1984, 34).

The fledgling PNP was led by Norman Manley, a light-skinned (reflecting the class and racial structure of Jamaica) and highly respected barrister and intellectual who was particularly concerned with empowering workers and protecting their interests. From 1940 through 1952, the PNP claimed to be guided by a socialist vision of society. Evidence shows that as early as 1940 the PNP was advocating land reform and nationalization of sectors of the economy, which resonated well with the land-concerned Rastafarians of largely peasant origins.

Interestingly, a few Rastafarians decided to support the opposition, Alexander Bustamante's Jamaican Labor Party (JLP), which claimed to promote trade unionism. According to Barry Chevannes, at least one Rastafarian was instrumental in the founding of the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (1994). During the early part of the demagogic Bustamante's tenure as leader of the JLP, he promoted a view of the party as one that spoke to the "small people's" desires. But he also promoted the aims and needs of capital and the elite groups. Bustamante, also a light-skinned Jamaican, did not endear himself to many of the predominantly black population when he publicly made disparaging remarks against a leading dark-skinned member of his own party, St. William Grant. Grant, an Ethiopianist, was popular with the black population. In response to Bustamante's racism, one early Rastafarian said, "I look into myself and I have seen where those men [Bustamante and his ilk] is [sic] a traitor to the black race." Another reasoned, "From the moment you change

your attitude from the poor people you don't mean them good. And we hear him say him don't have a drop of black blood in him" (Chevannes 1994, 148). This illustrates the extent to which race and class issues deeply plague Jamaican politics, although a range of Jamaicans, including poor ones, supported the JLP.

The JLP, in reaction to the PNP's socialist leanings, developed a hysterical anticommunist campaign and ideology that outlived Bustamante (for example, anticommunism played a decisive role in the JLP's 1980 national election victory).<sup>14</sup> The PNP lost the 1944 election, the first one, to the JLP. Those Rastafari who supported the PNP became disenchanted with politics, critically concluding that such a system could not work in favor of the oppressed. No matter who won the election, they concluded, the race-class structure would remain intact, and the largely African population would continue at the bottom of the class hierarchy. Repatriation came to be increasingly emphasized (Chevannes 1994).

Even given this ostensibly escapist thrust, the Rastafarians continued to demand that the government address their claims, and they engaged in "political" actions like marches. One Rastafarian, Sam Brown, even ran for a parliamentary seat in 1962 (he was ostracized by Rastafarians of that time for doing so). Sam told me that his aims were to push for land for the landless and housing for the homeless, to put the repatriation issue on the front burner, and to inform poor people of what happens behind the closed doors of Jamaican government. Today Sam is respected for his earlier forays into politics.<sup>15</sup>

The first period of withdrawal from politics was also part of changes going on within the movement itself as the dreadlocks faction gained ideological ascendancy over earlier adherents. More youthful dreadlocks groups such as the Youth Black Faith (YBF) and the Higes Knots drew an even sharper line between themselves, the first Rastafarians, and the larger society (see, for example, Homiak 1997).<sup>16</sup> They developed a language initially intelligible only to the dreadlocks; they developed an "Ital Livity" (a lifestyle based on use of noncommercial foods and goods and a closer harmony with nature); and they shouted a

damning discourse of raining “fire and brimstone” down on Babylon, in particular on the police, the conspicuous bourgeois groups, and those poor black people who aped European values and notions of beauty. They also critiqued prevailing notions of a white God and Christ. Of course, this led to further ostracism and punishment from Babylon.

In the 1950s Rastafarian clashes with Jamaica’s power structure appear to have increased. For example, Leonard Howell formed a commune called Pinnacle in a rural area outside of Kingston, where he tried to institute his version of “socialistic” living. Between 1940 and 1954, Pinnacle was raided several times by the police, and was finally destroyed by the government in 1954. Some argue this dispersed the Rastafarians further into the countryside and back into Kingston.

In 1960 the Rastafarians came to be seen by the government as a threat to national security. Reverend Claudius Henry’s son recruited a band of guerrillas in the United States.<sup>17</sup> They killed a man they believed to be an infiltrator, causing Henry’s church to be raided by government soldiers. A cache of weapons was found, as were letters to Fidel Castro asking for his assistance in overthrowing the Jamaican government and instituting a socialist regime. The government and the citizenry suspected all Rastafarians of harboring revolutionary intentions, and brutality toward Rastafarians intensified.

The increased scapegoating and brutalization of Rastafarians pushed some pragmatic Rastafarians to seek a means of providing the public with an accurate statement of their beliefs and practices. In 1960 three University of the West Indies academics (M. G. R. Smith, R. Augier, and R. Nettleford) conducted a two-week survey of the Kingston Rastafarian community, which was the basis of the oft-cited *Report on the Rastafari Movement in Kingston, Jamaica*. The government supported the research in the interest of averting what they thought might become an insurrection. The report treated seriously Rastafarian aspirations such as repatriation to Africa and their belief in the divinity of Haile Selassie I. Given the prestige accorded to Jamaican academics during that time, this so-called University Report helped

to legitimize Rastafarian beliefs and practices, although they remained social outcasts. Moreover, it provided a platform that gave the Rastafari the opportunity to explore the feasibility of their repatriation project. As a result of the University Report and its authors, three Rastafarians were part of a government contingent sent to several African nations to find how receptive these nations were to receiving Rastafarian repatriates. In general, this effort can be characterized as legitimizing and popularizing Rastafarian beliefs and aims within Jamaica. And this was done through pragmatic activism, not by escapism.

By the early-to-mid 1960s, at least one PNP politician, Ken Hill, was actively reaching out to politically engage people in the poorest sections of the ghettos of Dungle (the name translates as dung hill, reflecting the nature of the people's living conditions), strongholds of the growing Rastafarian population.<sup>18</sup> Hill took political literature to the people of these ghettos, and some Rastas would "meet and study the literature passed on by Ken Hill, as well as pray and read the Bible and chant like any other Rastafari group" (Chevannes 1994, 149). For the pragmatic Rastafarians, no strict separation of religion and politics exists, which is a difficult practice to comprehend for those who believe in separation of church and state.

The second disenchantment with politics for Rastafari occurred in the 1970s. The 1960s and 1970s were times of national liberation and Black Power movements throughout the world, and Jamaica was no exception. After the PNP won the 1972 election, the charismatic prime minister, Michael Manley (son of PNP founder Norman Manley), attempted again to develop a Jamaican democratic socialism, encouraged by the PNP landslide victory in the 1976 election. Initially their democratic socialist platform had strong support among the masses of sufferers (as the Jamaican poor refer to themselves). In his 1972 election campaign, Manley used Rastafarian rhetoric and symbols to appeal to the poor, many of whom by this time had developed sympathy and respect for the Rastafari (Waters 1989). This organic symbiosis between the sufferers and the Rastafarians did not come about simply because they lived in the

same community; rather, the University Report, the trip to Africa, and the rise of a U.S.-inspired Black Power movement in Jamaica combined to make the sufferers realize that much of the Rastafarian critique was relevant to their condition. The Rastafarians garnered added legitimacy because they developed an indigenous Black Power philosophy long before the Black Power movement of the 1960s. In addition, Robert Marley internationalized Rastafarian ideology through his brand of reggae (Jamaican popular music). It should be emphasized that Marley's music, despite its widespread appeal, drew upon very local experiences, and was directed especially to Rastafarians and Jamaicans. Eventually the poor and dispossessed throughout the world come to embrace this "rebel" music (as Bob Marley referred to it), as did the youth of the bourgeoisie.

The Manley program of the 1970s appealed to the poor with promises of land reform, redistribution of wealth, and the uplifting of the downtrodden through improving education, health care, housing, and other programs. Many Rastas ardently professed their desire for a socialist society, often looking to Cuba's education, housing, and health-care system as a model; some participated in leading local PNP corps and union activities. By 1977 Manley's program had run into serious problems, including U.S. destabilization efforts and the exodus of the Jamaican bourgeoisie and their capital, which only exacerbated earlier problems caused by the oil embargo, the ending of the gold standard, and the deterioration of the price of raw materials (like Bauxite) on the world market. Shortages of all kinds developed, and a state of national emergency was called in an attempt to control the growing unrest and violence. The Rastafarians, whose ideology and symbols partially fueled the success of the PNP, again felt betrayed by their foray into politics. By now many of them were referring to politics as "politricks," reflecting their recognition that Jamaica's class structure prevented status quo politics from radically changing the social order. They retreated from politics again, but did not give up their aims and struggles. They refocused their strategy in light of their past experiences and the changing social structure

(a turn to conservatism and neoliberalism was coming with Edward Seaga's election as prime minister in 1980).

Not only did the early 1980s herald an ideological shift to conservatism and neoliberalism, but popular culture in Jamaica changed. The hegemony of Rastafarian-inspired reggae music and its popular critiques of inequality, poverty, imperialism, and capitalism were largely supplanted by "dancehall-style" DJ music that gives emphasis to sex, guns, violence, and getting rich. This was the opposite of the Black Power and Black Pride consciousness of the 1970s, which emphasized unity, pride in African heritage, and the inanity of what Jamaicans refer to as tribal warfare (violence driven by political factions and vicious gunmen). I believe this shift in popular music reflects a change in popular consciousness; a widespread concern with Africa was replaced by a preoccupation with England and America and the material trappings of these societies.

From a postmodern perspective, the Rastafarian "retreat" of the 1980s could be analyzed as a particularistic identity manifesting voice and resistance within the margins of the system. But this observation is not politically or analytically useful. Times changed and so did Rastafarian modes and strategies of pursuing their aims. What should be seen as a sign of commitment to continuing what is more than a particularistic struggle (although it appears very particularistic) might instead be celebrated by the postmodernist as an identity of resistance. But the Rastafarians are much more than this, and such an identity analysis does not explain what has taken place since the 1970s.

For one thing, the Rastafarians did not become extinct, as quite a few forecast in the late seventies and early eighties, notwithstanding their lower profile. During the 1980s, Rastafarian ideology in Jamaica<sup>19</sup> was further refined and spread throughout the world, with Rastafarian communities springing up in places as disparate as South Africa, Senegal, New Zealand, and the Eastern Caribbean. Another significant dimension of the 1980s was the effort of core groups of Rastafarians to hold conferences to further their interests and to create international networks for their future development. One outcome of these

activities was an umbrella structure, the Rastafarian Centralization Organization (RCO), to unite all Rastafarians in Jamaica and the Caribbean. The RCO, headquartered in Kingston, is the highest (but not the first) expression thus far of the Rastas' efforts to organize. It may mark a third phase of political engagement, since it consists of many pragmatic and activist-oriented Rastafarians. Through the RCO I have met Rastafarians who are familiar with Marxism and Leninism. The RCO allows the simultaneous maintenance of the Rastafarians' acephalous and almost anarchist nature in conjunction with a structure that secures their aims and needs, while attempting to further develop popular support.

In March 1998, the RCO sponsored a conference in Kingston, attended by Rastafarian delegates from Cuba, the United States, and Barbados. A woman was elected vice-chair, which attests to some of the positive trends within the movement. Such an outcome would have been unlikely two decades ago. Although there is some justification for calling the Rastafarians a patriarchal group (a description most male and female Rastafarians would not deny), without more explanation this is misleading. On the one hand, the gender structure of the Rastafarians appears to be related to demographic processes that have so far been poorly explained. For example, during the 1930s and 1940s, female Rastafarians seem to have been more numerous than in the 1950s and 1960s, a period of change within the group (as already mentioned). Rastafarian segments such as the YBF and Higes Knots strove to be ascetic, with many members remaining celibate for years, even up to two decades or more, making it less likely for women to take up the faith during this period. By the late 1970s, however, women had again become a visible, integral part of the movement, helping to define it through music, poetry, and other means.

On the other hand, Rastafarian gender relations are a cultural construct that treats men and women as having different but complementary roles in society. In the past this coincided with a regressive view that discriminated against women by not allowing them access to leadership roles. Such behavior is losing

legitimacy as the first-generation Rastafarians pass away and the second-generation elders come to grips with the different views of the younger third- and fourth-generation Rastas.

*Two aspects of Rastafari: The spiritualists and the pragmatists*

One useful way to understand the Rastafarians as a group is to recognize that they have two strong orientations, pragmatic activism and spiritual mysticism, which coexist within the group and within individuals. At the group level, there is some tension between the two outlooks. But as different authors have demonstrated, many Bible-based religious ideologies exhibit tensions between a radical and prophetic dimension seeking to hold the Bible to its word by pursuing justice, equality, and uplift of the poor, and a clerical and status quo dimension that works to legitimate existing orders of inequality and suffering on grounds of redemption in the afterlife or the apocalypse (Tabb 1986a).

The Rastafarian pragmatists are spiritual, but believe that divine ordinance is implemented through human action, while the spiritualists take a more literal interpretation and wait for divine intervention. The spiritualists tend to resist involvement in activities that require dealing with politics, bureaucracy, and organization; they tend to be most inflexible in their antistate, antimodern, and anti-Western ideology. Their general strategy is to withdraw from the system. It is these Rastas who come to most people's minds when they think of Rastafarians. But the spiritualists are a tendency within a movement, not the movement itself. The pragmatic Rastafarians, another tendency within the movement, believe that they cannot wait for anyone to change anything for them, but must take action themselves.

Within Rastafari it should be no surprise that the two tendencies antagonize each other. The pragmatists should be recognized, however, as politically initiating many of the beliefs that Rastafarians hold dear: advocacy of repatriation; the protection of human rights like the right to land, food, housing, and work; and the struggle to be accepted as an indigenous religion, to be free from persecution, and to have cannabis recognized as

their sacrament. The spiritualists have benefitted as Rastafarians from the pragmatists' activism, no matter how much they criticize that activism.

The pragmatic Rastafarians are committed to their program of liberation in Jamaica, which includes a God-ruled government and repatriation to Africa.<sup>20</sup> But despite their particularistic program, the pragmatists continue to broaden their support base. For example, in developing a cannabis-legalization rally in Kingston in 1996, the RCO leadership decided not to make the rally only a Rastafarian issue (as it might justifiably have done), but to make it a people's rally spearheaded by Rastafari. This was a recognition of the fact that many issues that affect a significant section of Jamaican society were involved. For example, many poor people are unnecessarily fined and imprisoned for possession of personal amounts of ganja.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the pragmatists had shown an awareness of how their struggles and aims articulate with those of other segments of the population. The cannabis rally spoke to issues of decriminalization of ganja, religious freedom, police brutality, and the positive uses to which cannabis can be put. These are issues that are dear to Rastafarians and many non-Rastafarians.

More importantly, the RCO leadership recognizes the current leadership and authority vacuum in Jamaica, and seeks to serve as a positive model during these uncertain times. Between January and October 1998, more than one hundred "recognized" protests, demonstrations, and riots took place throughout Jamaica, and the government knows there were far more rebellions than officially recognized. In September 1998, I witnessed first hand a three-day standoff between the army and gunmen. The army did not fare well. The vanguard of these riots and protests was not workers or students, but the lumpenproletariat who currently define the state-of-the-art protest activities in Jamaica. And in my judgment, they respect the Rastafarians most, not politicians and activists. But these elements lack organization, a moral stance, and a guiding ideology—all of which the Rastafarians do have.

**Conclusion**

In many ways capitalist development thwarts spiritual growth and development, such as through the commodification of religious experience itself. Whether or not progressives harbor a spiritual-religious orientation, they must recognize that most of the world's people have at least a nominally religious orientation. Such an orientation should not be carelessly dismissed as myth-oriented, reactionary, and regressive. This dismissal ignores the potential of some of these groups and people to assist in progressive social change.

The point I wish to make is that progressives have allies in places sometimes ignored. We cannot presuppose in the present period of identity-centered movements that spiritually oriented movements—which do empirically seem to be proliferating, especially the millenarian and messianic-oriented ones (Castells 1997)—are inherently reactionary, and hence not potential allies in the struggle for progressive change. Appeals can be made to their desire to have security of access to land, housing, food, and shelter. True, anticommunist rhetoric and hysteria would probably be invoked to thwart the building of positive alliances between different groups and their discussion of progressive change. But this should be expected by now and preparations made for such contingencies through local outreach and education efforts. Local and seemingly particularistic struggles centered around what is called identity carry the possibility of articulating with global concerns for social security and harmony, while being able to maintain distinctiveness.

A broadly universal, not particularist, set of aims could probably propel the Rastafarian pragmatists to support a program of social change. Although they have their own agenda tied inextricably to their identity and aims, they also recognize that other people share some of their aspirations. Land reform; universal health care; guaranteed rights to work, shelter, food, and security; and redistribution of wealth are broad concerns that would certainly capture the attention of the pragmatists (and probably most of the spiritualists too). The Rastas probably stand a better

chance than any other group in Jamaica (including the three political parties<sup>22</sup>) to bring the poor, the marginalized, and the escapists to debate and participate in such efforts. As one elder Rasta, "Bully Dread," told me,

We (Rastas) must be socialists. We support socialism because we want to be able to have a house too, to have some land, to be able to make a living without so much sufferation. . . . Capitalism is not for we. It is fi dem (for them) who already have [capital]."

### ***Postscript: Rastafari in a revolutionary context***

While Rastafarians in Jamaica have actively crusaded for their vision of a better society, it is the Grenadan Rastafarians who have experienced participating in revolutionary politics. They were a part of the Grenadan revolution and the New Jewel Movement from the start, which gives them moral legitimacy within the context of three controversies: the extent of their participation in the revolution; the matter of culture within a revolutionary context in regard to the marijuana issue; and the degree to which the cultural issues highlight conflict and convergence between visions of socialism held by Rastafarians and by the People's Revolutionary Government of Grenada.

### ***Rastafarian participation in the Grenadan revolution***

The standard reference on Rastafarian involvement in the Grenadan revolution is Horace Campbell's *Rasta and Resistance* (1987). Campbell does not offer the details provided by Grenadans I interviewed, who actually took part in the revolution,<sup>23</sup> nor does he mention the dark aspects of the revolution, such as the detention camp Hopevale.<sup>24</sup>

Because of conflicting accounts and little documentation, it is difficult to determine accurately the extent and role of Rastafarian participation in the revolution. First-hand accounts of Rastafarian involvement in the revolution generally converge with Campbell's account, but there is some discrepancy in the

estimates of the extent of participation in the revolution. Campbell claims that more than four hundred Rastafarians participated in the People's Liberation Army's overthrow of the Eric Gairy regime on 13 March 1979 (1987, 163). However, a participant estimates one hundred Rastafarian participants (personal communication). Those I interviewed concur that Rastafarians participated in the People's Revolutionary Army and that they were involved in the revolution from the beginning. They participated in workers' education projects and the Centre for Popular Education. They helped to build schools and roads; some even saw Bishop as a "savior." This attitude lasted for at least a year. One interviewee who was involved with the youth movement in the city said the Rastafarians "were very involved in the movement; Bishop defended them. At least one of them was a prominent leader in the revolutionary movement . . . [But] most of the Rassas [Rastafarians] came into the movement after the planning phase of the Revolution" (personal communication). Thus, estimates of how many Rastafarians participated in the revolution depend upon the phase of the revolution being scrutinized.

Regardless of the scale of participation, the Rastafarians were close to the New Jewel Movement (NJM), and the Left generally supported them. For example, Maurice Bishop defended Dominican Rastafarian Ras Kabinda, who would have been hanged under the ban on the freedom to be a Rastafarian in Dominica, with its despotic leader Patrick John. In Grenada, Prime Minister Eric Gairy's soldiers often sheared off the locks of Rastafarians and referred to them as "dutty" (dirty). The fact that the NJM aimed to end such barbaric discrimination was one reason it was supported by Rastafarians. Under the NJM they were integrated into the society—in the army, government, and positions of leadership. Such possibilities were impossible for Rastas in nearly all Caribbean societies. Even in Jamaica, Rastafarians had no access to social mobility before Bob Marley became internationally popular, although social mobility is not a priority for most. As a result of the end of the molestation of Rastafarians, Brethren and Sistren from nearby islands began to seek refuge in Grenada.

During this phase, weekly Nyabinghis were held by the various domestic and international houses of the movement.<sup>25</sup>

***Cultural politics and socialism: The marijuana issue***

On 19 June 1980, a bomb exploded at a Labour Day celebration, killing three children and injuring others. Those responsible for the bombing were involved with large-scale marijuana production for international distribution. The People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) took a nuanced view of local marijuana use with an eye to reform, but at the same time sought to rein in large-scale production. For example, the large marijuana producers clear-cut forests and ruined the small farms of some peasants. The PRG understood the difference between Rastafarians growing for their own purposes and those growing for international markets. To complicate matters, mafioso used nearby islands as transshipping points for narcotics originating in Columbia. As in Jamaica, some lumpen elements were growing dreadlocks and aping Rastafarian behavior while engaging in criminal activities sometimes linked to the international narcotics trade. Furthermore, small farming paid little in comparison to international prices for marijuana. The PRG tried to educate the public regarding these distinctions between types of marijuana production and Rastafarian culture, but would not unilaterally move to legalize marijuana.

The PRG police chief asked Rastafarians to assist in limiting large marijuana production. In May 1980, the big growers led a demonstration to protest the PRG's policies on large-scale marijuana production (there was also a counterdemonstration for self-sufficiency in food production). The big growers argued that ending large-scale production of ganja would lead to outlawing its smoking. The big growers apparently were seeking to protect their self-interest, and appealing to the Rastafarians' concern with the marijuana issue was a cunning strategy.

Like Campbell, the interviewees note that marijuana and drugs became an issue in the relationship between the PRG and the Rastafarians. An older interviewee notes:

In 1981 the relationship between the Rastas and the NJM began to fray. The Rasses made a bold move to conspicuously grow ganja. As a result some were jailed. Those jailed included some Rasses of middle class background who were from prominent families who were pivotal in the movement. The ganja situation created a problem for the Revolution. . . . The Revolution had to move against them. (Anonymous interview, 13 September 2000)

In effect, the NJM saw legalization of marijuana as a threat to its attempt to gain legitimacy in the international system (as if it would be seen as legitimate anyway!).

The younger interviewee confirms this:

There was a falling out over the drug issue. The Rasses wanted the legalization of ganja. But this created a dilemma for the NJM since it meant they were flouting international rules regarding controlled substances. As the revolution tightened up, the NJM decided to ban ganja and this is where the conflict began. Arrests of Rastafarians on drug charges commenced, but because of the special conditions [of the revolutionary situation], there were no specifications for due process and justice. People could be arrested and detained without a hearing. Some visible Rastas got arrested. (Anonymous interview, 13 September 2000)

Many of these Rastafarians were imprisoned at the Hopevale detention camp, which has been described as Grenada's gulag.<sup>26</sup> The youth laments that "this may have been one of the saddest aspects of the revolution." He goes on to say, "The Rasses felt herbs had to be legalized, and when it wasn't it was felt that Bishop had reneged on his respect toward them. Some of the Rasses actually picked up arms in regards to the ganja issue, which led to more arrests, if not a general crackdown." This helps to explain how the Rastafarians could be seen as a reactionary force.

### ***Rastafarian support of socialism***

On 10 October 1979, the front page of the Caribbean newspaper *Torchlight* carried a famous drawing by Rastafarian Daniel Hartman of Jamaica, under which a story began: “Rastafarians in Grenada are likely soon to take to the streets in massive numbers to protest the debarment of Rasta children from schools and the arrests and charges for ganja smoking” (Campbell 1987, 165). The story went on to mix truth and falsity by claiming that it was at the weekly Nyabinghi meetings in Grenada that the Rastafarians concluded that the PRG was anti-Rastafarian.

According to Campbell, Trinidadian and Barbadian anticommunist elites wangled two young Rastafarians, allegedly affiliated with a branch of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, into denouncing the PRG and leading a demonstration against the PRG (1987, 164). Through the *Torchlight* the ruling class asked the masses to call for an end to Cuba’s assistance to Grenada.

The *Torchlight* article drew its “anti-Rastafarian” conclusion from alleged statements that Rastafarians do not support Cuba or Russia because these nations did not “acknowledge Rastafarian doctrine” (Campbell 1987, 165). Such commentary by Rastafarians is not uncommon, however, and does not mean that Rastafarians do not prefer social living (Rastafarian vernacular for the equivalent of socialism). It was soon publicly revealed that the two young Rastafarians were used by an anti-PRG cabal (with U.S. involvement) seeking to create confusion in order to cover an assassination plot against NJM leaders and an armed invasion of Grenada (Campbell 1987, 165). Even before the plot was exposed, Rastafarians in Grenada organized a counter-demonstration to show how the anti-PRG effort pitted Rasta against Rasta and to reaffirm their support of the PRG. A group of Rastafarians replied:

We strongly criticize *Torchlight*, Ras Nna, Ras Ersto Ja Ja [the two youths] and any of I brethren who form reactionary group to assist Babylon. . . . Us brothers see Revolution Time. . . . Us Rasta believe in revolution

whether social or political and not no ballot Constitution [oppression]. . . . We strongly and firmly support the PRG and all the socialist Powers in the world for it is Cuba and Russia who are assisting our Black struggles in Africa. (Campbell 1987, 165–66)

On the other hand, there is widespread regret about what happened at the Hopevale detention camp, where many Rastafarians were incarcerated by the PRG.

The Rastafarians in Grenada were involved in at least three major tensions in the New Jewel Movement's efforts to create a different society. First, their participation in the revolution is undeniable, so the extent of the participation is a moot point. Second, the Rastafarian concern with the freedom to use marijuana brings attention to how culture must be brought into consideration in any socialist program. Third, it appears that despite their rhetorical reservations about the politics of nominally socialist and communist nations, Grenadan Rastafarians supported a socialist agenda. In this regard they are similar to many of their brothers and sisters throughout the world. In spite of the controversies and tensions, Rastafarian participation in the revolution helped to make the Grenadan revolution truly a people's revolution.

I want to thank Dr. Setha Low, Christopher Charles, Robert Sautè, and three anonymous reviewers for their critical observations and commentaries. I take full responsibility for this article, especially where I did not utilize their suggestions.

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#### NOTES

1. By "dominant system," I mean not only capitalism and class structures, but other impediments such as racism, imperialism, and the residues of colonialism.

2. This remark, as a phrase, is embedded within a larger statement that implies Marx's sympathy for those who are oppressed and find religion as a partial expression of their distress and desires, as Magdoff and Sweezy point out (1986, 194).

3. The theory of antisystemic movements is developed in *Antisystemic Movements* (Arrighi et al. 1989); it is further refined in *Transforming the Revolution: Social Movements and the World System* (Amin et al. 1990).

4. Tabb goes on to add that "over time this all-encompassing coherence becomes lost, as institution-building takes precedence over belief and the new church gains a vested interest in the material trappings of power and influence" (1986b, xv), which points to the tension that develops between what Baum calls the two organizational logics, "the logic of mission" and "the logic of maintenance" (Baum 1986, 127). The maintenance logic often blunts the radical social teachings of a particular religious tradition.

5. Lewis, in his ethnographic account of the Rastafari, does not treat the anti-Western and antimodern tendencies as negative (1993). Cornel West makes the point that the issue is not "antiscience" or "antitechnology" stances, but "antiscientism" and "antitechnologism," referring to the idolization of science and technology, and the careless and profit-oriented uses to which it is directed (1986, 205). This, I think, speaks more accurately to Rastafarian critiques of science, technology, the West, and modernism.

6. Howell traveled between Kingston, the capital city, and St. Thomas parish during this time so it is difficult to pin down precisely when and where the first Rastafarians emerged.

7. Although the Rastafarians took on Selassie's birth name, they were not the first or only black people of that time to express adoration for the new Emperor of Ethiopia, as Hill points out in his brief discussion of "Ethiopianism" in Jamaica (1984).

8. One favor Selassie granted was to set aside several hundred acres in Shashemene, Ethiopia, for those who wanted to repatriate to Ethiopia. The central symbolic role that Ethiopia has played in the minds of people of the African Diaspora, especially black nationalists of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, is often overlooked.

9. I define *cult* broadly as a small group that develops a "new" synthesis of existing worldviews in sharp distinction from other worldviews and status quo groups. This differentiation is often the root of hostility directed toward the cult by the surrounding society.

10. Paul Bogle in 1865, in the parish of St. Thomas, led an unsuccessful rebellion of ex-slaves and descendants of slaves against the colonial authorities and their black supporters.

11. This can be partially explained by the fact the British had no motivation before the early 1800s to Christianize the slaves, leaving them to formulate their own religious interpretations.

12. Although the initial Jamaican political system was a two-party one (the Jamaican Labour Party was formed in 1943, five years after the People's

National Party), I have the sense that the early Rastafarians were not overly concerned with whether the political system was democratic or not, as long as people had a right to food, housing, work, and the right to practice their beliefs.

13. I first interviewed Rasta Ivey in 1998, and then several times thereafter, the last being in March 1999.

14. Communists and socialists were Marcus Garvey's archenemies, yet the Rastafarians melded together principles of all three.

15. Sam Brown passed away in August 1998 while attending a Rastafarian organization conference in Barbados. He was an activist to the end.

16. Chevannes (1994) and Homiak (1997) respectively provide information on the YBF and the Higes Knots as they relate to the rise of the dreadlocks Rastafari. However, my own personal experience suggests that other groups were acting in a similar way during this time, and had networks that overlapped with the YBF and the Higes Knots.

17. It is not clear that the Reverend Henry identified himself as a Rastafarian, but non-Rastafarians assumed that he was because he promoted the view of Haile Selassie as divine.

18. Back-O-Wall settlement is now called Tivoli Gardens and controlled by the JLP. In Jamaica, the two political parties attempt to maintain or gain control of neighborhood districts through force and coercion. The party in power often makes amends to its constituencies by implementing certain projects as a "payoff" to the party activists and community members. In the case of Back-O-Wall, which was a shantytown and Rastafarian stronghold, the JLP (allegedly spearheaded by Edward Seaga, later prime minister) had the community bulldozed, displacing its residents, and then built a housing project in its place. Housing schemes are one way to gain voter loyalty in a poor country like Jamaica. But given the state's meager resources and the manner in which it allocates them, the party that makes such an "investment" cannot afford to lose it to the competing party. Force is often necessary to maintain control. By the late 1960s, weapons were being supplied to thugs in each political stronghold to ensure political control and loyalty. The 1970s were a decade of extreme violence in Jamaica. In April 1998, an Irish commentator on a Jamaican talk show remarked that more people died in Jamaica's decade of violence than in thirty years of Irish civil war.

19. It appears that Rastafarian ideology became more cogent during the 1980s, especially given the issues raised for them by the disappearance of Haile Selassie (I say "disappearance" and not "death" because his body has yet to be found). Differences within Rastafarian ideology have become more pronounced, as attested to by the different Rastafarian sects that include the Bobo Shantis, Twelve Tribes, Ethiopian Orthodox Church adherents, and the Nyabinghis, the original and central Rastafarian group. Such a proliferation of differences in views should be seen as normal; many religiously based groups develop diversity as they mature.

20. Space constraints prevent a discussion of the current dimensions of Rastafarian approaches to repatriation, but the pragmatists and spiritualists have

different views about how it should come about. Suffice it to say here that the pragmatists have a complex view of the process, including making many preparations such as contacting the requisite ministries in African governments, acquiring land in Africa, and procuring funds to develop the land. Recently the issue of reparations for New World slavery and its apartheid-like ramifications has become central to repatriation discourse.

21. In April 1998 two ganja “spliff” incidents involving police intervention led to dreadful outcomes. In one case a protest after one young man was arrested for a single spliff escalated into a riot, two women were publicly brutalized, and the police accidentally fired tear gas into a day-care center in their Keystone-cop effort to control the riot. In another case a youth was shot at a stadium event (and later died) as a result of police reaction to a single spliff. See “Grant’s Pen Residents Protest Against ‘Police Brutality,’” *Daily Observer*, 21 April 1998, 3; “Grant’s Pen Incident Sparks Outrage,” *Weekend Observer*, 24 April 1998, 4.

22. A third party called the New Democratic Movement emerged in 1997, partially as a result of factions that developed within the JLP.

23. I want to thank three Grenadans, who shall remain anonymous, for sharing their experience and opinions with me.

24. For additional information see the SpiceIslander TalkShop Web site, and use the keyword “Hopevale.” The URL is <[www.spiceisle.com/cgi-bin/talkrec.cgi?submit=List+Thr.../talkshopandmsg\\_num=3801](http://www.spiceisle.com/cgi-bin/talkrec.cgi?submit=List+Thr.../talkshopandmsg_num=3801)>; in particular read the message dated 16 December 1999 at <[www.spiceisle.com/talkshop/messages/38169.htm](http://www.spiceisle.com/talkshop/messages/38169.htm)>.

25. The Nyabinghi is the central solidarity and religious ceremony of Rastafarians. It is also the name of the largest religious order of Rastafarians. The name, some Nyabinghi ceremonies, and some of the ritual (dance) movements associated with it, were originally tied to the old Rastafarian cry, “Death to all White oppressors and their Black allies!”

“Houses” and “mansions” are indigenous terms that refer to Rastafarian organizations.

26. See the SpiceIslander Talkshop Web site cited in note 24.

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# **Time for a Change in Public Education, but What Change?**

**Erna Bennett**

'Tis education forms the common mind:  
Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined.

Alexander Pope, *Moral Essays I*, 1735

And your education! Is not that also social, and determined by the social conditions under which you educate, by the intervention, direct or indirect, of society, by means of schools, etc.? The Communists have not invented the intervention of society in education; they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class.

*Communist Manifesto*, 1848

Almost two centuries later—notwithstanding developments in educational practice and theories—universal compulsory schooling continues to function much as it did in the beginning, as the intermediary institution between the family and the labour market.

Harris, *Teachers Constructing the Future*, 1994

## ***Public education under attack***

The murals of the Mexican artist Siqueros are world-renowned. One of his best known dominates the campus of the University of Mexico City and depicts students donating the

*Nature, Society, and Thought*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2000)

fruits of their studies to the nation. It is a public declaration that students and young people are among a nation's most valuable resources, and that society is enriched by their learning—in short, that schools and universities are an investment in a country's future.

The mural in Mexico City, capital city of a country that is far from being a shining model of an enlightened state, nevertheless expresses a concept that seems far beyond the grasp of the stunted minds that at present rule Australia.

Australia's rulers loudly proclaim its foremost position among the nations of the world. In reality, they are representatives of the most backward forces that exist in the country, and are dragging it into a new dark age. Inheritors of its most discriminatory and backward-looking traditions, they promote the idea that education is a marketable commodity accessible by right only to those who can afford to buy it.

Like other governments throughout the industrialized "developed"<sup>1</sup> world caught in a frenzy of globalization, the federal and state governments of Australia are currently engaged in a feverish campaign to decimate public services, closing public schools and promoting private schools subsidized by public funding, privatizing universities, merchandising learning, and cutting funding to disciplines and faculties that cannot provide an immediate return in cash terms—converting schools and universities, in other words, to commercial enterprises, and marketing educational qualifications to those whose social position guarantees that their acquisition of a little learning will not menace the undisturbed survival of the political status quo.

On 19 November 1992, a few weeks after the victory of the right-wing Liberal-National Party Coalition in state elections in Victoria, fifty-five government (that is, public) schools were closed. One who was directly involved in the struggle over one such closure said, in a graphic account, that this was the first step in the "greatest counter-revolution in social policy in recent Australian history" (Jolly 1996).

This first onslaught was followed by a second wave of closures, affecting a further 230 government schools (a number that

reached 349 by 1997), the cancellation of more than 7,000 primary and secondary teaching posts, the widespread introduction of short-term contract teaching, and the loss of more than 4,000 cleaning and maintenance staff posts over the following months (Kronemann 1988, 11, 13, and throughout). Student enrollments declined, falling by more than 14,500 in the following five years, against an increase of more than 9,000 in private schools (1). Spending on public schools was cut by \$305 million<sup>2</sup> and class sizes rose by between 20 and 30 percent. Teaching posts for English as a second language were cut by half. Over the five years from 1992 to 1997, nonschool specialist staffing was reduced by more than a third (4, 13, 20).

School closures were accompanied by formidable cuts to other public services, with heavy job losses. Antiunion legislation aimed at disarming effective popular resistance to these and future attacks on working and living conditions in Victoria was introduced. Health and social services were heavily axed.

Since the 1992 victory of the Liberal-National coalition in Victoria, elections in other states have also seen right-wing coalitions replace other Labor governments. These, too, have launched similar attacks on public services, including public education. The scale and the pace of this offensive have intensified and with the Liberal-National victory in the 1996 federal elections and the first federal budget of 1996–97, the attack has assumed national proportions. A Commonwealth Workplace Relations Bill (1996) spearheaded a sweeping nationwide attack on the trade unions.

Prime Minister John Howard and the men around him have worked systematically and in great haste to fulfill their plans to destroy the public sector of the Australian economy. They have legislated a significant transfer of public funding to the private sector, including private schools (Kronemann 1998, 8, 9, 63, 64; NSWTF 1998b).

The privatization of public services—health, pension funds, communications, transport, banking, security, prisons, as well as electricity, water, and gas services—has been carried out at breakneck pace and on a very wide scale, accompanied by a

significant departure from the principle of collective responsibility and a major power shift to nonelected bodies.

The systematic dismemberment of public education is very clearly part of a wider plan in which the beneficiaries of Australia's social services will no longer be the country's working class, but its privileged strata. Benefits of the "education industry," the "health industry," and a host of other "industries" born from the ruins of the country's public services will now be reaped by the businesspeople and speculators of a burgeoning private sector.

The transfer of public services to private hands has been carried out by federal and state governments under giveaway conditions, using a wide variety of stratagems ranging from so-called outsourcing to the outright sale of public assets. The whole privatization process has been driven by deregulation and shielded behind a screen of deceptive euphemisms such as self-regulation, innovation, reform, flexibility, efficiency, and governance in transition.

Public funding has continued to be provided only for whatever costly infrastructures are needed to keep the private sector afloat—the funds derived, need it be said, from public taxation, paid by the workers, the poor, the aged, the unemployed, the disadvantaged, the weak, the sick, and the vulnerable.

Those who govern Australia—for now, but for how long?—have set out coldly and deliberately to cripple the public services of which they, as an elected government, are the custodians; among these is public education, guarantor of the nation's future and a right endorsed by the United Nations in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, until now taken for granted. Not so in today's Australia, where public education has become a lucrative milch cow for private entrepreneurs and sundry speculators.

All this, according to a representative of the New South Wales (NSW) National Union of Students in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 2 June 1997, reflects "beliefs professing that education can be bought or sold and need not serve any other social role than to benefit the individual. They reflect complete neglect

of the value of an education system based on social goals that are broader than ensuring that individuals are marketable after graduation" (see also Kent 1997).

Thousands of university places in every state and territory of the country have been abolished, or opened to wealthy, fee-paying students. Steeply rising fees and increased "up-front" charges dash any hopes that nonprivileged students might have of university education, or any career dependent on it. Tertiary enrollments have dropped by as much as 15 percent in the poorer urban and rural areas and by more than 10,000 nationwide (Wells 1999).

Students are now in debt to the government for the education loans they receive under the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), to the tune of \$5.4 billion, according to the Federal Government Higher Education Funding Report published in the *Australian* on 27 December 1999, the day after Australia's universities closed for the summer recess. This debt is destined to reach insuperable levels when the new scheme for "real interest rate" loans is implemented in mid-2000. The same report also announced cuts in public funding to tertiary education amounting to nearly \$1 billion by 2002.

In the University of the Northern Territory, twenty-one courses have been cut, nineteen of them in the arts, and university staff cut by fifty. In Adelaide, eleven faculties have been reduced to six, and teaching staff cut by 130. In the University of Tasmania, three major arts faculties and one library have been closed. The University of Western Australia has been forced to cancel subscriptions to many essential journals. A \$14 million cut in the budget of the University of Newcastle has led to a 10 percent reduction in all its academic programs. Mature student enrollments are down in all states, by from 4 percent in the Australian Capital Territory and Western Australia; to 12 percent in Victoria, New South Wales, and Tasmania; and 28 percent in South Australia (Cameron 1997).

Even in Labor-governed New South Wales, student numbers in universities have fallen sharply, following a 14 percent budget cut on top of an earlier government refusal to meet rising

university costs with extra funding. Funding cuts have already had serious consequences, with the loss of hundreds of academic jobs, overcrowded lectures, high student-staff ratios—as much as 15 to 25 percent higher than national and state averages—reduced study and library facilities, and heavily increased workloads for university staff, as reported by Luis M. Garcia, who examines these problems in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 16 June 1997 (but see also Kronemann 1998).

This is only a beginning. Garcia, in a later report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (12 January 1998), notes that federal funding cuts of more than \$680 million, leading to the loss of 6,400 publicly funded places, have pushed universities to neutralize their budget deficit by enrolling a planned 45,000 fee-paying students over a three-year period. This is expected to raise fee revenue by \$480 million, or 76 percent, by 2000, as revenue from government direct operating grants falls from 75 percent of total budget to less than 50 percent. Yet there are signs already that intakes of fee-paying students are falling seriously short of target (Healy 1998).

As privatization spreads like an epidemic, fees soar. Poorer students, driven from the universities by tuition fees ranging from more than \$8,000 to almost \$25,000 a year, are looking for places in the TAFE (Technical and Further Education) vocation-oriented system. Here too, however, 45 percent of all student admissions are expected to be fee-paying within the next five years.

As a result, the demand for university places has fallen since the election of the Liberal-National federal government by 4.4 percent in 1997 and 4.1 percent in 1998 (NTEU 1999a). This trend is most marked among students from poorer families living in depressed areas. Nationally, university enrollments are down by more than 10,000 on 1996 (Wells 1999). The Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AV-CC) believes these changes represent an unprecedented crisis in the country's university system, and has warned of the erosion of Australia's knowledge base.

The already underfunded \$184 million Abstudy program, set up to confront and at least partially resolve the problem of gross educational disparities between aboriginal and white students, has been cut by \$39 million. A contributor to the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 16 June 1997 reports that at least 1,000 students from a total of 10,000 are expected to suffer significant cuts this year to their travel allowances to the cities, where almost all the universities are located. The cuts are applied against a background of extreme social inequality, with only 30 percent of aboriginal children completing their primary schooling compared to more than 70 percent of white children, and only 2.2 percent of indigenous students completing tertiary education compared with 12.8 percent of whites (NSWTF 1998a).

The attack on education comes as no surprise to anyone, but its scale and its pace are disturbing. It has been evident for some time that the notion that equal education for all should be a public service is far from the minds that guide the Liberal government. In place of the principle of public service, they intend to install greed and the search for personal gain as the social model to which future generations are expected to conform. A new vocabulary that speaks of providers, customers, and clients has entered entire sectors of public service in which these concepts have always been alien.

It must be said, however, that for all the Liberals' well-laid plans that everyone should grub, as they do, for private gain at public expense, Australian working people on the whole do not share these values.<sup>3</sup>

The many submissions to the West Review Committee of Higher Education Financing and Policy bear testimony to a growing opposition (see, for example, Kent 1997, NTEU 1997). As students take to the streets and occupy universities, colleges, and schools, it is becoming clearer by the day that hundreds of thousands do not accept the worldview promoted by Australia's New Liberal Order. Rising resistance to the government's attacks on the public sector and on public education, for all the attempts by both the press and the government to play it down, has had an impact.

In its submission to the West Review Committee, the New South Wales Government Department of Training and Education Coordination notes critically that the “changes introduced in the 1996–97 Commonwealth [federal] Budget have already significantly shifted the balance between public and private financing of higher education in Australia, with the burden for higher education seemingly to be increasingly borne by individuals. Recent years have seen a decline in public funding for universities from an average of 90 percent in the early 1980s to as low as 48 percent in 1997” (NSW 1997).

Public education spending in the member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has stagnated in the past twenty years, according to an OECD report cited by the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee before the West Review Committee (AV-CC 1997, 6), but public spending on education in Australia has declined significantly. University funding per “full-time student unit” has fallen by 8.3 percent since 1983. The drive to extend privatization, however, still continues.

A “voucher scheme” that would introduce the “demand-driven” financing of tertiary education by way of loans to students that they could use in universities of their choice has been proposed, disguised behind quite blatantly cynical claims that this respects the students’ “right of choice.” One former member of the West Committee who supports a voucher system claims that it “puts purchasing power in relation to a socially valuable service and a major single instrument of social mobility in the hands of those without wealth” and cannot understand why it does not appeal to a “genuinely radical political left” (Chipman 2000, 16–17).

The same author goes on to admit that “we now see in Australia a widening gap between the educational haves and the educational have-nots. The social and economic costs of Australia’s rising secondary school dropout rate are huge. One estimate is that an Australian male who does not complete year 12 or equivalent now has a more than a fifty-percent chance of spending more than half his adult life on welfare” (Chipman 2000, 18).

“Why,” he asks, “is Australia the only OECD country in which the school retention rate has been falling steadily every year since the early 1990s?” And he seeks an explanation in the country’s “volatile social cocktail” and the solution in a better and “sharper direction” to the \$5 billion annually that Australia still invests in higher education.

But other OECD countries have to confront the same volatile social cocktail that current social conflicts generate. He fails to see, as others have done, that Australia’s failure might have more to do with political philosophies that put education for sale in the marketplace than with social mixes. The National Union of Students’ submission to the West Review submits evidence that “fees have a clearly observable deterrent effect” on postgraduate enrollment and points out “that in 1996 people from low socio-economic backgrounds participated at only 26.4 percent of the rate at which they should have participated if they were equally represented in up-front fee-paying postgraduate courses” (Kent 1997, 11).

The NUS submission adds that

the negative effects of vouchers are numerous. Not only would they ensure that [the] most disadvantaged become further concentrated in low prestige (or the less-marketable) institutions, but it would also ensure that the lower-status institutions are starved of resources (given that they would not be able to attract high up-front tuition fees in addition to vouchers). Once starved of resources, they would be unable to offer high-cost courses and would be forced to compromise on quality in the courses which they do offer. This would further entrench and accentuate the hierarchy of universities.

Similar views are expressed, too, by the universities. The University of Western Sydney opposes proposals for voucher-driven funding. Noting that “the issue of funding students rather than universities has also had currency,” it observes, “such a mechanism has both ideological and operational difficulties. It also creates an environment mitigating against effective

long-term strategic planning, particularly in newer universities” (UWS 1997, 5).

“The real motivation for voucher funding,” the NTEU (National Tertiary Education Union, which represents university teaching staff nationally) suggests, “is ideological,” and is unrelated “to concepts of efficiency, personal freedom or rational use of resources. The system is a means by which deregulation and privatisation can occur organically and relatively quickly” (NTEU 1997).

Fifteen years ago, the Hudson Committee of Enquiry, appointed by the now-defunct Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, reached a similar conclusion, that “fees and voucher schemes” improve neither efficiency nor responsiveness to changing community demands. “The necessary conditions for the operation of a ‘market’ in the supply and consumption of knowledge at the higher education level do not exist,” it said. It believed there would be “little to gain and a great deal to lose by adopting a funding system based on full-cost fees” (CTEC 1986, 243–45). Needless to say, the Hudson Committee’s recommendations are still to be adopted.

In 1986, the Committee noted that “in the decade since fees were abolished” (in 1974), Australian higher education “has operated at lower costs per student, while at the same time broadening access and exhibiting a high degree of responsiveness” (1986, 244)—a situation reversed in a matter of a few years by the present reckless and unrepentant Liberal-led counter-revolution.

The opposition it has encountered on the campuses and in its committees, however, has, for now, forced the Howard government to redimension its plans to introduce a voucher scheme. But although temporarily stalled, these plans are far from dead, and are already being presented in new forms.

Demand-driven “client-based” funding is still a centerpiece of the government’s university-financing strategy. Students, says Howard, will be granted loans at real rates of interest to meet tuition costs. This will push the present high levels of student debt even higher. Moreover, as the NTEU points out, none of the

current student loan proposals will help solve the universities' financial problems, since student repayments go to the government, where they will "offset the government contribution to higher education, and so reduce the overall budget bottom line" (NTEU 1999b).

So offensive is the current government's attack on public education that the *Australian* (and what Australian daily is more conservative than that?) on 22 August 1997 quoted with approval the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee's description of the Liberal-National administration as the worst government for education that Australia has ever had.

Symptomatic as criticism from such a source may be, however, equally symptomatic and more encouraging is a new mood of opposition sweeping the country in response to the government's current attempts to curb the educational future of Australia's next generation. This has stimulated protests at every level with the prospect of many more, as long as governments, whether Liberal or Labor, persist in such policies.

### ***The role of the Labor Party***

In the smoke of battle, it is only too easy to forget how the battle began. Those who are involved in today's widening struggles to defend public services and public education may need to be reminded that Labor governments were the first to embark on the privatization of public resources and, with their first steps in this direction, paved the way for the Howard counterrevolution.

Privatization in Australia began with the Hawke and Keating Labor governments between 1983 and 1995. Under these governments, the number of teachers fell and teacher-student ratios rose in both primary and junior secondary schools.

In the 1980s, the federal Labor government, like many social-democratic governments, warmly welcomed the evident trend towards economic rationalism, and fell for the notion of a globalized market freed of frontiers and trade barriers.

One writer has discerningly noted that while the Liberal-National coalition, when in power, saw such policies as a green light to intensify attacks on unions and reduce real wages, the

Labor governments in power after 1983 saw it instead as an opportunity to use “unions as tools for governing wage costs . . . and industrial militancy. Bipartisan similarities were more important than partisan differences” (Marginson 1995, 82).

This not-so-subtle but revealing piece of thinking from a government of social democrats reflects its dedication to the idea of compromise and class collaboration—even at the cost of “buying” the union movement and stifling its independence.

In education, the thin end of the wedge of Labor’s betrayal of its own official policy of support for public education came with the reintroduction of university fees in 1987, legitimized by the euphemistically labeled Higher Education Administration Charge (HEAC).

The following year saw the country’s nineteen universities and forty Colleges of Advanced Education amalgamated into a tertiary system of thirty-six universities and four colleges, as part of a policy of “micro-economic reforms” and commercialization of the entire public sector (Karmel 1997). Faculties and courses unable to show short-term, bottom-line returns were slashed. The shift to market-oriented studies saw classics faculties facing a crisis as student numbers fell. The chairs of classical studies at Adelaide and Tasmania fell vacant. Sydney University has abolished one of its two classical chairs. Courses in ancient languages have been downgraded, with serious effects on other classical studies.

The Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) and the Commonwealth Schools Commission (CSC), set up by the Whitlam government, both potential sources and rallying points of resistance to the proposed policy shifts, were abolished. Their place was assumed directly by John Dawkins, Minister of Employment, Education and Training, thus successfully neutralizing such sources of existing and possible future official opposition to economic rationalization in education (Dawkins 1987, 1988, 1989).

In May 1988, a Labor-appointed Committee on the Funding of Higher Education, under the chairmanship of a former premier

of New South Wales, Neville Wran, published its recommendations. On very questionable grounds, both Wran and the federal government argued that the abolition of fees by the Whitlam administration of 1973–1975 had failed in its aim to broaden participation in higher education, as had been hoped. On these and similar grounds, it therefore proposed a system of deferred fees that, it was claimed, “would create access and equity” by financing growth in the sector, under a new Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), although, as we have already noted, HECS repayments return to the government and not to the university.

But the Wran Committee’s real brief “was not to universalise education or to re-distribute its benefits; it was to craft a fees system that was supportable inside the Labor Party.” The proposal to introduce fees was finally put to an Australian Labor Party Conference in June 1988, which accepted it by a far-from-impressive majority (Marginson 1995, 227).

In embracing these measures, Marginson pertinently noted, “by dividing the population between beneficiaries and payers, Labor fractured the social solidarity necessary to a system of universal financing and provision. In the place of equity . . . it substituted the . . . notion of individualised benefits in exchange for individualised taxes in place of the notion of social programmes of common benefit.”

Between 1993 and 1995, before the federal Liberal-National Coalition came to power and reduced higher education funding by \$600 million, education spending by Labor had already suffered major cuts, and student fees had incurred heavy increases.

In New South Wales, at the time this essay was being written, the Labor Party decided to close down a key Technical and Further Education (TAFE) campus in an underprivileged area on the outskirts of Sydney that served 1,800 students, of whom the majority were unemployed workers, working mothers, and mature students. In spite of repeated official assurances that no plan existed to close the college, the government, overruling the recommendations of a state parliamentary committee and

rejecting discussions with both TAFE and student representatives, served teaching staff a three-day notice to quit on the eve of the Christmas summer recess (Seaforth 1999).

The Labor Party in government, constrained by its image as the traditional representative of the working class, its main support base, has had to employ stealth and deception to do what the Liberals elsewhere do openly. These and other conservative forces strain every nerve to exploit to their own political advantage Labor's betrayal of working-class loyalty. Politicking has replaced politics, creating the conditions in which confusion, cynicism, and despair take root, opening the road to the proliferation of numerous small political groups and fragmenting popular political forces.

The Labor Party's significant role in the erosion of public education thus raises serious questions that must be confronted and answered. Without doubt, many attempts will continue to be made to cover up or explain away Labor's role in dismantling the public services, certainly in the climate of an election year in which the two major parties (the Labor Party and the Liberal Party) will contend for the favors of the Australian electorate and the opportunity of governing it, but there can be little doubt that the change in Labor's party line had its origins in a series of OECD reports, published in the late 1980s (OECD 1987 and 1989) on the need for an economic rationalist approach and the extension of microeconomic "reforms," which were warmly embraced by the Labor government.

Other observations (with the force of recommendations) made by the OECD suggested that universities "operate as service enterprises, and under some conditions can cover much of their expenditure from the sale of their services." Inevitably, in such a scheme of things, and facing all-round reductions in funding, the universities could find no other valid option for either education or research but to submit to industry's needs in return for industry's favors. Australian universities, therefore, created commercial companies to market their services. According to the *Australian* of 5 June 1997, these companies earn well

in excess of \$300 million a year, an increase of 50 percent since 1991.

Education Minister Dawkins, in his 1987 report on higher education, spoke of the role of education in terms of the needs of the “national economy” for a much “greater premium on technical knowledge and labour force skills [that] will also be a vital factor in our productivity performance.” The hypocrisy and class bias of such declarations is revealed by an eventual 13 percent fall in the rate of school completion among the sons [sic] of manual workers, compared with a 3 percent decline for the sons [sic] of managerial families reported in the *Australian* on 28 January 1997.

Even during the “legendary” Whitlam years, relationships “between the state and large firms has generally been to serve the interests of the firms,” and “leading companies retained a privileged position since vital decisions on the size, nature, direction and location of investment . . . remained in business hands” (Marginson 1995, 81).

In spite of its close involvement with the corporate sector, however, the Whitlam government introduced many noteworthy improvements in social services and education. It abolished fees for higher education. It introduced the Technical and Further Education system, and, in the wake of the 1973 Karmel Report, federal allocations for education spending increased from a 1973 level of \$364 million to \$1,091 million in 1975 (Karmel 1973; Whitlam 1985, 324–27).

The same cannot be said of either the Hawke or Keating Labor administrations that came to power in 1983 and remained in government until 1996. Submission to corporate interests had by then become complete.

The Whitlam government was dissolved in 1975 after a cynical and arrogant display of political power-play and covert, but transparent, maneuvering by Liberal and corporate interests in which all pretense at democratic process was discarded. The Liberal-National government that assumed power after the coup d'état took less than a decade to cut back on education spending by almost 20 percent. At the same time, the share of the

education budget going to private schools rose from 25.7 percent to 46.4 percent, exceeded 60 percent in the 1996–97 federal budget, and was estimated to rise to 65.8 percent by 2000–2001 (NSWTF 1998b).

Labor reassumed power in the 1983 federal elections, but the attack on schools and higher education continued. The Hawke government continued the same policy of downsizing and outsourcing the public services, cutting health and education, and striking at the whole public sector. Its close dependence on corporate Australia intensified and ignited the fuse to an unprecedented explosion of privatization that was to affect every branch of the public service over the next decade.

When the Liberal-National Party Coalition came to power in Victoria in the 1992 state elections and took immediate and determined action to dismember the public services with tens of thousands of firings, it was a Labor federal government in Canberra that provided Victoria's right-wing government with a \$2 billion loan to finance the severance payouts.

Labor's ardent espousal of the privatization process was accompanied by the formal abandonment of the policies of full employment, social welfare, and the free, universal education that traditionally had been identified with the Labor Party. In their place market criteria, class collaboration, and labor discipline were elevated to the status of a new creed with all the devotion of a John the Baptist preparing the road and making smooth the path for Liberal and National coalitions that, as a direct result of widespread popular disillusionment with Labor, inevitably won a series of state elections in the early 1990s and the federal elections of 1996.

Labor's privatization program was pushed forward in the face of strong internal opposition from many Labor Party members who, as dedicated supporters of public ownership, were deeply dismayed by the shift in their party's line. Their opposition was energetic, but completely without effect, and we must ask why.

The answers—for there is not a single answer—are to be found in several distinct directions.

In the first place, the Labor Party does not consider class divisions within society as a cause or reason for conflict between classes for control of the state. In the words of the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848:

The undeveloped state of the class struggle, as well as their own surroundings, causes Socialists of this kind to consider themselves far superior to all class antagonisms. They want to improve the condition of every member of society, even that of the most favoured. Hence, they habitually appeal to society at large, without distinction of class. (Marx and Engels 1976, 515)

The Labor Party, like other social-democratic parties, stands for collaboration between social classes, between employed and employers, between the oppressed and their oppressors, between the disadvantaged and the privileged. It believes, *or would have workers believe*, that debate, persuasion, conviction, and negotiation can overcome differences in class interests, and that, as a consequence, the privileged will renounce their privileges. The harmony thus established will, in their view, eventually bring benefits to all.

But many decades of class collaboration led by labor and social-democratic governments in every part of the world have *not* resulted in the elimination of poverty or of class exploitation. Under such governments, all these have intensified.

Under the Hawke government, the rich-poor gap doubled between 1983 and 1989. Out of the then 26 OECD countries, Australia under Labor ranked seventeenth in its “generosity” to the poor, spending 12.8 percent of its GDP on welfare, against an OECD average of 18.8 percent, and 29.1 percent in the Netherlands. Even Ireland spent more, at 16.7 percent of GDP (Lombard 1991).

The gap between rich and poor widened under Labor between 1983 and 1989 thanks to government taxation policy that lowered marginal tax rates for the rich but penalized low- and middle-income earners. In 1983, the richest 1 percent of the population earned as much as the bottom 11 percent; by 1989 this

had doubled to 21 percent. In spite of the Labor Party's claim to favor equal opportunity for women, women's share of the national income remained unchanged (Lombard 1991).

One must be wary about oversimplifying the analysis of social trends, but it is perfectly clear that one cannot speak of the "economic health of a nation" in a nation that is divided into classes with contradictory interests. Nor can one claim that the health of a nation can be served by investment flows where these are driven, as they are, by motives of self-interest and maximum return for the benefit of corporations and wealthy investors. To achieve such aims, corporations demand minimum costs, including minimum wages, and the reduction of the "costly waste" of public funds on education, welfare, and other public services.

Because social-democratic parties, among them the Australian Labor Party, have ignored the importance of contrasting class interests in society, they argue that "for the economic health of the nation" they have no option but to "govern wage costs" and, as they have done consistently, will use the unions to help them do so. In the Hawke and Keating years, they did so using a policy of class collaboration, productivity agreements (a modern euphemism for wage reductions), and a system of wage accords. They speak of a "partnership" between workers and employers or—as we have noted above—between exploited and exploiters.

One may quote once again from the 150-year-old but still pertinent *Communist Manifesto*, which has this to say of the utopian socialists that can be applied to the social-democratic parties, with their lack of historical understanding of social and class evolution:

The economic situation, as they find it, does not as yet offer to them the material conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat. They therefore search after a new social science, after new social laws, that are to create these conditions.

Historical action is to yield to personal inventive action; historically created conditions of emancipation to

fantastic ones, and the gradual, spontaneous class organization of the proletariat to an organisation of society specially contrived by these inventors. Future history resolves itself, in their eyes, into . . . the practical carrying out of their social plans. (Marx and Engels 1976, 515)

Without recourse to analytical discipline, or scientific rigor, or historical method—in short, without Marxism—social-democratic parties lay themselves wide open not only to the dangers of political and historical fantasies, but also to betrayal of the interests of the working class of which they claim to be spokespersons and representatives, and which elects them to power.

Thus, while the state of Victoria, following Kennett's right-wing victory in the 1992 state elections, was the first to see a highly organized and rapid reversal of the notion that social welfare, whether in health, education, housing, transport, or other services, is the responsibility of government, it is also amply evident that for more than a decade the Labor governments both of Hawke and Keating unhesitatingly adopted the principle of "user pays," with all its harsh and self-righteous, as well as grossly and brutally primitive, connotations of "every man for himself" and "the devil take the hindmost."

This has been as much the credo of Labor governments since 1983 as of the Liberal Party and its National Party allies since 1996. That the weakest go to the wall is approved as an acceptable social norm, clothed when necessary, in the social pseudoscience of "natural selection" and "survival of the fittest," supported by excuses of a "cash-strapped" state economy, by *both* major parties.

With youth unemployment oscillating between 20 and 30 percent and rising, Liberal schemes up to 1982 to "train" and "educate" the young and often long-term unemployed by offering "an appropriate education program . . . to assist young unemployed whose low or inadequate educational qualifications inhibit them from obtaining stable employment" served, in reality, to introduce certain basic skills and flexibility to "the reserve army of the unemployed" so that it could then be used to

undermine working-class solidarity and the security of still-employed workers.

These schemes also served to dump responsibility for unemployment onto the shoulders of its victims, and were used “as a cynical political move to recycle youth unemployment and artificially reduce the teenage unemployment rate” (Freeland 1986, 230). These programs were followed after a change of government in 1983 by Labor schemes, differing little if at all, save in their attempt to present a human face, from those of the Liberals, and having the same effect.

The erosion of education and social services under Liberal and Labor governments in Australia is but the expression of a wider and now dominant new world order, directed by the recommendations contained in reports of the IMF and OECD, whose worldview is shared by Labor and Liberals alike. Now that the global victory over the socialist world seems to these people to be more and more firmly secured, education and social services are but a few of the many chosen testing grounds in the battle to reestablish the old order of things—well illustrated by R. H. Tawney in a short but classic essay of 1918 (1964)—and drag social values to depths not seen for a century.

### ***Objectives of education***

The Labor Party’s approach to public education differs as little as it does from the Liberal Party’s for yet another reason, and has to do with what may be seen as education’s role within the capitalist system. It is a role that calls for historical assessment.

Free and universal public education in Australia dates from 1848—the year in which the *Communist Manifesto* was first published—when a National Education Board was set up along with a separate Denominational School Board. Their purpose was to respond to the colony’s growing need for a literate and numerate workforce. These two boards were amalgamated in 1866 into a single Council of Education.

Although to different degrees and with divergent motivations, both conservative and liberal opinions were agreed on the need to educate the colony’s labor force. “In the outback of New

South Wales,” laborers’ children were growing up like savages, “idle, ignorant, and demoralised,” said Thomas Holt in 1856 in a speech to the Legislative Assembly, and he argued that it was the government’s duty to “prevent crime and promote virtue by means of a universal system of education” (Ely 1978, 24).

More to the point, the reality of the colonial situation “led both conservatives and the upwardly mobile to agree . . . that something had to be done about the education of the future generation in both town and country if the transplanted British civilisation was to be saved from retrogression into barbarism” (Ely 1978, 22).

Moreover, a society increasingly dependent on industrial activity faced a growing need for a literate workforce. By the mid-1800s it was clear that both elementary and higher mass education were indispensable elements without which a modern economy could not be created. Universal education for the masses, however rudimentary it might be, was necessary, both conservative and liberal-minded progressives nervously agreed, but while the liberal-minded were concerned about wasting public funds, conservatives were obsessed with quite other dangers.

The Queensland Under-Secretary of Education, after a review of the New South Wales school system in 1896, thought “it would be lamentable if the New South Wales system of public and university education, admirable as it is, led to the formation of a class mentally disqualified to earn a living under the conditions of the time, and it brought with it the danger of an educated proletariat” (Mendelsohn 1979, 293).

These views were neither merely personal nor unusual; they were generally held. At the turn of the century in both the United States and Europe, debate raged on the dangers that were inherent in universal public education, in spite of a general recognition that it was necessary.

In the United States, W. T. Harris, a prominent conservative educationalist, supported universal education on the grounds that, if “property was to be safe from confiscation by a majority composed of communists, [we] must see to it that the people are educated so that each see the sacredness of property.”

“His major goal,” says Feinberg, “was to find a way in which America could adjust to the emerging technology [of the day] without a political revolution, and without a drastic alteration in the distribution of wealth. Marx had already served notice on the defenders of capitalism that within its own technology were the seeds of its own destruction, and Harris believed that the school was the instrument to ensure that such seeds never blossomed” (1975, 35).

In Europe, the same fears assailed governments caught between industrial capitalism’s need for a workforce with a degree of literacy, and the realization that knowledge, however rudimentary, could have serious and unpredictable political consequences.

From its beginning, universal elementary education provided by the state has been influenced by recognition of the same contradiction between necessity and fear. Consequently, education has been dominated by the principle of inequality. Tawney saw it as “a discipline, half-redemptive, half-repressive. . . . It had been designed for those for whom it was expedient to provide the rudiments of instruction since, if wholly untaught, they were a danger to society, but inexpedient to provide more, since they were equally a danger if taught too much” (1931, 129).

A specter was, indeed, haunting not Europe, as the *Communist Manifesto* modestly stated, but the entire world!

### ***Social conditioning***

“The demand for popular education,” says Bernal, “first arose with the insurgent bourgeoisie of the sixteenth century,” and the question of its recognition remained a battleground in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the course of the struggles that marked this period, early educators played a significant part in overthrowing the ideology of the feudal order.

However, once industrial capitalists were in power their enthusiasm for the extension of education soon evaporated. True, the new working class needed enough

acquaintance with the three R's to do their jobs properly, and provision for teaching them was only reluctantly provided on the cheapest possible basis. But that was all the more reason for seeing that education of the masses did not go too far, and that it introduced no unsettling ideas. (Bernal 1954, 1149)

The problem of the contradiction between the system's need for a literate proletariat and its inherent political dangers was eventually resolved. Teaching acquired an ideological dimension. It was assigned the responsibility of integrating "working-class children into the *given* society; those who are 'bright' are helped to prepare their escape from the working-class condition and the rest are helped to accept their subordination; as far as the vast majority of working-class children are concerned," universal education "performs an important class-confirming role" (Milliband 1970, 241).

It became an important part of education "to instil in those who are subjected to it a submissive acceptance of the social order of which they are intended, no doubt with exceptions, to form the base." In the Australian colonies, administrators all recognized that the colonial end of the imperial economic system could only work effectively if specific, teachable, and acceptable modes of social behavior were spread more widely in the population; "what was called for was diligence, self-reliance, self-improvement, inter-dependence, and respect for social rules and traditional institutions" (Ely 1978, 10).

"Mass elementary education," we may typically read in a recent textbook, "must have a curriculum sufficient to ensure a meagre literacy, and be suited solely to the lower classes" (Musgrave 1968, 61). For those receiving such an education, however, "the fundamental principle of upper-class assimilation remains" (Bernal 1954, 1150).

"Compromise, rather than confrontation with the upper classes of Australian society has marked the extension of educational facilities to the ambitious, the industrious, and the lucky among the humbler classes," says Ely. Educational facilities

offered to the upwardly mobile have generally guaranteed their cooperation rather than confrontation with their superiors. Stress on upward mobility continued into the 1960s and 1970s with both the Murray Report (1957) and the Martin Report (1964).

Kevin Harris (not the W. T. Harris cited by Feinberg 1975, 35) has recently summed up the situation in an Australian context:

First, schooling provides certain skills and knowledge required by most, if not all, future workers . . . as well as socially-specific, highly-valued esoteric skills and knowledge for a small proportion of pupils headed for specialised regions in the labour market. Secondly, it transmits to all future adults, albeit with a varying degree of proficiency and success, the values, norms and attitudes required by people occupying different positions within the existing relations of production. And thirdly, it diverts part of the cost of producing trained and pre-sorted workers for the labour market from the employers to the state or, more specifically, to the taxpayer. (Harris 1994, 35)

In short, in the eighty years since the publication of Tawney's short polemic, which took Britain's industrial masters to task for their opposition to the British government's 1918 Education Bill, little has changed. It is still the function of education to keep the workers' children in their place—and to do so at public, not private expense (Tawney 1964).

If anything has changed in education, Harris notes, it is "that developments in macro- and micro-economic policies have tended to promote moves that divert a larger share of the cost . . . of producing employees away from the employers, and more directly to the taxpayer and the taxpayer's progeny, who are now represented as *consumers* as well as beneficiaries of schooling" (1994, 36).

So when Howard (like his Labor predecessors head of a conservative government and differing from them only in his unconcealed zeal for the task) continues to vandalize and dismantle public education, this can be seen as no more than a

return to historically established priorities hallowed by generations of capitalist legislation and practice. Even the 1964 Martin Report on Tertiary Education in Australia noted that a sound education was “the best guarantee of a flexible workforce whose members are capable of turning to new tasks.” Education (or schooling, as some have taken good care to distinguish it) was, and still remains vocation-oriented.

Ely remarks that the aspirations of the working class in Australian society have been partially gratified by educational opportunities that, sometimes readily, but often grudgingly, have been made available to their children. Among the have-nots, turbulence was weakened by the limited but real opportunities offered to their natural leaders, and so “Australia entered without stress what Manning Clark called the age of the bourgeoisie. Consensus rather than confrontation [has] transmuted marxist class struggle into acquiescence” (Ely 1978, 5).

What, then, of the free and universal character of a public and socially oriented education that has been, and continues to be, dismembered at the hands of recent Labor and Liberal governments?

Here we must note that current ideas of universal and free popular education are a recent inheritance dating from a relatively short period that followed World War II. An economic boom, driven by heavy demands for postwar reconstruction, an awakening of humanistic values in the wake of a war that had profound and widespread ideological significance and led to the resurgence of popular forces and values that stirred wide political support for the idea of the “welfare state” (even in relatively conservative circles), the emergence of labor and socialist governments in Europe and elsewhere, and the disintegration of old Europe’s former empires—all served to stimulate a brief renaissance that lasted until the 1970s. This renaissance was felt in Australia, but in an attenuated form, only with the formation of the Whitlam government that held office for less than three years from 1973 to 1975.

Viewed from longer historical perspectives, other periods of revolutionary or exceptional social change have been marked by

a similar flowering of new attitudes and ideas. These have always left their impact on educational principles and the liberalization of education itself. Among these, one can count the Florentine Renaissance of the 1400s and 1500s, the English Civil War, the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and the 1917 October Revolution in Russia.

Each of these was succeeded by retreat into the formalistic and sometimes obscurantist application of some, though not necessarily all, of the ideas that had been awakened in the ferment, or by their eventual abandonment, with subsequent collapse into reaction.

So the postwar ferment was an interlude only, soon eclipsed by the growing power and domination of global transnational capitalism, hastened by the Cold War defeat of most of the socialist world. The dismantling of the public services that began in the 1970s and has lasted until the present, under the influence of the economic “rationalism” that currently dominates the political philosophy of developed capitalist countries, is not a new development, therefore, but rather a return to the past, although to a qualitatively different degree, determined by the present transnational stage of capitalism.

Speaking of earlier periods, the historian Christopher Hill observes that “as revolutionary tides have subsided, again and again the idea that re-asserted itself was that education for the lower orders is socially destabilizing and politically dangerous” (Hill 1967, 195, 196, and throughout), and the ruling class has reacted accordingly. Our present age is no exception.

### *And the future?*

The current, narrow, task-oriented, role-confirming model of education has not gone unquestioned. The 1957 Murray Report remarked how little attention was paid to “a full and true education befitting a free citizen of a free country,” and deplored the fact that we have “been falling behind in our understanding and appreciation of human values” (Ely 1978, 112). The 1974 TAFE Committee Report proposed a shift of education from “merely

serving industry's needs" toward "meeting the needs of persons who wish to develop their abilities to the best advantage of themselves and the community" (115).

Since then, however, political and ideological priorities have shifted, and educational policies along with them, as governments of "developed" countries, conservative and social-democratic alike, have moved to the right in response to the growing ideological pressures of globalized capitalism.

Government committees no longer care nor dare to state their attitudes toward such notions as community needs or human values if not in explicit cash terms—although Keating, while still prime minister and in command of a policy of education cuts, allowed himself occasional flights into rhetoric, as when he said, "education is a foundation of the nation's culture and strength. It is where the knowledge and appreciation of our heritage and institutions is passed on."

He even "suspected," he said, that "these things are not the priority they once were" (Keating 1995). He should know. The proof of his educational pudding, as of offerings from any other Australian government since the mid-1970s, whether Liberal or Labor, has been in the eating of its perpetually diminishing fare.

It would be inappropriate, therefore, to confine our present discussion on education to the idealistic and abstract levels such discussions often occupy, given the new, harsh reality of education policies in the "developed" countries of the OECD. Reality and experience tell us that education, wherever we find it, and whether it be elementary or higher, or whether technical, scientific, or in the humanities, has the aim of serving a specific and immediate purpose—now usually evaluated in terms of bottom-line returns, rather than in intellectual aims or content.

Education is not intended either to enlarge or enrich the mind. It is intended to enrich the pockets of those who sell it and those who buy it. It serves as "a preparation for life"—but what life? Its objective is either to train people to perform more effectively the tasks to which they are destined by their class position or to serve as a boost to the upward mobility that will permit others to escape from subordinate class-determined roles.

In short, in spite of all the rhetoric, in any class-divided society, there are different educations for different classes. This message is amply confirmed by innumerable statistical indications. For example, in postwar Europe, the upper and middle classes have rarely, if ever, contributed less than a large minority of students to universities, and are frequently present as a distinct majority. In the Netherlands this has been about 45 percent. In other countries, Sweden among them, it exceeds 50 percent, while in Mediterranean countries it is often as high as 80 percent.

Most of the rest are the children of salaried employees, small businessmen, and farmers. Working-class children are invariably poorly represented, rarely exceeding 10 to 15 percent, often considerably less. (These data from the 1970s have not changed substantially since.)

The situation in Australia is not significantly different. The Williams Report surveyed the social origins of the students in Australian universities, and noted that only 15 percent of students came from working-class families, while 50 percent came from the professional, executive, and administrative classes whose members constitute only a quarter of the male population (Williams 1979, 100ff).

Recent Australian studies have shown that boys from poor socioeconomic backgrounds are only half as likely to gain admission to universities as others, while those that come from professional and administrative families have a 15 percent better chance of entry. The trend towards a greater representation of the wealthy and privileged has accelerated rapidly in the past several years.

All this indicates a state of education that is a long way from the humanistic notion that education should aim at the intellectual enrichment of the individual and of the society of which the individual is a part. However much we might hanker after the renaissance ideal that exalts the unrelenting search for truth and humanist values that can liberate the fullest potential of the human mind, the stark reality of the human condition under capitalism dictates quite other imperatives.

Education, say our rulers and their various commissions and committees, serves the needs of society. In a class-divided society such claims are meaningless. Education does not serve the interests of society or even of a majority within it, as is claimed, but those of its privileged minorities. It serves the ruling class, which has power to dictate the character of education and educational policy. This favors and is meant to favor ruling-class interests and the interests of any others who choose to conform to capitalist society's social and cultural norms in the hope of escaping their subordinate and class-determined condition.

As for the future, when working-class forces take power and choose a socialist path, the same rules will continue to hold true. Class divisions will continue to exist, for they cannot be banished overnight by decree. Power will have shifted from the old ruling class to a new one. The regime will be transitional, and education will continue, as before, to serve the specific and immediate objectives of the new ruling class, which will be the working class. This class will determine the characteristics of the new education, and will give priority to the interests of the new ruling class as long as class divisions persist.

The important difference, as the *Communist Manifesto* took care to underline in 1848, is that ruling classes until now have represented only a privileged minority, while the working class, the new ruling class, represents "the immense majority of the people."

As a result, education under postrevolutionary governments will serve the interests of "the immense majority of the people," although society may retain its class character for many decades until a new, classless society evolves over time.

Yet even in its very earliest days and in an imperfect and poorly developed form, in the presence of persisting class divisions, and often in the face of hostile encirclement and military intervention, socialist societies have allowed us to see and evaluate the germ of a new, classless, and truly universal communist education.

The experience of socialist education to date, with whatever defects, has not only confirmed the validity of this vision. It has

also provided valid guiding principles for the first outlines of a genuinely universal educational system. It has provided the opportunity to rid today's educational policies of the numerous illusions of idealism and egalitarianism that clothe them.

In even the most disadvantaged postrevolutionary societies—former colonies, underdeveloped, starved of every resource, including even paper and pencils—it is possible to see the emergence of an educational system with an unmistakable and uncompromising social and community orientation.

The principle of usefulness to the community is now central, but it has a real meaning that it did not have before; the community now means “the immense majority of the people,” not a privileged minority that seeks private gain at public expense. The new priority is public service. Literacy is now prized, not as a key to social success, but because it opens new worlds to a population previously denied them. Social responsibility assumes outstanding importance.

As for literacy, where can any capitalist society point to the literacy campaigns that, in Cuba, Nicaragua, and former African Portuguese colonies, saw tens of thousands of young volunteers mobilized to bring the skills and advantages of literacy to an entire population of laborers and peasants, of young and old, throughout entire countries, regardless of the future demands of this or that industry?

Where, outside the socialist system, can school games be found with rules that depend on cooperation rather than competition? Or play activities designed in such a way that they require the combined and reasoned efforts of more than one child? Or problems posed in such a way as to require for their solution the joint knowledge of several children?

Between the system Howard and his government are ravaging in the name of privilege and the one socialism ushers in and that already, many years ago, emerged from realms of theory and conjecture into demonstrable reality, only to be crushed again for the umpteenth time, there is one great difference.

We are looking at two worlds, and two ways of looking at the future. One of these worlds, conceived and regulated by the

Liberal-Nationals and slavishly accepted by the leaders of the Australian Labor Party and their faceless wealthy friends, is a world of greed.

The other, a world founded on social responsibility and human values, is one that neither Liberals or their National Party allies will ever understand and that social-democratic labor parties will continue to betray.

As the popularity of both of these groups wanes, so will their grip on power. With their passing, the road will be clear once more for the construction of the kind of society that for so long has endured their hatred and so often been dismantled and destroyed by them. It will be a socialist society dedicated to nurturing all its children equally, encouraging their diversity and the diversity of their gifts, and opening an era in which all humans can flourish to their fullest potential.

This remains the socialist objective, only temporarily stalled by the combined efforts of a world of Howards and his kind, who look backwards with nostalgia, but have never—because of their entrenched class position—learned the art of looking forward or found the courage to do so.

I should like to express my gratitude to colleagues who have provided me with additional reference material and helped me locate many references that I carelessly mislaid since this paper was first prepared. Thanks to Ian Tremain of the Australian Education Union Library, Julie Wells of the National Tertiary Education Union and the library of the Victoria Trades Hall Council, all in Melbourne, and to the library of the New South Wales Teachers' Federation in Sydney.

This paper is an updated and slightly modified version of one that originally appeared in the *Australian Marxist Review*, no. 39 (February 1998).

*Terni, Italy*

## NOTES

1. The terminology that describes countries as “developed” and “developing” needs critical scrutiny. It is obvious that the real problem of the so-called developing countries is that they are *not* developing, and that it is more correct to call them “underdeveloped” countries. Similarly, the developed

countries, which for centuries extracted wealth in vast quantities from their colonies, underdeveloping them, and jeopardizing future survival of the planet by their overconsumption, should more accurately be called "overdeveloped" countries.

2. One Australian dollar is about fifty U.S. cents.

3. Readers may need to be reminded that in Australia the Liberal Party is the party that represents the country's conservatives.

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## MARXIST FORUM

### **Symposia in China on Socialism and Marxism in the Twenty-First Century**

Some fifty Chinese and twelve foreign scholars attended the International Symposium on Marxist Philosophy and the Twenty-First Century in Beijing, 30–31 October 2000, sponsored by the Institute of Philosophy of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. This symposium presented a rather significant contrast ideologically with the International Symposium on Socialism and the Twenty-First Century, 18–21 October 1999, in Wuhan City, sponsored by a number of academic institutions including the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The presentations by the Chinese scholars at both symposia covered a range of areas. All expressed support for Deng Xiaoping's policy of opening and reform that introduced the relatively free flow of information internally and between China and the rest of the world externally (opening), along with a mixed market economy (reform) in which the socialist sector is to retain the leading role. Following the terminology of Deng Xiaoping, opening and reform constitute the essence of "socialism with Chinese characteristics," a phrase used by Deng Xiaoping to distinguish China's socialist development from a tightly planned economy modeled on the Soviet Union.

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In the wake of its focus on the consolidation of Deng Xiaoping's program, the leadership of the Communist Party of China has paid scant attention to the development of Marxist theory. At Wuhan, none of the papers presented by Chinese scholars suggested that capitalism might enter a terminal crisis during the twenty-first century or even that it ever would. There was no mention of class struggle. Several of the papers explicitly stated that no new social revolutions will take place in the twenty-first century, even implying that revolutionary transformations are a thing of the past. The assertion of convergence of the capitalist and socialist systems was not uncommon. Although one or two papers made some vague reference to imperialism, none saw imperialism as something that needed to be confronted by China.

The year that passed between the two symposia witnessed the strong Chinese reaction to the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia and concern over the new guidelines for Japanese-U.S. defense cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. The Party leadership, obviously aware that the capitalist sector in the Chinese economy, both domestic and foreign-owned, would exploit the weakness of Marxist ideology to seek ideological hegemony, began to stress the need for strengthening Marxist theoretical activity.

At the Beijing symposium, the Chinese scholars also repeatedly gave support to Deng Xiaoping's policy of opening and reform. They universally referred to the need to develop various aspects of dialectical and historical materialism and displayed few of the illusions expressed in Wuhan. The ever-present danger from imperialism was also acknowledged. Considerable attention was paid to the importance of the materialist component in Marxist philosophy. As in Wuhan, however, class analysis and class struggle were ignored and the spirit of combativeness with bourgeois ideology was minimal. The focus was the need to apply Marxist philosophy to conditions in China.

In this and the next issue of *NST*, we present a number of papers from the Beijing conference, including four presentations by Chinese scholars.

Erwin Marquit

Editor, *Nature, Society, and Thought*

# Opening Remarks to the International Symposium on Marxist Philosophy and the Twenty-First Century

**Li Tieying**

*Professor Li Tieying is president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.*

Friends and comrades:

It is a big event today to have so many philosophers come from all over the world to take part in this international symposium with a focus on “Marxist Philosophy and the Twenty-First Century” organized by the Philosophy Institute of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). The symposium intends to engage common commitment to re-examine and sum up the essential experiences in the studies of Marxist philosophy in the twentieth century, and meanwhile to preview its potential role in the twenty-first century. Please allow me to take this occasion on behalf of the CASS to extend a warm welcome to all the philosophers from home and abroad present here for the conference. I would also like to express our heartiest congratulations to the conveners of the conference.

Philosophy is a science tracing back to antiquity but subject to recurrent renewal. It is thus seen as the embodiment of the highest form of wisdom peculiar to humankind. As early as the Pre-Qin Period in China and Hellenism in Europe, philosophy as

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a systematic learning of wide scope and great depth came to the fore almost simultaneously in both East and West. This fact seems to me to suggest not only that human beings need philosophy, but that the advent of the discipline itself marks the maturity of human rationality or reason. In the past two thousand years or so, the development of philosophy has undergone a diversity of rich features and rapid changes along with the continuous progression of the human race full of historical ups and downs. Its significance, so to speak, can never be neglected because it is “the cream of the spirit of the times” and “the living soul of civilization” as well.

It is without doubt that the Marxist philosophy of our concern nowadays occupies an extremely important position in the history of philosophy as a whole. Born in the midnineteenth century, it is the outcome of the development of both modern industrial civilization and natural sciences in one sense, and in another, the fruit of social reflection and thought based on the critique as well as transcendence of capitalism. Its very birth initiated a profound revolution in the domain of philosophy. “The philosophers,” claims Karl Marx himself, “have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point however is to change it.” This argument fully reveals the basic ethos of Marxist philosophy. To interpret the world is to change it and realize human emancipation. Accordingly, the world can be better interpreted only through the praxis of changing it. Such praxis ever since the emergence of Marxism justifies the fact as follows: it is the basic ethos aforementioned that enables Marxism to have become a philosophy of inexhaustible vitality, and to have transformed the look of world history.

Ever since the twentieth century, the destiny of China has been closely linked with that of Marxism. As a result of the relevance of Marxism as it was discovered, China treated it as the theoretical guide for her revolutionary cause and construction activity. Moreover, unremitting efforts have been made to combine it with both the status quo of Chinese society and the positive aspects of the Chinese cultural tradition. During the

process of this combination, the Communist Party of China consistently places more emphasis on the understanding and application of the Marxist world outlook and its methodology rather than any bookish parroting or indiscriminate mimesis of its words and expressions. During the New Cultural Movement in the early twentieth century, Li Dazhao commenced to promote in China the idea of historical materialism as a primary element of Marxism. That has helped us broaden our mind and perspective in observing the world and history together.

In the course of China's New Democratic Revolution between the 1930s and the 1940s, Mao Zedong wrote two philosophical essays entitled "On Practice" and "On Contradiction," launching a resolute attack on the dogmatism and formalism that are apt to oversimplify Marxism. What we have learned from either positive or negative experiences is most crucial and valuable, that is, we must be realistic and seek truth from facts, and make working policies according to the real and ever-developing situation in both China and the world over. This has already been considered as our most treasured conviction and spiritual wealth. In 1978, for example, Deng Xiaoping strongly backed a nationwide debate over truth-oriented criteria in order to redress the dogmatic and stereotyped thinking once rooted in the conventional mode of China's socialist construction. Philosophical debate of that kind continues to provide a great ideological support for China's reform and open-door policy as well as for building socialism with Chinese characteristics. Its importance will be displayed to its fullest degree along with the advancement of social praxis in this country.

The experience of the twentieth century in its entirety has given us a feeling of the powerful appeal and boundless vitality of Marxist philosophy. It is therefore treated as the best spiritual weapon for both the Communist Party of China and the Chinese people, not only at the present stage but also in the time to come. Of course, Marxism and its philosophy both require continuous development and enrichment in actual practice. Hence all the Marxists in China have a sense of mission to fulfill this objective with all possible endeavor.

Friends and comrades, the bell is going to ring for the arrival of the twenty-first century in about two months' time. With the new millennium approaching nearer, it is worth our serious consideration and discussion of such matters as what will become of the destiny of Marxist philosophy and how it is possible for us to develop it further. These matters do matter to the extent that they are related to the destiny and prospects of humankind. The participants in this conference come from both advanced regions like Europe, North America, and Japan, and from developing countries like China. In spite of different social conditions and cultural backgrounds, we all share the similar wish to explore the existent issues from a scientific viewpoint. We can therefore discuss together, investigate deeper, and speak out all our observations about the topics of common concern. Only by so doing can we make the symposium a rewarding and fruitful one of high scholarship.

Now I would like to propose, for discussion only, a few words more about my personal views.

1. The study of Marxist philosophy should first of all pay enough attention to the social problems that arise in the present-day development. The actual way of life is, as it were, subject to change. It goes on changing so greatly and profoundly that it has reached in the past century an incredible level our elder generations could hardly imagine. As for the spirit of Marxist philosophy, it always keeps a close watch on the evolution of the times and human fate. This general spirit calls for a parallel to current advances, even though some of the specific doctrines of Marxist philosophy need to be modified in accordance with the ever-changing reality. In other words, Marxist philosophy cannot maintain its vitality if it breaks away from the development of the contemporary era.

Around the turn of the centuries at present, the economic development in capitalist countries encounters some new features and contradictions. The cause of socialist construction undergoes some form of tortuous exploration toward a new realm. Such ideas as "sustainable development" also imply the fact that the strategy of economic growth in human society faces

new transformations nowadays. In addition, the international situation is currently going through conspicuous and thorough changes. Although the Cold War is assumed to be over, peace and development as two key themes and main streams in the world are not brought into authentic and full display yet. The priority task of the twenty-first century remains to create a new international economic-political order, preserve the world peace, and promote the common development of all humankind. Under such circumstances, economic globalization has turned into a developmental tendency, thus bringing forth an enormous impact on global economy, politics, and social life and on many other aspects involved. The impact of this kind will be surely reflected in theoretical dimension and thus naturally challenges philosophy with new questions. Economic globalization, for instance, will give rise to the issue about the historical status of a nation or state.

What notion of equality is deployed as the ground to build up a reasonable and just world economic-political order is surely associated with the issue about cultural-value diversity and universality. Correspondingly, how to tackle these matters also leads us to another issue about the probability of conducting legitimately fair interactions and communications by common pursuits of consensus among nations and states that vary from one to another in economic-political system and cultural heritage. All this deals a direct influence on the global tendency in the twenty-first century. Facing these critical matters of reality, many people have once again noticed some of Marx's forward-looking predictions over the historical development of the human race. Among many others, for example, he predicted that human history would evolve into world history. In my mind, a further investigation into such crucial ideas and messages will enable us to achieve something new and remarkable in the studies of Marxist philosophy.

2. The study of Marxist philosophy needs to take in rich nutriments from modern scientific developments on the one hand, and on the other, to summarize the findings by contemporary scientific experiments. As usual the founders of Marxism

emphasized the role of sciences and gave heed to major discoveries of natural sciences that help push forward the progression of philosophy proper. Ever since the midtwentieth century, the revolution of new science and technology has witnessed such an advance and made historic breakthroughs in the fields of physics and chemistry, biology and biological sciences, astronomy and cosmology, and informational science, etc. Consequently there have arisen high tech clusters chiefly based on microelectronics, informational, new biological, space flight, new energy and material technologies. New tech revolution and its application to production tend to cause the replacing and upgrading of old industries, lay a solid foundation for the developing of new economic forms, accelerate the reform of the social organizational system, and also stir up the renewal of human lifestyles and ways of thought. In face of all these new changes, Marxist philosophers today are expected to inherit the traditional merits as performed by Marx and Engels in their attitudes towards sciences. That is to say, it is a necessity for Marxist philosophers to closely follow and boldly assimilate the new achievements of contemporary sciences and technologies so as to conduct their research in probing and creative manners with reference to the latest scientific knowledge and thinking strategies. This would make it possible for them to continuously enrich and upgrade the theory of Marxist philosophy into a new crystallization of human wisdom.

3. The study of Marxist philosophy is consistently accompanied with a high awareness of self-conscious practice. Marxism is by no means a dogmatic principle but rather guidance for action. Hence its theoretical investigation requires a constant integration with practical development as it gets itself tested and developed in and through praxis. The praxis referred to is a social praxis that serves forever as the greatest drive and the ultimate home for theoretical research. In this case, Chinese scholars ought to envisage not merely the global issues emerged in human praxis, but the new problems encountered in domestic social praxis. China in the twenty-first century aims to carry forward the modernization program and strives for national “prosperity,

democracy and civilization.” Generally speaking, an arduous and historic task for China is to give a fresh impetus to the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics in particular. Moreover, the integration of socialism with market economy turns out to be an inventive experiment without any precedent to go by in human history. All this is bound to pose theoretically important issues that demand theoretically scientific answers and solutions. The time we live in sets up most novel and higher requirements on theoretical work. Our philosophical research will be able to contribute its due bit to social development providing it respects the common practice of humankind and dares to take up any practical challenge.

Friends and comrades, the twenty-first century is saturated with prospects and challenges. With the new millennium just around the corner, the world and China alike are moving toward a critical phase of development. Correspondingly, Marxism and its philosophy are coming across a critical period of advancement as well. Let us make a sustained effort in favor of developing the advanced culture of humankind and the philosophy of Marxism altogether.

Lastly, I would like to wish this conference a complete success, and sincerely hope all the participants will have a pleasant time.

Thank you for your attention.

*Beijing*  
*October 2000*



# **Marxist Philosophy and the Development of Science and Technology**

**Hu Xinhe and Jin Wulun**

## **Introduction**

In the twentieth century, Marxist philosophy was broadly propagated, practiced, and developed. It encountered many distortions, criticisms, and challenges from the outside, as well as misunderstandings, abuses, dogmatization, and vulgarization from within the Marxist camp. In contrast to other philosophical schools, Marxist philosophy was able to retain its vitality and remain the theoretical foundation for guiding our opening-up and reform in the face of many challenges because of its practical and scientific characteristics. In the attention it pays to practice, Marxist philosophy emphasizes the test of practice, seeks to draw positive results from practice, always connecting it with human activity. Its scientific character enables it to improve, evolve, and perfect itself by interacting with its philosophical opponents, paying attention to the Enlightenment and lessons from the development of science and technology, and attempting to answer the essential problems arising from human interaction with nature and society. It could thus enrich itself and go forward in time. In fact, the interconnection between theory and practice means that those practices Marxist philosophy is concerned with are scientific practices and those sciences Marxist philosophy needs are practical sciences. The combination of theory and practice is the principal motor of Marxist philosophy. In China

*Nature, Society, and Thought*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2000)

today, Deng Xiaoping theory is an example of the unity of the practical and scientific characteristics of Marxism.

The scientific character of Marxist philosophy requires it to pay attention to the theoretical achievements and practical significance of the development of science and technology and to base itself on the most advanced achievements of contemporary science. As is well known, the founders of Marxism always emphasized that it should draw on the best heritage of human civilization. Marxism was founded on the basis of the achievements of the natural and social sciences of that time. It is certain that the development of Marxist philosophy today also is inseparable from the interaction with contemporary science and technology, because the development of science and technology and the social progress associated with them are responsible for the most rapid progress of human knowledge and practice. Many new and hitherto unknown phenomena are brought to light; new ideas, new hypotheses, and new theories provide plentiful data and problems for Marxist philosophy, and enable it to move ahead with the times as it continues to interact with the development of science and technology.

The unprecedented progress made in science and technology in the twentieth century and its reflection in the knowledge of nature and society, which came on the heels of the theories of relativity and quantum mechanics, can be associated with five theoretical models, namely, the quark theory of the structure of matter; the double-helix model of genetic materials; the big-bang model of the origin of the cosmos; the plate tectonics theory of the earth's crust; and Alan Turing's computer model. All of these theories are logically coherent and empirically confirmed to some degree. Beyond the traditional concepts and paradigms, they present a challenge to the Marxist philosophical view of matter to relate these theories to the evolution of nature and the laws of nature. A rapid development of high technology—a new revolution of science and technology, the core of which is information technology and biological technology—has characterized the latter part of the twentieth century. It has deeply influenced the economy, culture, politics, thought, and even life

habits of human society, and stimulated the speed of knowledge transmission and the process of globalization. Today, as a new civilization is being created by science and technology, there also arises a series of ethical and ecological problems, at least partially associated with the development of science and technology and with the direction of technological innovation in the new economics. All of these provide Marxist philosophy with new problems as well as opportunities for development.

We shall now explore four aspects of these conceptual changes and practical problems to which Marxist philosophy should pay attention.

### ***I. The evolution of the view of reality***

A problem of materialism—namely, the problem of the relationship between scientific theory and its objects—is the central problem of current philosophy of science, which is closely related to the philosophers' view of reality. Materialists may have different views on what those objects are, such as particles or fields, and these views must be changed with the development of science.

The dominant view of reality in Western philosophy is Aristotle's view of *substance*, which accepted Parmenides's invariability as the criterion of reality, and took *substance* as the substantial and essential thing behind the real world and as the subject of his *Posterior Analytics*. According to this theory, the primary character of substance lies in its priority, universality, and essentiality, which means that substance is a priori both in time sequence and in definition; any existence is an existence of substance and related to substance, and substance appears in any statement system as the subject term, and all other categories, such as quantity, quality, state, and relation, are descriptions of it and predicates of it. This view of substance established the ontological tradition in the history of Western philosophy and left an age-old influence of substantialism in investigations of natural philosophy and physics.

But with the rise of modern science, a new view of reality developed, as advocated by Galileo, Newton, and Locke. This

view is based on the concept of *property*. In this view, the properties of the substance are described and the distinction is made between primary qualities, independent of human sense organs, and secondary qualities, dependent on these organs. The invariability or reality of the primary qualities is thereby emphasized, because these qualities have the same or similar characteristics, such as independence, invariability, spatial separateness, quantitative and qualitative determinacy, determinism, etc., as does substance. So it is in fact a view of the “primary quality” that saw these qualities as the essence of a substance; some, like Hume and Russell, even went to the extreme of reducing substance to primary qualities and challenged the reality of substance.

The cornerstone of the view of primary quality is the dichotomy of subject and object and the absolute invariability of reality that ineluctably set itself in difficult positions. The theory of relativity and quantum mechanics told us that those basic physical quantities, or the primary qualities, like extension, time interval, and mass, even the properties of particles or waves, are all not invariant but relevant to reference systems or measuring equipment. Because these reference systems and measuring equipment themselves are also physical systems, the results of observation of interactions between physical systems are the same to all observers in the same arrangement, and therefore retain their objectivity and reality. But such a reality is not determined by innate “primary quality,” but is dependent on other physical systems that are chosen by the observing subject. So in maintaining the reality of primary qualities, we should also infer the following:

1. Because the reality of primary qualities is confirmed in definite relations with other physical systems, we should say that physical relations, as well as the physical entity and property, are also real. Physical relations include the relational terms, the material object referred to by the subjective term, and the quality referred to by the predicate term.

2. This new view of reality stresses that relations are real as well as reality being relational. Physical reality is confined to universal interactions with other things. As Engels said: “Only from this universal reciprocal action do we arrive at the real causal relation,” and “reciprocal action is the true *causa finalis* of things” (1987, 512).

3. From the relative (to other systems) reality of primary qualities, we can infer that secondary qualities, as results of interactions between physical entities and human sense organs, are also real in relation to normal sensual organs as measuring instruments.

4. Furthermore, the universality of relations and interactions challenges the dichotomy of subject and object. Such a dichotomy is only an intellectual device and gesture that emerges as a step in the history of epistemology; but once being made absolute and substantial, it will lead to a series of theoretical paradoxes and be contradictory to practice.

The lesson that modern science gives us, therefore, is that realities, as the objects of scientific recognition, are not pure objects and their properties, but include the interrelations and interactions between objects and between objects and the equipment used in our scientific practice. Our theories are not pure descriptions of objects and their properties, but are based on the experiments of our scientific practice. Using Marx’s words:

The chief defect of all previous materialism—that of Feuerbach included—is that things [*Gegenstand*], reality, sensuousness are conceived only in the form of the *object*, or of *contemplation*, but not as *human sensuous activity, practice*, not subjectively. Hence, it happened that the *active* side in contradistinction to materialism, was set forth by idealism—but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real, sensuous activity as such. (1976, 8)

Thus, for a real standpoint of scientific materialism, things, reality, and sensuousness in scientific theory should not be

conceived only in the form of the object, or of contemplation, but subjectively; and sensuous human activity, practice, and human activity itself should be conceived as objective activity. Human activity of recognition is not a mechanical description of objects but an activity based on human practice and a full playing of human initiatives.

## ***II. The reform of the mode of thinking***

Science is the pursuit of definite knowledge. As a result, the pursuit of definite methods of science—that is, the pursuit of universal and invariant methodological rules ensuring reliable knowledge—also goes forward, from which a relatively stable mode of thinking is formed. The eminent representative of this mode is the reductive pattern serving as the basic method and mode in classical science.

Classical science is essentially a mechanistic model whose manifestations are reductionism in the mode of thinking and determinism in the view of laws, besides the previously mentioned invariance of objects of recognition and mechanical reflection in epistemology. The typical model of reductionism is the Newtonian model, which is expressed in theoretical or mechanical reduction as well as in particle reduction. The former aims at reducing all phenomena to mechanical phenomena and then deriving them by mechanical principles, while the latter aims at reducing all universal mechanical properties, such as extension, hardness, impenetrability, mobility, and inertia of each body, to those of their components or even to those of their most fundamental parts. The combination of both constitutes the reductionist program of mechanism: to explain all phenomena by corpuscles and their motion by mechanical principles. Meanwhile, determinism in the mechanical model actually also expresses a reductionist tendency, such as reducing the random motions and the associated statistical laws governing gases composed of tremendous numbers of particles to deterministic mechanical laws of each particle. In this way, if the initial conditions and boundary conditions of each particle were known, we could in principle predict definitively their further motion.

During the initial period, when the objects were relatively simple, the reductionist doctrine was so successful in some fields, such as mechanics, physics, and chemistry, that it became not only a scientific method for the construction of a theory to explain phenomena, but also a tendency among scientists to approach scientific problems by what Alvin Toffler called the “disassembling” technique. In dealing with scientific problems, their tendency was always to reduce the whole to its parts, to reduce complexity to the simple, to reduce the nonlinear to the linear, to reduce irreversibility to the reversible, and to reduce the physical, chemical, biological, and even social phenomena to mechanical phenomena, following mechanistic principles, and then to reassemble them as a whole, which continues to obey mechanistic laws. Scientists were so familiar with and fond of this technique that they frequently forgot the reassembling after disassembling, reducing in this way the whole to the parts. But with the development of modern science, especially systems theory, dissipative structure theory, emergence theory, fractal geometry, chaos theory, etc., this once-progressive program showed its limitations and confronted a series of paradoxes. Reduction is to imitate the complex by the simple, to construct the whole by the parts, to iterate the nonlinear into the linear and to replace the irreversible by reversible. As systems theory and nonlinear theory has revealed to us, however, in the case of the complex phenomena of inorganic systems, biological systems, as well as social systems, the whole frequently proves to be greater than the sum of its parts; the emergence of new qualities could not be traced by a continuous process, the nonlinear interaction could not be iterated into a series of linear interactions; thus the complex phenomena could not be reduced to simple phenomena. Irreversibility in thermodynamics is incompatible with reversible mechanistic laws; coupling phenomena in the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen argument of quantum mechanics cannot be explained by the separable principle of a reductionistic program; the generation of dissipative structure in nonequilibrium thermodynamics, the sensitivity to initial conditions in chaos theory, all sorts of huge complex systems in the ecological environment, in the biological world, in the human body, especially in human

brains and in human societies, and the emergence of particular qualities at each level, etc., require us to make a paradigm shift from reductionism to holism. This new paradigm should not take complexity into account as simplicity, but must take it into account as itself, as complexity, and develop a new scientific method and mode of thinking, a particular philosophical perspective for examining complex phenomena.

The development of scientific theories for complex phenomena reveals to us the unity of macroworld and microworld, the combination of the reductive and holistic methods, and requires us to pay attention to self-organization and the emergence properties of systems, to intensify the exploration of the genesis and evolutionary dynamics of systems and of new problems such as irreversibility, discontinuity, indeterminacy, unpredictability, and nonlinear interaction. Such a shift from simple to complex, from reductionism to holism and becoming, requires the participation of philosophy because it involves a transformation of philosophical ideas and philosophical epistemology. It requires especially the participation of Marxist philosophy because, as we all know, the founders of Marxism had criticized the mechanistic tendency of science and philosophy even when they were at their summit. But in the development of Marxist philosophy in the twentieth century, there was also a dogmatic and mechanistic tendency, especially in the textbook system of the former Soviet Union and in the so-called Cultural Revolution in China, that blocked the path of development of Marxist philosophy. As a critical weapon and philosophical method, Marxist philosophy, by overcoming such a simplistic and one-sided pattern and dogmatic tendency, can restore the innovative spirits of Marx and Engels. That implies the need to analyze the development of science and society in the contemporary capitalist countries and of the global political, economic, and cultural problems as they appear in practice, and to draw the necessary practical and scientific consequences. In this way, Marxist philosophy can again play a predictive and guiding function in the future development of science and society.

### ***III. The extension of scientific rationality***

The opposition of “to be” and “ought to” or *quid facti* and *quid juris* is an ancient tradition in the history of Western thought. Since Hume and Kant, this dichotomy has become, in the minds of philosophers, the criterion of demarcation between science and dogma. According to this view, scientific propositions are factual statements that pursue the object as it is. They follow the rule of objectivity and aim at the truth, whereas a value judgment is a subjective and emotive human expression that aims at conformity of objects with the ends and feelings of human beings and manifests a relation between the subject and object. So scientific judgment and value judgment are two different activities; science is value irrelevant. It is impossible to infer a value judgment such as “ought to” from a factual judgment such as “to be.” On the other hand, value judgment is helpful in the deduction of factual judgment. Scientific rationality was appealing to scientific activities such as scientific discovery, theoretical construction, and even evaluation of theories. These include only logical, empirical, and mathematical forms but not values and ethical factors. This dichotomy is closely related to those of subject and object, mind and matter, rational and irrational, etc., which intensified the opposition and divorce of scientific and human culture. The high point of logical positivism was its projection of the slogan to reject metaphysics and demarcate it from science by asserting that the meaning of a proposition lies in the method of its verification. Such a view obviously reflects the admiration for science at the beginning of the twentieth century.

But what does it mean when we speak about science? “Science and technology is the first productive force”; “science is a human activity of recognition of nature and society”; and “science is true knowledge about nature and society.” These are several typical statements about the term *science*. The first statement itself, however, implies a sort of value orientation about science and technology and stresses utility in satisfying human desires. Although a distinction is generally made between the

terms *science* and *technology*, the latter implying such a utility, the current term *high tech* is irrefutably based on current science, and much research today is oriented on technological development and investments of big enterprises. It is increasingly difficult to make a sharp distinction between these terms.

According to the second statement, science is a human activity. On the one hand, it is an activity of a cognitive subject and reflects a cognitive relation between the subject and object that is necessarily limited by the relations between the objects and the relations between the subject and objects. Therefore, it is impossible to exclude all human factors, as is indicated in the aforementioned lessons from microphysics as well as from the anthropological principle in cosmology. On the other hand, science is a common activity of the scientific community, an activity in human society that cannot be untouched by various value ideas inside or outside the scientific community. Therefore, on both the cognitive and practical level, science as an activity is not indifferent to value judgments. What some people hold onto is the value neutrality of the third statement, namely the neutrality of the achievements of cognition, of knowledge. But even this statement is not easy to justify.

First of all, as discussed in section I, the “reality” that science describes is the human practice of cognition of nature and society, but not pure objects unrelated to human beings, so that these achievements in some sense are human constructions based on practice. Second, these achievements are inseparable from the activity of cognition and those scientists who are active in the sphere of cognition inescapably enter into these processes of cognition with their worldviews, metaphysical beliefs, and cultural backgrounds. Those social and cultural elements in the construction and evaluation of scientific theory that are stressed by the historical school in philosophy of science represented by Thomas Kuhn and the Edinburgh school are enlightening in this sense. Furthermore, especially in the twentieth century, when science-based high tech developed so fast, greatly influencing human life, scientists could not take into account the ethical consequences of their work. As Einstein remarked, “In our time,

scientists and engineers bear specially a heavy responsibility of morality because the development of massive destructive means of war depends on their works." Value judgments now have unavoidably become a part of scientific rationality.

The classical case of such an extension of scientific rationality is the production and use of the atomic bomb. Oppenheimer said that curiosity and the consciousness of adventure were among the initial motives of the scientists participating in the making of the atomic bomb, apart from the race with the Nazis. But when he faced the mushroom cloud and the great power of the bomb, the feeling that emerged in his mind was, "I became the god of death." This is why he supported international control of atomic energy, opposed the nuclear arms race in which the United States sought to make the first H-bomb, and became a victim of McCarthyism.

Scientific ethics—tying factual and value judgments, a bridge connecting science and technology with humanitarian fields—has now shifted from nuclear ethics to include ecological ethics, bioethics, and genetic ethics. No doubt the exploration of the unification of science with value theory and ethics based on human practice will expand the field of investigation of the philosophy of science as well as enrich the subjects of investigation of Marxist philosophy.

#### ***IV. The transformation of social roles***

As already mentioned, when the object of scientific theory is no longer a pure natural object but scientific practice as a human activity, and when a restrictive distinction between factual judgments and value judgments can also no longer be made, the image of science in the scientific community is changed greatly. No less a change has taken place in the external image of science and in its social role. Because science-based high tech has been playing a key role in the current knowledge economy, because the achievements and products of high tech have penetrated every aspect and level of social life, and also because the innovative consciousness embodying the essential spirit of science is not confined to one concrete field but dominates the direction of

social culture, science has moved from the aristocratic ivory tower of intellectual games toward the frontier of material production and spiritual-cultural construction, affecting the lives of all people as its application has evolved from the professional work of a relatively small part of the population to a motive power of all fields in the whole society.

Marx and Engels wrote in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* that

the bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of Nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalisation of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground—what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour? (Marx and Engels 1976, 489)

No doubt this magic development of productive forces came mainly from the rapid development and application of science and technology, from innovation of theory and technology. During the last three hundred years, modern science and technology have rapidly developed, human beings having achieved great successes in exploring the secrets of nature and of humanity itself. From the time of the industrial revolution initiated by the invention of steam engine to the electrification made possible by the technological application of electromagnetism, to the present period of the knowledge economy based on information technology and other high-tech industries, the development of science and technology has greatly changed the human conditions of production and life and has created a wealth that is thousands of times greater than that created during the previous thousands of years. This is the reason why Marx viewed “science as the powerful lever of history and a revolutionary force in the highest

meaning” and why Deng Xiaoping said “science and technology is the primary productive force.”

But up to now, science and technology have been not just a revolutionary factor in the productive forces and a material force, nor just an external factor alien to society. Science and technology involve a law-governed comprehension of nature based on practice as well as an application of nature in conformity with human ends. When we say that science is a revolutionary force, it does not only mean that “science and technology is the primary productive force” and promotes the development of the productive forces, but it also means that science and technology push forward the whole reform and progress of human civilization. Because the productive forces are the most revolutionary factors in the whole development of society, their evolution requires the reform and adaptation of productive relations, promoting the progress of human society. Because the essential spirit of science is criticism and innovation, resisting dogmatization and stagnation, unceasingly going forward and developing itself, its development has therefore become the main input for the reform of human life.

At the spiritual level, as Engels noted, each scientific field acquired its scientific form in the eighteenth century by combining philosophy on the one hand with practice on the other. The consequence of its combination with philosophy is materialism and the Enlightenment and the political revolution in France; the consequence of the combination with practice is the social revolution in England. Science was once the foundation of materialism, the forerunner of the Enlightenment, and the guide for political and social revolution; it has constituted the cultural and historical background of our lives and our basic mode of life; it has become part of our life.

Today, the knowledge economy is growing and the globalization process has been accelerating. The development of information technology and biotechnology has been promoting the socioeconomic transformation from a material economy to a knowledge economy. Knowledge and intelligence have become the main resource of contemporary society; innovation has

become the core of economic development and the sustainable pattern of development in which harmonizing human with nature has become the pursued goal.

The future competition of comprehensive national power is not only a competition of productive forces, but also of innovative power. The key to innovation is the innovation of ideas and theories, the establishment of new modes of thought. Therefore, innovation is not only an economic formation but also a basic pattern of human existence, not only an external competing pressure at home and abroad, but also an inherent demand of the evolution of human beings as a species. This is not only an economic problem, but also a theme for philosophical investigation, especially for philosophy of science. The problems like scientific discovery and the growth of knowledge once were basic problems in philosophy of science. Karl Popper wrote *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Norwood Hanson wrote *Patterns of Discovery*, and Thomas Kuhn also explored in detail the discovery of new facts and the invention of new theories as the fundamental causes of scientific revolution. Innovation is distinct from discovery and invention—innovation stresses transforming new ideas and conceptions to goods and the realization of their use value. Discovery and invention pay attention to revealing new phenomena and processes, and establishing new laws; their common characters are the genesis of new ideas and the establishment of new modes of thinking.

As Jiang Zemin has noted,

The knowledge economy and innovative consciousness are essential to our development in the twenty-first century. Most important to meeting the challenge of rapid development of science and technology and the rise of the knowledge economy is persistence in innovation. Innovation is the soul of a nation, an inexhaustible impetus of the flourishing of a nation.

Innovation of technology, innovation of systems, and innovation of theory are historical missions as well as the mode of existence of people in the time of a new economy, the focus of attention as

well as the source of vitality of philosophies of this time. If Marxist philosophy is to retain its vitality and reflect the spirit of the time, it is necessary to seek truth from facts and innovate unceasingly. A premise of this innovation is to pay attention to the development of science and technology, the fields of human practice that have been developing most rapidly. As long as Marxist philosophy adheres to its basic principles, displays the courage to engage in practice, and faces in an innovative manner the development of science and technology, it will be able to grasp the spirit of the time and retain its vitality.

This paper is expanded from a presentation at the International Symposium on Marxist Philosophy and the Twenty-First Century, Beijing, 30–31 October 2000.

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# **The Material Basis for Revolutionary Optimism**

**Wadi'h Halabi**

What will determine the future of philosophy? More than anything else, it is the success of the struggles of the working class. Marxist philosophy, in turn, is essential for guiding those struggles.

In the past hundred years, the working class has achieved some great victories over capitalism. Most important were the Russian and Chinese revolutions, and the overthrow of capitalist rule in more than a dozen additional countries, from Albania to Vietnam.

The past twenty-five years, however, have witnessed numerous setbacks for the working class. These have included failures to seize power despite revolutionary opportunities, such as in Lebanon in 1975–76 and Nicaragua in 1979. The great British miners' strike of 1984–85 was defeated. And most serious, between 1989 and 1991, capitalist counterrevolution brought down workers' rule in Albania, Yugoslavia, the Warsaw Pact states, and above all in the Soviet Union itself. In addition, unemployment, poverty, inequality, national oppression, environmental degradation, and war have all grown across the capitalist world. Only in China and Vietnam—products of socialist revolutions—has there been a significant decline in poverty and hunger. Pessimism has infected some “socialists.” A few have even proclaimed the “triumph of Western capitalism” and

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asserted that “the Marxist project for revolution launched by the *Communist Manifesto* is dead” (Burbach et al. 1997).

But has capitalism triumphed? Our pessimists appear unaware of the profound if indirect connection between a deepening crisis of world capitalism and the collapse of the Soviet Union and allied states. Furthermore, they ignore or dismiss the continued existence of five states created by socialist revolutions—namely, China, Vietnam, Laos, North Korea, and Cuba. Our pessimists have not even understood the *Communist Manifesto*. The *Manifesto* did not launch a “Marxist project.” It is a correct reading of the forward march of history; it, like all Marxist philosophy, provides scientific, revolutionary direction to the working class.

Nevertheless, recent defeats raise a legitimate question: What is the material basis for revolutionary optimism in the twenty-first century? The working class is fundamental for a scientific answer. Why?

### ***Five reasons for the historical role of the working class***

One of the great scientific discoveries of Marxism is the reason the working class, rather than the toiling classes in general, would be the primary historical agent in the transition from capitalism to socialism.

The *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* summarizes basic Marxist studies on the working class.<sup>1</sup> It lists five reasons, paraphrased here, for the historical role of the working class:

1) Capitalist exploitation—appropriation of the surplus value created by the working class—imparts a permanent, inalienable character to the antagonism between labor and capital. In exploitation lies the profound material basis for the working class’s revolutionary interests. These interests direct the class to the only effective resolution of the contradiction between the growth of the productive forces and capitalist forms.

2) Capitalism has greatly reduced the economic importance of other toiling classes.

3) The conditions of production shape the working class as the one most capable of organization, discipline, class consciousness, and solidarity.

4) Many ties link the working class and the nonproletarian oppressed, whose interests largely coincide with those of the working class. As a result, the working class's role in the class struggle is larger than its share of the total population.

5) The international character of modern production provides the working class a crucial position in the struggle against the world bourgeoisie. This is the basis for the organizational unity of the workers of the world.

### ***Role of the industrial proletariat***

Furthermore, Marxism has historically emphasized the importance of the industrial proletariat. Despite changes in society and the work force, there is a material basis for maintaining this emphasis. Why?

1) Creation of surplus value, and exploitation by the capitalists, are greatest in industry. This is true even though higher profit rates are found in other sectors, such as some services in imperialist countries. These are the results of unequal exchange, debt service, outright looting, and other monopoly manipulations.

2) Conditions in industry promote the greatest organization, discipline, class consciousness, and solidarity. The concentration of workers in industry is rarely found in other sectors.

3) The international division of labor is most pronounced in industry.

The industrial working class can be compared to the driveshaft of a motor: it may be small compared to the gears with which it connects, but it provides motive force to the class as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Methodological approach***

How can we assess the basis for revolutionary optimism?

The approach followed here weighs the relationship of forces between the fundamentally antagonistic classes, the world capitalist class and the world working class. Each class can be viewed as a single "organism" worldwide, because class interests are stronger than national borders and other divisions.

Thus the world capitalist “organism” responded to socialist revolution in Russia with hostile invasions, economic sanctions, denial of markets and access to technology, diplomatic isolation, etc. The international working class, on the other hand, responded to the same development with solidarity efforts; the formation of Communist parties and of the International; general strikes, including one in Seattle; and struggles to seize power. Similar opposed international responses can be seen after the Chinese, Cuban, and other socialist revolutions.

### *Capitalism’s fundamental contradiction*

Let us examine the weaknesses and strengths of the capitalist class, both of which, in the last analysis, flow from capitalism’s fundamental contradiction. This is the conflict between the growth of productive forces and capitalist forms, which are too narrow for those developing forces.

These forms include private ownership and also capitalist methods of rule, such as top-down command without bottom-up control, both in society and in enterprises. It is true that centralization is absolutely necessary in modern economies, but bottom-up control is also necessary. And that is not possible under capitalism. The continued division of the economy into more and more countries (that are more and more unequal) is another capitalist form incompatible with the development of productive forces.

As labor productivity grows, these conflicts render the bourgeoisie less and less capable of preventing economic imbalances from multiplying, and less and less capable of recovering from the resulting crises.<sup>3</sup>

“Common sense,” for example, would lead us to expect that growing productivity would be accompanied by a rise in the standard of living. But Marx’s work shows why under capitalism the reverse becomes true. An extraordinary statistic: by a bourgeois economist’s calculations, income per person in 144 capitalist countries has been falling 0.8 percent per year since 1973.<sup>4</sup> The reality is almost certainly worse. Income per person

in the United States rose in the same period, but all gains went to the exploiting layers of society; workers' wages fell.

Capitalism's fundamental contradiction manifests itself in the economy as growing imbalances (disproportionalities) leading to crises. For the capitalists, these imbalances appear as "overproduction"—that is, too much is produced to achieve maximum profitability.

### ***Capitalism's weaknesses***

As "overproduction" rises, the capitalist response is to cheapen labor, to plunder, and to destroy productive capacity (preferably belonging to others). Since 1990, not only have wages fallen across the capitalist world, but some 22 percent of productive capacity under capitalist rule worldwide has been idled or destroyed.<sup>5</sup> Bad debts and corporate losses also reflect overproduction. Bad debts held by Japanese banks climbed from fifty billion dollars in 1990 to fourteen hundred billion by 1996, as markets dried up and capacity use fell.

For the masses, disproportionalities in capitalist economy manifest themselves as unemployment and immiseration. The number of unemployed and underemployed worldwide, by the estimates of the International Labor Organization, roughly tripled between the early 1970s and the mid-1990s, and now exceeds one billion.

The insecurity of life under capitalism is a profound revolutionary factor. Yet the capitalist class, not only too weak to alleviate this insecurity, is pushed by internal contradictions into worsening it. Even in the United States, currently in the longest economic expansion in its history, the proportion of the labor force in extremely insecure employment grew from one out of four in the early 1980s to one out of three in 1999.

### ***"Overproduction" and losses***

Except for occasional worries about revolution, the capitalists do not care that the masses are hungry, unemployed, or insecure. Their system could even survive—if only they could increase

their profits, or at least maintain them. The problem, and a fatal weakness for capitalism, is that the same disproportionalities that leave the masses jobless and hungry also result in losses for the capitalists. These the exploiters care passionately about.

It is possible that corporate losses and bad debts worldwide will equal or exceed monopolies' profits in 2000, with profound implications for the world economy and society.

### *The capitalist class's numerical insignificance*

Monopolization, crises, wars, and social revolutions in the last century have reduced the capitalist class to numerical insignificance. Crises impel the wealthiest capitalists into looting their own already-narrow social base, smaller capitalists and exploiting layers of the petty bourgeoisie.

In the United States, ownership of capital today is overwhelmingly concentrated among the top one quarter of one percent.<sup>6</sup> Because of the dominance of U.S. capital, the proportion of capitalists in the world population is even smaller. A frustrated British coal miner and union president once said, "If we'd just spit together, we could drown 'em!"

The combination of the capitalist class's economic and numerical weakness, its constant violations even of bourgeois-democratic rights, the huge gap between what is under its rule and what can be and will be—all points to a profound social weakness. Imperialism has the capacity to destroy the world many times over, and naturally we do not ignore this destructive power. But this only underlines its profound economic and social weakness.

### *The capitalist class's strength*

So what strength does the world bourgeoisie have? Only one stands out: the extraordinary centralization of its resources, economic and military. This too is a result of capitalism's fundamental contradiction, and the resulting crises, wars, and monopolization.

This centralization is evident in U.S. dominance of international organizations such as NATO, the International Monetary

Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization. It was evident in the Pentagon's command of the armies of more than twenty-five countries in the 1990–91 Gulf War, and again in the NATO aggression (led by the United States) in Yugoslavia.

Needless to say, centralization is of enormous importance, indeed an outright necessity, in waging a global class conflict. And that is precisely what the world bourgeoisie is compelled by its crises into waging. At the same time, because this centralization is under the flag of individual gain, it is necessarily filled with internal contradictions. So even this strength contains the makings of severe weaknesses.

***What about the working class?***

The international working class made enormous gains in the past century—in strength, numbers, concentration, literacy, and culture. But the distribution of gains has been uneven, and mixed with decay and decomposition.

For example, there were just 3 million industrial workers in all of Russia in 1917, out of a total population of 140 million. By the 1980s, there were nearly 40 million workers in Soviet industry out of a total population of 280 million, with 50 million more in support positions. Even ten years after the counterrevolution, the Russian working class remains one of the largest and most concentrated in the world. Its life remains organized around factories and industrial complexes. According to recent calculations by Stanislav Menshikov, it is now as exploited as the U.S. working class (1999, 86–91). Workers across former Soviet republics are presently waging struggles, insufficiently publicized, of great historical potential. These include not only occupying factories, but running them and deciding what to do with the production. Lately, signs have appeared of growing militancy among workers in the energy sector across the former USSR.

In China, the number of industrial workers fluctuated between 2.5 and 3.5 million from 1919 until 1949. By 1958 the number had grown to 25 million, and by 1997 to over 100 million. Similar growth of the working class occurred in Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia—until 1989–90.

What the Soviet Union, China, Bulgaria, Romania, etc. share, of course, is that in them capitalist rule was overthrown in the twentieth century. And this is where the greatest development of the working class took place. Why?

*Decomposition and recomposition under imperialism*

The shortest definition of imperialism is: capitalism in historical decay. The same factors weakening the capitalist class—in the final analysis, its contradictions and crises—also result, short of revolution, in decomposition of the working class, and recomposition on an unfavorable basis.

In some oppressed capitalist countries, imperialism has so devastated the economy that there remains little of a working class. In Congo (Zaire), for example, industry collapsed in 1992, almost eliminating the working class. It has not recovered. Even in imperialist countries, there has been a significant decline in the number and concentration of industrial workers. In Britain, for example, 25 percent of industrial jobs were eliminated in less than five years in the early 1980s, and have not been replaced. In the United States, the absolute number of industrial jobs has remained relatively constant over the past four decades, while the labor force doubled. But industrial employment is extraordinarily insecure; factories constantly close or move, technology changes, workers frustrated by conditions move to self-employment, etc.

Most serious of decomposition factors is the rise in world unemployment. In addition, there has been a significant decline in big concentrations of industrial workers. For example, since 1970, all U.S. steel works that once employed 10,000 or more workers have closed or suffered sharp cuts in their employment; very few remain with even 5,000 workers, while “minimills,” sometimes with fewer than 500 employees, replace them. Secondary factors of decomposition include rising inequality among workers even as overall wages decline; growing insecurity and turnover in employment; exclusion of youth, the energy of the revolution, particularly from heavy industry, and from steady

employment in general. The various economic and social changes under imperialism can be summarized as making socialist revolution at once more necessary and more difficult. On a world scale, nonetheless, the gains made by the working class in states that experienced socialist revolutions in the twentieth century greatly outweigh the losses under imperialist rule, even in most countries that later suffered capitalist restoration.

### ***Working-class weaknesses***

What working-class weaknesses stand out? First, insufficient clarity continues on major economic and political developments, such as the collapse of the Soviet Union and allied states and the deepening crisis of world capitalism, as well as the profound, albeit indirect, connection between the two. Second is insufficient organization and centralization of working-class resources internationally—insufficient, that is, for successful struggle against attacks by centralized world capitalism. As Lenin demonstrates in *State and Revolution*, effective organization and centralization are possible only with maximum internal democracy (1964 [1917]). Both weaknesses are of a primarily subjective nature. With initiative and leadership, they can therefore be corrected relatively quickly.

After the fall of the First, Second, and Third Internationals, as after the fall of the Soviet Union, the capitalist class proclaimed its eternal victory and the death of Marxism and of working-class struggle. Each time, the working class—and Marxism—recovered. Today, there are efforts worldwide to correct present weaknesses. This important International Symposium, organized by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, represents such an effort. Recent meetings of Communist and workers' parties from around the world, hosted by the Communist Party of Greece, represent another. Communist Parties worldwide are working to reach clarity on developments such as globalization or the real reasons behind the U.S.-led aggression in Yugoslavia, to correct previous errors (such as idealization of the USSR or China), and to build organizational unity.

**Conclusion**

A scientific assessment of the relationship of forces between the international working class and the capitalist class favors the working class. The capitalist class has been greatly weakened, economically, socially, and numerically, in the past century. The working class has made major, if uneven, gains in numbers, culture, and strength in the same period. Herein lies the profound material basis for revolutionary optimism in the twenty-first century. But the forces of the international capitalist class are more centralized than ever, while those of the working class are not. Correction of the working class's weaknesses, which are primarily subjective and organizational, will lead to major victories, ending exploitation, inequality, national oppression, poverty, and wars. This will also bring huge advances in philosophy based on dialectical materialism—in other words, in philosophy to further change the world.

This paper is expanded from presentations at the International Symposium of Marxist Philosophy and the Twenty-First Century, Beijing, 30–31 October 2000; and at a conference sponsored by *Nature, Society, and Thought* and the Sociology Department of the University of Nevada, Reno, at Reno, 15–17 October 1999.

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**NOTES**

1. The 1976 edition of the Encyclopedia was translated into English by Macmillan Publishers in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Encyclopedia is an outstanding materialist reference work of the twentieth century. It reflects the Soviet Union as the product of the Russian Revolution, its strengths and weaknesses.

2. This analogy is taken from Hall (1987). From 1959 until his death in October 2000, Gus Hall was leader of the Communist Party USA, which has maintained a correct emphasis on industrial workers, while seeking to address the great changes in U.S. employment patterns. At the Beijing symposium sponsored by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, numerous questions and comments focused on the issue of "knowledge workers." Atomized conditions of employment for many knowledge workers often make it difficult to achieve organization, discipline, and class solidarity. In capitalist countries,

knowledge workers frequently shift back and forth, from employment to self-employment to managerial positions, or even ownership of enterprises. An extreme example is Bill Gates, the head of Microsoft, once a computer programmer and now one of the wealthiest capitalists in the world. The opposition between intellectual and manual labor, which has historical roots in exploitation and which Marxism is committed to end, must also be taken into consideration. Nevertheless, we can be sure that knowledge workers will contribute to coming victories of the working class.

3. This paper builds on analysis by the author in an earlier paper, "The Communist Manifesto and the World Economy after World War II," *Nature, Society, and Thought* 10, no. 4 (1997), 489–501. Reasons for the relative and purely temporary stability in the world and U.S. economy between 1950 and 1990 are discussed in this paper. Suffice it to say here that the working class, through the states where it seized power, has been the only source of stability in the world economy. There is no sign that capitalism has learned to regulate its cycles.

4. Study by economic historian Angus Madison, *Wall Street Journal*, 11 January 1999.

5. For a breakdown of the idling and destruction of productive capacity under capitalism in the 1990s, see my paper, "On the Real Causes of the Longest Economic Expansion in U.S. History," prepared for the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, June 2000; a slightly expanded version of this paper was also published in the November 2000 issue of *Political Affairs*, theoretical journal of the Communist Party USA. Much of this idling has taken place in former Warsaw Pact states now under capitalist rule, but a significant portion is evident in Japan, Indonesia, and other countries hit by crisis in the 1990s, and in Iraq, Yugoslavia, and others as a result of war and sanctions.

6. This estimate is based on the "Surveys of Consumer Finance," studies of U.S. household assets conducted every three years by the Federal Reserve Bank. After taking into account household debts, and excluding home and car ownership, these surveys point to extraordinary concentration of capital, with a 1989 Gini index of inequality of 0.966 (where 0 is perfect equality and 1.0 is perfect inequality, where just one person owns all capital). Furthermore, most gains in capital ownership since 1989 appear to have been made by the top one-fourth of one percent of the population. Note, by contrast, that the great inequality in income (as opposed to capital ownership) in the United States yields a Gini index of "only" 0.54.

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# Constructing a Paradigm for Sustainable Development

Minoru Kitamura

We are now facing an unprecedented ecological crisis that could lead to the extinction of humanity. The serious threat of ecocide on our earth today is a result of the encroachment of human beings on the natural environment through industrialization, exhaustion of nonrenewable energy and raw-material resources, pollution of nature by industrial and domestic waste, disturbance of natural ecological equilibria, elimination of specific species of animals and plants, and so forth. How can we cope with our present difficulties? Can Marxism contribute to a solution of this difficult question?

Ecocentrists, such as “deep ecologists,” have held that Marxism and ecology are diametrically opposed, that Marxism is typically anthropocentric, because Marx and Engels were supporters of the modernist notion of “human mastery of nature,” “development of the forces of production,” and “scientific and technological advance.” According to the ecocentrists, these ideas have indeed caused today’s environmental destruction.

Yet the greatest care must be taken in dealing with this issue. Matters are not so simple. It is necessary to define what is meant by *ecology*. At this time, I will say only that in ecological movements today such ecocentrism is an extremist standpoint not to be identified with ecology as the scientific study of the interactions of plants, animals, and people with each other and with their surroundings. I am convinced that Marxism is

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compatible with ecology as a science, because the basic ideas of ecology were anticipated in the writings of Marx and Engels.

We have evidence that Marx referred to several ecological problems.

Capitalist production, by collecting the population in great centres, and causing an ever-increasing preponderance of town population, on the one hand concentrates the historical motive power of society; on the other hand, it disturbs the circulation of matter between man and the soil, i.e., prevents the return to the soil of its elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; it therefore violates the conditions necessary to lasting fertility of the soil. . . . Moreover . . . all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time, is a progress towards ruining the lasting sources of that fertility. The more a country starts its development on the foundation of modern industry, like the United States, for example, the more rapid is this process of destruction. Capitalist production, therefore, develops technology, and the combining together of various processes into a social whole, only by sapping the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the labourer. (1996, 506–8)

We can find another striking example in Engels.

Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory 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. . . . 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. (1987, 460–1)

These passages suggest that Marx and Engels were the fore-runners of ecological thinking, although they never employed the term “ecology,” which was coined by Haeckel toward the end of their lives. Certainly Marx and Engels were sensitive to the negative consequences of human mastery of nature. Nevertheless, they disagreed with the neo-Rousseauian who rejects civilization and its scientific and technological advances, calling for a “return to nature.”

“Untouched nature” exists only in a dream. Nature has been shaped through its interaction with human beings since the dawn of civilization. Besides, the “human/nature” relation is not a sort of Robinson Crusoe affair. Relations between people and nature exist in a society, in concrete social conditions. In fact, the “human/nature” relation is more accurately termed a “human/ society/nature” relation.

## 1

The harmonious coexistence of people with nature can be realized only by solving the “society/nature” problem. This means that our ecological problem is indeed a social one, and that a solution to this question can be found only in advances in social, cultural, scientific, technological, and ethical knowledge as well as in industrial and economic progress.

It is undeniable that steady scientific and technological progress has resulted in a huge growth of human power over nature. Humankind has built a high level of civilization. We are now in a position to remake nature more and more. But the human action of remaking without limitations leads inevitably to an unacceptable encroachment on nature. We cannot and must not use our full power over nature without restrictions. We must avoid the possible negative consequences of our activity.

Nature is not an inexhaustible treasure-house of energy and raw-material resources. Nature is the real basis of our existence. In order that we may ensure that the biosphere is being altered safely, we need the aid of scientific and technological

knowledge. Humanity's future and its very existence depend on our scientific and technological knowledge of the rational interaction between people and nature. In order that we harmonize the interaction between people and nature, the purposeful transformation of nature must be based on the preservation of nature in the course of further scientific and technological advances.

Almost all ecocentrists have a negative and pessimistic attitude towards the role of science and technology. Marxists have, of course, criticized misuse of science and technology, especially by capitalism. With reason, however, Marxists respect scientific and technological knowledge. Ecocentrists incorrectly brand Marxism as anthropocentric and technocentric. They do not recognize a more enlightened Marxist point of view on the ecological problems of civilization such as I present here.

Although the ecological situation in the present time has become more serious than it was in the days of Marx and Engels, their farsighted suggestions of ecological consequences and the way of solving difficulties are even now fundamentally effective. Our task is to develop the teachings of Marx and Engels into concrete strategies for avoiding ecological disaster. Some Marxists advocate "the greening of Marxism" and call for "ecological Marxism," that is, "eco-Marxism." In my opinion, however, it is needless to establish a specialized Marxism that is devoted to ecology apart from Marxism itself.

We must not underestimate the potential of the contribution of Marxism to solving ecological problems. Marxism, being enriched with a new knowledge of our environment, can contribute to the construction of the paradigm for sustainable development that is now our concern.

## 2

In 1992, more than 1,600 scientists, including Nobel laureates, signed a "Warning to Humanity" that stated:

No more than one or a few decades remain before the chance to avert the threats we now confront will be lost

and the prospect for humanity will be immeasurably diminished. . . . A new ethic is required—a new attitude towards discharging our responsibility for caring for ourselves and for our earth.

It is correct that the key to the solution of the ecological danger lies in the establishment of a new ethic. The question is the contents of such a new ethic that can replace the conventional one. This new ethic should be an alternative to our lifestyle, which has become an unrestrained, unlimited exploitation of nature and an uncontrolled, egocentric consumer arbitrariness.

This new ethic should be interpreted as *sustainable development*. According to Brundtland, the best known exponent of this new notion, it is a complex concept that implies the integration of four elements: the biological, the economic, the social, and the cultural. Moreover, it is stressed that economics and ecology should be united in decision making on all levels.

Ecocentrists reject all kinds of development, and insist on “zero growth”; they even call for “lowering” the standard of living. The expression *limits of growth*, which was originally the title of a book published on the initiative of the Club of Rome, became popular. According to the supporters of the Club of Rome, it is necessary to stop the growth of production, needs, and population, and to reduce the rates of growth substantially, in order to make ecological conditions normal, that is, to keep “global equilibrium.” Ecocentrists are thus even more pessimistic.

In contrast with the assertion of “antigrowth,” sustainable development permits growth within the limits of the maintenance of natural wealth for future generations. This is an ecologically justified development that aims at qualitative improvement instead of quantitative increase.

This new thinking requires a radical break with the past. We must find the road toward alternative, nondestructive, and controlled development that will preserve natural resources for ourselves and future generations. It is the road not toward *more* but toward *better*. It means the conversion from “quantity” to

“quality.” That is the new notion of “progress,” in which biological, economic, social, and cultural elements are taken in equal measure, and sometimes the biological and sociocultural elements are to be estimated higher than the economic.

First of all, this new road compels us to rethink our social system. Our motto is “ecology before economy,” but this motto cannot be easily implemented in capitalist countries. Needless to say, the capitalist mode of production has a necessary tendency to exceed the limits of sustainability and to go to the extremes of environmental destruction, because of the categorical imperative of gaining the greatest profit.

Private enterprises in capitalist countries pursue devotedly their own selfish interests. They are polluting the earth’s atmosphere and surface, mountains, forests, rivers, lakes, and oceans with toxic waste. Private ownership of the means of production, which is characteristic of capitalism, accelerates environmental destruction, such that our planet is in a critical situation.

It is undeniable that a good deal of ecological disruption now confronting us arises from the capitalist economic system. One of the main causes of ecological problems lies in anarchy in production, which inevitably arises from the private ownership of the means of production and the market economy. Certainly, the capitalist economy has an intrinsic ecological crisis-generating mechanism.

Once socialism was proposed as a solution to ecological problems, on the hypothesis that socialization of the ownership of the means of production and a planned economy would put national production under the control of the people and eliminate anarchy in production. History teaches us, however, that this hypothesis broke down in the Soviet Union and its allied countries.

We do not have time to wait for a socialist regime in our country. We must endeavor to realize sustainable development now, under capitalism, through controlling private enterprises by the people’s power. Is it possible? I think it is by no means impossible, because the highly developed capitalist countries have an advantage over the less industrially developed,

noncapitalist countries. In regard to environmental protection, as we all know, capitalist countries such as the Netherlands and West Germany were superior to the Soviet Union and East Germany.

If there is an alternative to socialism, then, what is it? We have a strong conviction that the conversion of the economy from the profiteer's system into a new one that respects "fairness" and takes care of the greatest possible preservation of the environment could be done more readily not by socialism, but by radical democracy. What is radical democracy?

According to C. Douglas Lummis, the author of *Radical Democracy*, "Radical democracy means democracy in its essential form, democracy at its root, quite precisely the thing itself" (1996, 25). If so, the modifier "radical" is unnecessary. Nevertheless, he intends to express genuine democracy by using the adjective "radical." He emphasizes that democracy means that the people rule, because the origin of the word is the joining of *demos* (the people) with *kratia* (rule).

That the people rule is equivalent to the people having political power. Democracy is nothing more than the political form in which the people have the power to decide all public affairs. Therefore democracy is incompatible with centralized power of every kind—charismatic, bureaucratic, technocratic, military, and so forth.

Radical democracy endeavors to enlarge the citizen's autonomy, promoting the transfer of administrative authority from central government to local administrations. It is not realistic to deny parliamentary representation, but it is necessary to adopt the merits of direct democracy, for example, public hearings and referenda, in order to compensate for indirect democracy. What is most significant for citizens is their participation in every process of policy and decision making. In Japan, although rather late, radical democracy is growing increasingly.

Now radical democracy is the savior of the earth. Without the citizen's initiative, it will be absolutely impossible to prevent environmental destruction. Ted C. Lewellen, the author of *Dependency and Development*, says:

One of the major points to emerge from the Rio Conference was that sustainable development must begin at the grass roots. Governments have not fared well in protecting the environment; entrenched interests, corruption, and extremely limited budgets have prevented effective policies or implementation if such policies have been enacted. Local independent groups are often much better acquainted with environmental problems and much more motivated to confront them. (1995, 212)

I agree with him wholeheartedly. Numerous locally based grassroots organizations that are dedicated to improving their own communities must play a decisive role in maintaining our planet. Let us carry out the slogan, "Think globally, act locally."

This paper was presented at the International Symposium on Marxist Philosophy and the Twenty-First Century, Beijing, 30–31 October 2000.

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## BOOKS AND IDEAS

by *Herbert Aptheker*

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### **Kissinger, war criminal**

A careful, devastating exposé of Henry Kissinger has been published in the February and March 2001 issues of *Harper's*. The first section, "The Making of a War Criminal," consumes twenty-five pages, as does the second section, "Crimes Against Humanity."

The author is Christopher Hitchens, formerly Washington editor of *Harper's* and a regular columnist for *Vanity Fair* and the *Nation*, who has produced significant books on the Cyprus crisis, Kurdistan, Palestine, and other vital matters.

In this study Hitchens makes clear that he is not treating what might be considered despicable acts of state—such as Kissinger's dealing with Saddam Hussein and the Shah of Iran, or his "orchestration of political and military and diplomatic cover for apartheid in South Africa." These foul acts were part of the policy of the administration Kissinger served. No, Hitchens is dealing only with "identifiable criminal acts" subject to a bill of indictment. These include "the deliberate mass killing of civilian populations as in Indo-China and the personal suborning and planning of murder of a senior constitutional officer in a democratic nation—Chile—with which the United States was not at war."

In the second installment, evidence is submitted *proving* criminal activity in Bangladesh, Cyprus, East Timor, and . . . Washington, D.C.! Hitchens notes that many of Kissinger's partners, from Greece to Chile to Argentina to Indonesia,

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“are now in jail or awaiting trial.” The relevance of the Pinochet case is noted, as is that of the Nuremberg precedent “by which the United States solemnly undertook to be bound.”

Might we expect the present administration in Washington to act on the convincing demonstration of criminal activity by one of its very distinguished senior advisers? Certainly not without enormous mass demand that justice be done and the criminal brought before a tribunal sworn to uphold the law. Hitchens rightly concludes his historic investigation: “If the courts and lawyers of this country will not do their duty . . . we shall be put to *shame*.”

### **Kennedy and Cuba**

A book edited by Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House during the Missile Crisis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997, 728 pp.), is very important. It demonstrates how very close we were in 1962 to a catastrophic war between the USSR and the United States. The General Staff here recommended a full-scale assault upon Cuba, knowing that this would mean counteraction by the Soviet Union and probably World War III. The staff was ordered to prepare for this, but Kennedy decided otherwise. Why? The book helps answer, and the reply is all the more persuasive because the pro-Washington and anti-Moscow point of view in the book is perfectly clear.

Kennedy believed the Cuban population, in vast majority, supported Castro. Yet plans to kill him went forward and the abortive Bay of Pigs fiasco did not change that. Kennedy also knew, of course, that the war his military officials urged would mean enormous casualties—if any human life survived.

The book shows, perforce, the calm of Khrushchev and the deal that finally eventuated: removal of U. S. missiles from Turkey and of Soviet missiles from Cuba. Based as the book is on official tapes of White House recordings, it constitutes an important—and chilling—account of that time of imminent nuclear disaster.

### Styron, Nat Turner, and me—again

Late in March 2001, a friend brought me a copy of the 1993 Vintage Books edition of William Styron's *Confessions of Nat Turner*. I wrote to Mr. Styron, in care of his publisher, the following letter:

In the 1993 edition of *Nat Turner* you refer on p. 449 to the alleged "prevailing tone . . . strident cruel" over which "hovered the spirit of historian Herbert Aptheker, the official United States Communist Party theoretician, who had done pioneering work on Nat Turner and American slave revolts . . . ground-breaking and useful . . . but it was badly skewed by Party dogma. . . ."

My study of Nat Turner was written in 1935–36; it was accepted as my Master's thesis at Columbia in 1937. I was not then in the Party—let alone the Party's "official theoretician." . . . I joined the Party late in 1939 when I was 24 years of age.

You write that my work was "ground-breaking and useful"; but that it was "skewed by Party dogma." When you read my Turner's thesis—sent you at your request—you wrote me a glowing letter of appreciation and, of course, there was no mention of the Party.

You should be ashamed to have descended to such McCarthy-like garbage.

Very truly yours.

### The cartography of death

Under the above title, the *Nation* (23 October 2000) published a long, profound essay by Tim Engelhardt. He examines these recent books: *Rivers of Blood, Rivers of Gold: Europe's Conquest of Indigenous Peoples* by Mark Cocker (Grove); *The World and the West* by Philip D. Curtin (Cambridge); *"Exterminate All the Brutes": One Man's Odyssey into the Heart of Darkness and the Origins of European Genocide* by Sven Lindquist (New Press); *The Unfinished Twentieth Century* by Jonathan Schell (Verso); *King Leopold's Ghost: A*

*Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* by Adam Hochschild (Mariner), and *Stories from Rwanda* by Philip Gourevich (Picador). In a fairly long life—much of it devoted to study—I have not read a more probing and challenging essay than the above by Mr. Engelhardt. We should share it with friends and students and all we may influence. This may help make the present century less bloody and horrific than the one just passed.

### **The arrogance of power**

For a case study in the atrociousness of this past century there is no better individual than Richard Nixon.

That decisive figure in the activity of the supreme global power in the twentieth century is depicted in *The Arrogance of Power: The Secret World of Richard Nixon* by Anthony Summers (New York: Viking, 2000). This 641-page work (by the author of *The Secret Life of J. Edgar Hoover*) demonstrates that a man literally mad played havoc with the lives of millions of people and (aided especially by Kissinger) demonically directed Washington on its catastrophic course. Nixon is dead and thus beyond the power of the law. But his chief henchman, Kissinger, is alive and remains a significant power in a Washington dominated by the most foul force, rivaled in its criminality only by the slavocracy of Calhoun and Jefferson Davis that nearly destroyed the Republic.

### **The Holocaust**

After studying Kissinger and Nixon one might feel the depth of depravity and criminality has been reached. But thinking of the Holocaust, one knows that one is in error. Surely, with the Holocaust the lowest example of filth and evil has been reached. A powerful study (although limited in scope) of that horror should be understood by those who wish this new century to bring in a civilization worthy of Du Bois.

I have in mind *IBM and the Holocaust* by Edwin Black (New York: Crown, 2001, 519 pp. \$27.50). The International Business Machine Corporation, headed by Thomas Watson,

made possible, by its card production and filing business, the systematic slaughter of many millions of people, especially but not exclusively six million Jewish children, women, and men.

The book is exhaustive in its research but limited in its analysis—it never begins to understand Nazism, its basic relationship with monopoly capitalism, and its central purpose—the destruction of socialism. With this severe limitation, Black's book is a powerful exposé of the bestiality of Nazism.

By 1949, IBM had reestablished global supremacy, and its basic partnership with Hitlerism had been obliterated. Indeed, “the men who headed up the IBM enterprise in Nazi Europe and America became revered giants within the corporation's global community.” The former Nazi European subsidiary managers “were rewarded for their loyalty with top jobs.” Yes, “after the war the money regained, the machines recovered, the record clear. For IBM the war was over” (425).

The final words of this volume concentrate on “the seemingly magical scheduling process” by which millions in many countries were brought, after hours and days of travel, to the gas chambers. The question, the author concludes, “was barely even raised.” But is that important? Is the role of IBM in making possible the “blitzkrieg efficiency” of major consequence? Certainly not. The basic connection between monopoly capitalism and *its war upon democracy and socialism* is never raised.

Still, it is useful to have a definitive study of one example of how this system managed the slaughter of millions of defenseless human beings.



## Book Review

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*Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power.* By Timothy B. Tyson. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999. 308 pages, cloth \$29.95.

Robert F. Williams was one of the most provocative members of the Black freedom struggle during the post-World War II era. Williams's uncompromising opposition to white supremacy inspired nonviolent protesters as well as generations of Black Power militants, yet most historians barely mention his name. Timothy B. Tyson's meticulously researched and lucidly written book seeks to reverse this trend.

In *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power*, the author traces the life of Williams by exploring his radical stance against racial segregation and his bitter fight for social equality during the modern civil rights movement. Tyson's aim is to show how "the story of Robert Williams illustrates that the civil rights movement and the Black Power movement . . . grew out of the same soil" (308).

In the first chapter, Tyson examines Williams's early life. As a child, for example, young Robert was taught that it was his duty to protect his home and family by any means necessary. The author notes that Williams acquired this notion from a nurturing extended family that "instructed him in the hard realities of racial politics" (25).

Next, Tyson describes Williams's various activities during World War II. Most important was Williams's discovery of nonviolent direct action as a powerful protest tool to end U.S. racism and his subsequent conclusion that such a strategy only

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worked when a Cold War atmosphere was present. As a result of this deduction, Williams began to move toward the tactic of “armed self-reliance” (87).

Tyson devotes chapters five through eight to Williams’s search for an innovative philosophy or strategy to support his emerging civil rights crusade against American racism. This personal pilgrimage coincided with his ascendancy to the presidency of the Monroe, North Carolina, NAACP chapter during the 1950s. As the branch’s newly elected president, Williams began to develop important alliances with various “radical” organizations, such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Crusaders Association for Relief and Enlightenment (C.A.R.E.). Simultaneously, he began to stress the importance of “black economic advancement, black pride, black culture, independent black political action,” and “armed self-reliance” (191). According to Tyson, what ultimately emerged was a civil rights strategy by which Williams could show Black American Southerners how to use the emerging racial crisis around the world as leverage for their own liberation crusade.

To most African American Southerners, Williams’s new tactic, which rested on a framework of armed self-resistance, was not foreign. Even prominent civil rights activists—such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Daisy Bates, Thurgood Marshall, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Medgar Evers—owned a gun or hired guards who possessed firearms. The problem, however, was that Williams’s message was being broadcast throughout the United States. Many older civil rights leaders, seeing that the notion of an armed self-defense campaign was gradually beginning to inspire young civil rights activists, began a quiet attempt to curtail the influence of Williams within the developing civil rights struggle.

Tyson’s book ends with three chapters that describe the sudden exit of Williams as the leader of the Monroe NAACP branch, his activities in Cuba, and his eventual return to the United States. Under pressure from certain members of the national NAACP office and constant harassment by local, state, and federal law-enforcement organizations, Williams secretly left North Carolina and eventually resurfaced in Cuba. While in

Cuba, he began to broadcast a radical radio program called Radio Free Dixie. This program, which contained a mixture of jazz music and news that analyzed the intensified racial strife in the American South and throughout the world, encouraged people of color everywhere to fight against organized racial terrorism by using armed self-resistance.

Strangely, upon his return to the United States in the early 1970s, Williams began to distance himself from the ongoing Black freedom movement. Tyson concludes that Williams took this stance because he found the developing civil rights struggle to be “fragmented, dogmatic, and isolated from most of its potential constituents” (303).

Timothy B. Tyson’s *Radio Free Dixie* is an inspirational piece of scholarship. The author’s superior ability to tell a compelling story with great balance makes this book a must-read for anyone interested in the history of the African American freedom struggle. Tyson should be greatly commended for such a monumental and timely analysis of the life and times of this important figure.

Despite these strengths, the book has some problems, especially in its organization. The transitions from chronological to topical (and vice versa) make the author’s major points hard to follow at times. Williams’s relations with other like-minded civil rights activists, such as James Forman (Congress of Racial Equality), Stokely Carmichael (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), and Malcolm X (Nation of Islam), should have received more attention. A final problem is the lack of a complete analysis of the role of Black women civil rights workers in Williams’s crusade. In general, however, Tyson’s riveting biography of Robert F. Williams provides a great opportunity to reassess the nonviolent stage of the Black freedom struggle. It is a major addition to the recent explosion of literature on the modern civil rights movement.

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## ABSTRACTS

*Charles Reavis Price*, **“Political and Radical Aspects of the Rastafarian Movement in Jamaica”**—Challenging the view that Rastafarians are apolitical, the author discusses their origins and delineates some specifics of Rastafarian engagement in and withdrawal from popular politics. He points to recent trends within the movement and the potential of Rastafarians to assist other progressive left movements. In an addendum, the author discusses Rastafarian participation in the Grenadan revolution.

*Erna Bennett*, **“Time for a Change in Public Education, but What Change?”**—Public services, including public education, are under heavy attack from conservative governments everywhere. Why were a series of Labor governments in Australia the first to cut public and social spending? Public education’s class origins and continuing class character and its central role in the spread of ideas make it a major target for privatization and a battleground of private and public interests.

*Li Tieying*, **“Opening Remarks to the International Symposium on Marxist Philosophy and the Twenty-First Century”**—The president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Professor Li Tieying, stresses the linkage between Marxism and China’s destiny in the twentieth-first century, with an emphasis on understanding and applying Marxist methodology to the conditions in China, rather than parroting bookish words and expressions. Historical materialism must be developed to deal with the problems of sustainable development under conditions of globalization involving nations of different economic-political systems. Marxist philosophy must be upgraded and enriched to take into account revolutionary developments in science and technology. The integration of socialism with a market economy is bound to raise theoretically important issues that demand theoretically scientific solutions.

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**Hu Xinhe and Jin Wulun, “Marxist Philosophy and the Development of Science and Technology”**—The authors assert that Marxist philosophy has been able to retain its vitality in face of many challenges because of its scientific approach to uniting theory with practice. The development of science and technology has brought about several changes in traditional thinking: evolution of the view of reality, replacement of reductionist thinking by holistic approaches, and extension of and change in the social role of scientific reason. These changes, nevertheless, conform to the fundamental spirit of Marxist philosophy.

**Wadi’h Halabi, “The Material Basis for Revolutionary Optimism”**—The author argues that despite the apparent strength of capitalism today, the international working class over the past one hundred years has made major gains in numbers, culture, and strength. On the other hand, the forces of international capitalism are now highly centralized, while this is not the case with the working class. The author views the ability of the international working class to overcome this weakness as the material basis for revolutionary optimism.

**Minoru Kitamura, “Constructing a Paradigm for Sustainable Development”**—Humanity is facing an unprecedented ecological crisis that can lead to its extinction. Although the ecological problems in their time were not as severe as those today, Marx and Engels’s suggestions for dealing with ecological problems are still quite relevant. Marxism, enriched with new knowledge of our environment, can contribute to the construction of a paradigm for sustainable development.

## ABREGES

**Charles Reavis Price, «Aspects politiques et radicaux du mouvement rastafari à la Jamaïque»** — Tout en contestant le point de vue que le mouvement rastafari est apolitique, l’auteur revient sur leurs origines, et trace quelques détails de l’engagement rastafari dans la politique populaire, ou du désengagement de celle-ci. Il indique les tendances récentes à

l'intérieur de ce mouvement, et le potentiel du mouvement rastafari d'aider d'autres mouvements progressistes de gauche. En annexe, l'auteur examine la participation rastafari à la révolution dans l'île de Grenade.

**Erna Bennett, «Il est temps pour un changement dans l'éducation publique, mais pour quel changement?»** – Partout, le service public, y compris l'éducation publique, subit des attaques sérieuses de la part de gouvernements conservateurs. Pourquoi les gouvernements travaillistes en Australie ont-ils été les premiers à réduire les dépenses publiques et sociales? Les origines de classe, et le caractère de classe toujours existant, de l'éducation publique, et son rôle central dans la diffusion d'idées, en font une cible majeure pour la privatisation, et un champ de bataille où s'affrontent des intérêts publics et privés.

**Li Tieying, «Remarques préliminaires pour le symposium international de la philosophie marxiste et le vingt-et-unième siècle»** – Le président de l'Académie Chinoise des Sciences Sociales, le professeur Li Tieying, insiste sur les liens entre le marxisme et le destin de la Chine au vingtième-et-unième siècle, tout en soulignant la compréhension et l'application de la méthodologie marxiste aux conditions en Chine, plutôt que de répéter mécaniquement des mots et expressions livresques. On doit développer le matérialisme historique pour s'attaquer aux problèmes d'un développement durable, dans le contexte d'une globalisation qui implique des systèmes politico-économiques différents. La philosophie marxiste doit se revaloriser et s'enrichir, pour prendre en considération des développements révolutionnaires dans la science et la technologie. L'intégration du socialisme dans une économie de marché soulève forcément des questions théoriquement importantes qui demandent des solutions théoriquement scientifiques.

**Hu Xinhe et Jin Wulun, «La philosophie marxiste et le développement des sciences et de la technologie»** – Les auteurs affirment que la philosophie marxiste a pu conserver sa vitalité face aux nombreux défis en raison de son approche

scientifique d'unir la théorie et la pratique. Le développement des sciences et de la technologie a occasionné plusieurs changements dans la manière traditionnelle de penser : l'évolution dans la façon de voir la réalité, le remplacement de la pensée réductionniste par des approches holistiques, et l'extension et le changement du rôle social du raisonnement scientifique. Ces changements, pourtant, se conforment à l'esprit fondamental de la philosophie marxiste.

**Wadi'h Halabi, «La base matérielle pour l'optimisme révolutionnaire»** – L'auteur soutient que, malgré la force apparente du capitalisme actuel, la classe ouvrière internationale a gagné considérablement en nombre, culture et force. D'autre part, les forces du capitalisme international sont devenues fortement centralisées, tandis que cela n'est pas le cas pour la classe ouvrière. L'auteur considère comme base matérielle de l'optimisme révolutionnaire la capacité de la classe ouvrière internationale de surmonter cette faiblesse.

**Minoru Kitamura, «Construire un paradigme pour un développement durable»** – L'humanité fait face à une crise écologique sans précédent qui peut mener à sa disparition. Bien que les problèmes écologiques jadis n'aient pas été aussi sévères que les nôtres, les propos de Marx et Engels pour traiter des problèmes écologiques sont toujours pertinents. Le marxisme, enrichi de nouvelles connaissances de notre environnement, peut contribuer à la construction d'un paradigme pour un développement durable.