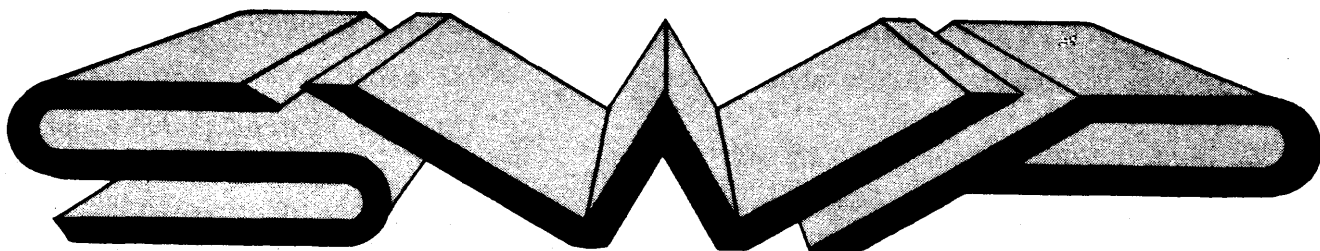


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MARXISM AND ECOLOGY

by Jan Garrett, Minneapolis Branch

The attempt is made below to develop the insights of Marxism in such a way that it will be possible to theoretically integrate an approach to the ecology issue with other aspects of Marxist theory.

In so doing, I found it necessary to choose between a couple conflicting variants of expression of the Marxist method despite the fact that in one way or another generations of Marxists have tried to live with them both simultaneously. I have chosen the approach that deals with the Marxist dialectic as the method of the concrete historical totality, the method which I believe accounts for the great successes of Marxism.

I have deliberately eschewed following those works on "dialectical materialism" that deal with a nature outside of, and irrelevant to, its role as a part of human prehistory and history. Lenin's Philosophical Notebooks, Gramsci's critique of Bukharin's method (Cf. The Modern Prince and Other Writings), and Georg Lukacs' 1923 History and Class Consciousness have helped me see wherein lies this dual approach and pointed out ways to avoid getting caught in it.

The method of the concrete historical totality is the variant of Marxism the most purified from economist vulgar materialism and the one most consciously descended from Hegel, in my opinion.

Comrades will note in this article something of a different approach on the population issue from that of Joe Hansen's 1960 pamphlet, which I feel it was an error to reprint without so much as an introduction indicating a grasp of the new context of the issue.

Several dozen copies of the Minnesota 1970 Campaign Paper "Capitalism Fouls It Up," which gives a description of the causes of the ecological crisis and makes a first attempt at transitional demands on pollution, are still available at 10 cents apiece from the Minneapolis branch.

* * *

The pollution of the magnitude with which we are concerned is a product of the conflict of the changing structural character of production and industry on the one hand and the rigidity of the social and property

institutions of the capitalist system on the other.

The Third Industrial Revolution -- the cybernation revolution which has mechanized agriculture and begun to substitute mechanical hands for human in manufacturing processes and even construction industry and which is powered by high-speed computers -- is the culmination of the technological leap that has taken place since World War II. The most important result for the ecology is the fact that there is a mammoth increase in the amounts of raw materials consumed per human laborer in industry as well as in the amounts of useful and wasteful output per human laborer. Or, as a recent writer in Datamation put it, human technology has become so powerful that it can match in force the self-preserving processes that have maintained the earth's living crust up till now.

To give you an idea of the rapidity with which this Third Industrial Revolution is occurring, here is a comparison of two IBM computers -- 360/50 which was first available in 1965 and 370/145 which will be ready for use at about the same cost in 1971, six years later. The 370 is almost four times as fast as the 360 (and it produces the same kind of results). There is similar progress being made in all other individual technologies in the vanguard of development.

What this means for the ecology may be easily seen when you think of IBM's 1971 computer printer which fires out paper at 2000 unique lines per minute (doubling or tripling the previous speeds). This increases the input of one of the main users of paper which ultimately derives still from our dwindling forests.

Any job that can be reduced to simple mechanical operations can be automated in time. And capitalism has reduced most productive labor and a lot of necessary but unproductive labor to precisely this level. What this means for raw materials, for air and water, is simply this: that relatively few people, driving these powerful machines, can cause a vast amount of pollution unless drastic counter-measures are taken.

The dim perception of this fact has led to several utopian proposals for reversing the course of pollution. Some antipollution reformers advocate

an attempt to convince the consumers to give up their autos, to consume fewer goods in general, to use the original produced good and not something wrapped in paper or metal. This approach overlooks the simple fact that we live in a capitalist (i.e. commodity) system which cannot survive unless somebody is buying more all the time. Except for the war industry, nearly every producer is ultimately dependent on individual purchasers if profits are to be made. Madison Ave., and its parent Wall Street, are far more entrenched than any campaign against driving cars could ever be. It will take far more than such campaigns to change the structure of American transportation.

Standard Oil's higher-than-regular priced lead-free gasoline is an immediate example of Madison Ave. huckstering on the pollution issue. The American worker is "expected" to spend more of his shrinking paycheck on a higher-priced gasoline and the industrial polluters salvage both their profits and their image.

Another utopian idea is that of the population fetishists. By such I do not mean everybody who dislikes the thought of having to live 4 or more to a room in an ant colony like the dormitories of certain large universities. I mean people who see the trends in population as the major danger facing humanity today. The social understanding of such people is usually small and may even be limited to the facile observation that since pollution and ecological disruption have grown in the same direction as world population, all we have to do is stop population growth.

This completely ignores the fact that pollution per person is growing rapidly; that, by such logic, it would be necessary, as labor productivity gets higher and higher, not only to reduce population growth to zero, but population itself as well. When formal thinking leads you to such conclusions, it is high time to recheck all your premises. I will have a bit more to say on this later, but for now, consider Marx's observation that each epoch of society has its own dynamic of population change. Perhaps capitalism, like the Nature that existed before it, is less than eternal.

One of the obstacles to a rational approach to the environment is the traditional idea of scientific method. The thinkers most directly connected with the rise to power of the bourgeoisie brought the sciences of Nature to the center of their world view. They sought to discover the "natural laws" of the chemical, physical and biological

world, so as better to be able to develop methods of manufacturing, animal husbandry and architecture. These bourgeois scientists assumed that nature and nature's laws were constant, an assumption also shared by Catholic medieval thinkers since Thomas Aquinas, who believed that God created a material world, whose attributes could be discovered by observation.

Assuming a constant natural law and a nature whose unity is established by the Deity at the time of creation and maintained ever since, these scientists could feel free to discover new techniques through the famous inductive method, or controlled experiment, which is taught to every elementary school pupil and most college freshmen. The theory behind the controlled experiment is that one is able to hold constant all variables but one, and to develop a valid discovery based on the study of variable results (hopefully variable in one dimension only).

This empirical method, when it is the exclusive scientific method used, looks at single qualities or relationships at a time. It must assume that all other aspects of Nature are constant. This method, eminently suited for the small scale of early capitalist industry, still dominates the methodology of almost all the so-called sciences, even though technology is hundreds of times more powerful and interrelated than it was three centuries ago.

A corollary of this method is the idea that the output from industrial processes is so infinitesimal compared to the universe at large that whatever you throw away will not really affect it. My output today will not affect your input tomorrow. The nature which we evolved out of and which has nourished us up to now will continue to do so.

Ludwig Feuerbach, the German materialist philosopher who preceded Marx, took this non-historical attitude and philosophically expressed it in the proposition: the essence of a thing is its existence. Marx answered Feuerbach by saying:

"Feuerbach always takes refuge in external nature, in nature as such, not yet subdued by man. But every new invention and every advance made by industry removes another portion of this domain, so the ground which produces examples to illustrate Feuerbach's propositions is steadily shrinking. The 'essence' of the fish is its 'existence,' water -- to go no further than this one proposition. The 'essence' of the fish is the water of a river.

But this ceases to be the 'essence' of the fish and is no longer a suitable medium of existence as soon as the river is made to serve industry, as soon as it is polluted by dyes and other waste products and navigated by steam-boats, when its water is diverted into canals and the fish is deprived of its medium of existence by simple drainage."*

Marx treated both natural and social development as aspects of the same historical process. This, I think, is the main principle of ecology and if Earth Day did nothing but begin to diffuse this idea into the American population, it was not passed in vain. Mankind lives, together with all plants and animals, in a total ecosystem where each species interacts with every other and the dead organic products of past life. Together, each makes possible the development of every other.

Marxists can rightly be expected to emphasize that this whole ecosystem develops historically itself. It is evolving. Rachel Carlson made this point 100 years after Marx, but it still has only begun to sink in. The environment cannot be "conserved" in the sense of being frozen at any point. The real alternative is between an ecosystem that has more vitality, more variety and complexity and hence more richness, and one that is made up of a few crude undifferentiated species which can breathe any kind of atmosphere and survive drinking polluted water. The second would probably represent dead-ends in terms of evolution, incapable of generalized further development.

The Corporate Structure Versus the Environment

When we say capitalism is responsible for the disruption of the ecology, some reply that we are being dogmatic, "it isn't that simple."

We could quote the experts in so-called management science who've written best sellers. I refer to C.N. Parkinson's Parkinson's Law and Laurence Peter's The Peter Principle.

Parkinson says that the amount of time spent on a subject by a corporate hierarchy in general or the board of directors of a corporation

in particular is inversely proportional to the complexity and importance of the problem. Thus, providing suitable parking facilities for employees gets a lot more attention than a proposal to adopt a particular type of nuclear power station.

The Peter Principle states that anyone who is competent in his job will get promoted until he reaches a level at which he is incompetent. Management tends to rise to the incompetency level.

You can see the immediate relevancy of these observations to the complex question of what is being done with the balance of life forms and natural resources. With the real decision-making bodies in our society, the corporations, essentially overlooking the difficult questions and those in the upper management levels essentially "incompetent," how can we do anything but pollute ourselves to death in a few years?

Actually, both Parkinson and Peter point to the same process, each emphasizing one side of it: The super-concentration of authority, in the hands of those who are too few, as a group, to have the collective knowledge, even if they had the desire, to pay attention to the details of the pollution problem, or anything else half as subtle.

The root of the matter, of course, is the concentration of property in the means of production. Concentration of property on a private basis means concentration of power. This dual concentration came about through competition; competition is the reason for its continuation in this form. What Parkinson and Peter noticed are effects, but important ones. Thus, on the one hand, the clear resolve of the corporate board to seek its own profits is the direct cause of pollution, when it is the unforeseen result of some "profitable" production process. But on the other hand, the bureaucratic and authoritarian -- where I work they openly call it paternalistic -- internal structure of the corporation itself makes it unlikely that it could respond to the environmental crisis even if its board

*If there are any who will take this 1845 quote as an aberration of the youthful Marx, who thereafter ignored the ecological issue, consider this from the old Engels (from "The Part Played by Labor"):

"Let us not flatter ourselves over-much on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place brings

about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first... 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...."

of directors were convinced that staving off a revolution depended on it.

When is a worker, blue- or white-collar, competent? It is when he or she pays attention to all the relevant aspects of his/her work. If an organizer of production today wants to turn out a product, whether or not his/her goal is to make a profit, he has to check out all sides of the process and make sure everything is going all right.

It is only because this is actually practiced on the shop or department level, to one or another degree, that we have not all been polluted to death a long time ago. But the closer one gets to the top, the wider the scale of one's responsibility, the more one is concerned exclusively with quantitative "profits" and less with the complex, qualitative totality which will determine what happens later.

The complexity of society's present problems, especially those of the environment, requires that everybody who uses a natural resource concern him/herself with the consequences of that use. This principle itself would be utopian unless it be axiomatic that the mass of the people must have access to the power to be able to do something about it. Lack of power leads to apathy.

I think it can be seen that, while the United States is prevented from tackling pollution because of the institutionalization of the profit motive, the Soviet Union is prevented from fully dealing with it because of the lack of political democracy, which results in a bureaucracy not all that different from the management bureaucracies of American corporations.

What Can Be Done?

In the Minnesota SWP "Red Paper" on the environment, there are several concrete demands which we have raised as an initial contribution to the discussion of what can be done in the fight against the pillagers of the environment. (Speaking at the Twin Cities Socialist Forum, the chairman of the Minnesota Sierra Club, a young lawyer, said he could not find fault with any of them.)

Take, for example, no. 2:

"Place under public ownership any firms that attempt to blackmail the public by threatening to close rather than live up to pollution-control obligations. Turn the profits of the socialized industries to cleaning up pollution and paying the workers

benefits for respiratory and other ailments caused by pollution."

Our candidates raised this demand specifically in the case of U.S. Steel's Duluth plant, in order to show what the state could do if it were really serious about its ecological pretensions and also to expose the incapacity of private enterprise to control pollution. It sought to tie in the employment and medical issue with the property/control question.

These demands are not complete. As the party becomes more deeply involved in the pollution issue, they will have to be added to or modified. Especially important are the demands that can be raised by the working-class and the trade union movement. If the labor movement is to regain its vitality, it must deal with the problems of pollution in the specific industries, not only as they affect the workers on the job, but also as they affect the whole society.

The general guidelines for the construction of a balanced environment that can coexist with modern technology are already known: a totally revamped transportation system, nearly total recycling of so-called waste material, botanical and zoological as opposed to chemical pest control, composting of manure with plant waste, reforestation of non-agricultural land, crop rotation, etc. But we cannot forget that actual implementation of these things on a meaningful scale cannot begin until the masses of the people are in control of the productive apparatus of this society.

To avoid the continuation of the Peter Principle, whereby incompetency tends to be found at high levels, workers' committees elected by the entire enterprise must have the power to fire all administrators. Administrators should be paid no more than skilled workers or technicians, so a competent worker will stay at his post rather than rising to an administrative level where he knows he won't do a good job. Eventually, when the mysteries of managements skills have disappeared -- as they have done to a great extent within a decade in Cuba -- all workers will be able to become managers in rotation, insofar as managers are needed at all.

In the new society, participation in the total experience of mankind will demand a continuous, never-finished, many-sided, interdisciplinary education for everyone. People will consciously come to understand that a high birth rate is a brake on the cultural and

educational development of the women as well as the already existing children who need to be socialized in a profound way. Economically speaking, population growth need not occur. Human development on a world scale no longer demands increasing numbers of routine workers in capitalist mechanical industry. The new occupations are increasingly interdisciplinary. The atomized, mechanical ones are beginning to disappear.

It is clearer all the time that socialism cannot mean an indefinite growth of material production. (Mandel writes in Marxist Economic Theory that under socialism, economic growth may well come to an end.) Most of our transitional demands already direct themselves not to methods of increasing production but to the restructuring of the entire social fabric so that the built-in wastefulness of presently capitalist countries, bureaucratized workers states and states under the pressure of capitalist encirclement can be eliminated.

The easiest place to see this is the slogan: "Turn the billions spent on war to day-care centers, quality education, preferential upgrading of oppressed groups, fighting pollution, etc." Such demands are at least two-pronged: besides accomplishing what they demand, they would release for human consumption the productive forces of the Indochinese and other peoples otherwise destroyed or plundered by imperialism.

The victory of the ecology movement must go hand in hand with the victory of the women's movement. The latter will mean for the first time in history the conscious numerical self-control of the human race. The breakdown of sex-role stereotypes, which teaches all males to be hunters and killers, can only have a positive affect as far as presently endangered species are concerned.

The survival of the biosphere, that living shell of the earth's surface which is never deeper than 500 feet at any point and has to support 500 people with corresponding plants and animals per cubic mile, requires a rational ecological plan on a world scale. It must be tied in with a democratic and rational world economic plan.

I must emphasize that democratic control is the opposite of arbitrary control, for only through a plan that is constantly subject to potential correction in details and even in strategic design by the active mass of the people can the concrete consciousness of all the human race be brought to bear in such a complex issue.

We must all be like cells of a great organism. As each cell has the genes of the whole organism, so each person must have a fairly concrete understanding of the workings of the world ecosystem: But each cell affects the organism most directly at one particular point. So each of us will care for the vitality of the whole ecosystem wherever we are at the time. Where a mammal has a nervous system, we will have our collective consciousness, our science, supported by a news media where no opinions are suppressed and differences can be aired openly.

Such a massive democracy is the only way to unify the principles of centralization and decentralization which are today often unthinkingly opposed to each other. Some environmental problems are only visible and soluble on the national or international scale; centralized bodies must concern themselves about them. On the other hand, there is no substitute for the social responsibility of the worker at a local chemical plant who will notice when pollution control equipment is malfunctioning and bring the matter up to the elected factory committee for immediate action.

May 1, 1971

BUILDING WOMEN'S COALITIONS

by Dianne Feeley, Upper West Side Branch

Members of the S.W.P. recognize the potential of the feminist movement to reach out and involve millions of women around concrete, and independent, action. In the course of the struggle towards liberation, women will develop coalitions around one or another feminist demand. This will be necessary because many women will join a coalition to fight for a specific demand before they are won over to the women's liberation movement. The feminist movement will be the backbone of these coalitions, and by working within them will draw many women into the ranks of the women's liberation movement.

Having had experience in building coalitions, the S.W.P. will play an important role in initiating them, and in developing a strategy whereby a coalition can implement its demand. This contribution to the preconvention discussion is an attempt to outline some of the problems which will come up in the course of building such coalitions.

ABORTION

Last year the ultra-left section of the women's liberation movement, including people like Roxanne Dunbar, announced that the movement should not fight for the right of women to have abortions. They argued that the abortion laws were already being repealed and ruled unconstitutional, and this would happen with or without a feminist movement. In fact, they suggested that the movement might have to fight abortion repeal because while it was valid in itself, large-scale forced sterilization might follow the repeal. Their position was clearly abstentionist. Further, it revealed their lack of confidence in the power of the feminist movement to project the principle of a woman's right to control her own body. The ruling class will try to co-opt every demand, but a strong and confident movement will be the determining factor in the struggle.

Recently anti-abortion forces have launched an attack on abortion repeal. The Catholic Church, using its tax-exempt status, has mounted a full-scale campaign. They have set up an anti-abortion referral service (called Birthright), taken ads in the New York Times, read letters in local parish churches denouncing abortion as murder, mobilized its clergy and members for anti-abortion demonstrations, and put out a wide variety of anti-abortion

literature.

In New York state there are more than a dozen bills in the legislature aimed at tightening up restrictions in the "liberalized" abortion law passed just last year. Throughout the country politicians are speaking out against the right of women to have abortions. This counter-attack must be met by a vigorous defense of women's right to abortions. The abortion issue is shaping up to be the key fight in the coming period. Obviously any effective defense of women's right to control their own lives will advance the whole feminist movement.

While the anti-abortion opposition illustrates the necessity of organizing an effective abortion repeal campaign, Nixon's statement immediately suggests the necessity for a national focus. As a group of women wrote in Connecticut, "We are beginning to realize that, like suffrage, the recognition of abortion as a woman's right is going to require political action and agitation by large numbers of women." As this lesson is assimilated by the movement, certain problems will arise. The two most central will be:

1. Whether to fight for repeal of all laws restricting abortions, or for a "better" law,
2. Where does the abortion coalition stand on the question of forced sterilization and what position does the coalition take on the question of population control.

It is essential that the abortion coalition be built around the right of women to control their own bodies, just as it was necessary to build the antiwar movement around the right of the Vietnamese to self-determination. The right of women to control their own bodies is a principle which the masses of women can easily understand and support. When coalitions are organized on this principle, the debates within the coalition can take place within this context.

1. Repeal vs. Reform

The discussion over whether to fight for abortion reform or abortion repeal suggest the parallel debate which we have already encountered within the antiwar movement over negotiations vs. withdrawal. However, the debate will begin on a higher level. More

women understand why a coalition must fight for repeal than reform simply because there is the concrete experience of several liberalized abortion laws. In some, like California, only about 50% of the women who get an abortion are able to get a legal one. Clearly that is not what women want. In the case of the New York law, women see how politicians are attempting to add a whole list of additional restrictions. The best argument against these attempts is that the decision is the woman's, not the state's. Any restrictive abortion law only serves to force the poorest, least educated, and youngest women into seeking back alley abortionists or into bearing unwanted children.

2. On the Question of "Population Control"

We want to involve as many women in the abortion coalition as can unite around the principle of a woman's right to decide. We will find that many women, accepting "population explosion" ideas, will join and fight for abortion repeal. The coalition's established baseline does not give in to that reactionary position. While different elements of the coalition will have different positions on the issue, the coalition itself is fighting for women's control, not population control. It will be the responsibility of revolutionaries and feminists within the coalition to expose the reactionary and racist assumptions upon which the population control theory is built, winning over these women to understanding the problem is a lack of women's ability to control their own lives and the unequal distribution of resources. This means that socialists are going to have to study the arguments people like Paul Erlich raise, and learn how to smoke out their fairly well-disguised racism.

In the past, the S.W.P. has pointed to the justified fears Third World people have that they will be forced to bear the number of children the government wishes them to have. In the midst of the Vietnam war, the government has unleashed an attack on the living standards of the American people. Their campaign to cut welfare costs is just one aspect of this attack. Several bills have been recently introduced into state legislatures, which, if passed, would force women on welfare who have an "illegitimate" child to face sterilization, or be cut off from welfare. In other cases women have been sterilized first and informed afterwards.

The abortion coalition can speak out against this clear violation of

women's rights with the demand "No forced sterilization." While this demand is relevant to all women, since forced sterilization is used primarily against Third World peoples, it is a crucial demand for the coalition to raise in order to involve masses of Third World women. These women want, and need, the right to control their own bodies. They will join a fight for abortion repeal if they see that it is clearly for the right of all women -- and not just a cover to impose genocide on their people. On this issue, too, revolutionaries must be in the vanguard of explaining the importance of taking a firm stand against government interference. As one sign put it, "The government has no business in my womb."

As abortion coalitions are organized, and begin to utilize a variety of tactics, it is important to remember that the basis upon which many abortion laws are being ruled unconstitutional is that the laws deny women freedom to control their bodies. These legal challenges, accompanied with a strategy of mass action, provide an excellent forum for winning women to the struggle.

RELATED ISSUES

The struggle to repeal all abortion laws will raise many related issues. The right to control one's own body means having accurate birth control information, and, in fact, having control over medical research and facilities. These are issues which will be discussed in an educational way within the coalition, these are issues which revolutionary socialists will raise in election campaigns.

Abortion, after all, is simply a back-up contraceptive device that works when all other methods fail. The women's liberation movement, understanding the right to control one's own body means the right to birth control information, will be raising the following kinds of demands:

1. The right of all women -- particularly young women -- to birth control information. This will include the fight of high school women to have access to this knowledge, the fight to set up birth control centers to assure that information is widely disseminated, the fight to know which birth control devices are safe and what dangers are involved.

2. The right of women to decide the kind of research which is necessary to develop totally safe and effective birth control methods. Today, the

drug companies keep information from women, determine what kind of research is to be done, and determine, to a large extent, the amount of money spent on birth control research. Women are used as "guinea pigs," with few safeguards established for research. In fact, women are often used for research purposes without their knowledge or consent. Any woman has the right to know what dangers are involved in participating in a scientific experiment to further our knowledge on contraceptives, and no woman should be forced to participate without her consent. Women, therefore, must have control over birth control centers, courses on birth control information, and the contraceptive research itself. Women have the right to demand that a crash program to develop safe and effective contraceptives, funded by the government, be launched.

CHILD CARE

The issue of child care, while it will not be as prominent an issue in the coming period as the abortion repeal fight, is another feminist demand which can mobilize masses of women. The questions are less clear than in the abortion fight, and, consequently, there is a need for educating people to a deeper understanding of the demand for child care facilities, controlled by those who use them.

Despite the desperate need for child care facilities, many women still accept society's assumption that the individual parent is responsible for the rearing of her children. Masses of women still feel guilty because they work, and consequently "deprive" their children of the loving care which presumably exists within the home. In discussions within the women's liberation movement and through our socialist campaigns, we can point out the isolated home is not good for either the woman or the child. Children need to have the total resources of their society available to them, they should not be doomed by the economic, intellectual or psychological background of their biological parents. The woman needs freedom too. She is a human being, rather than a slave who is totally defined by her biological relationship.

Other women fear child care because they think it means institutionalizing a program of dreary baby sitting. Society tries to foist this picture, contrasting it with the mythical scene of a warming, loving mother who spends her full time answering the needs of the child. In fact, women have so many responsibilities that they actually have little time,

energy, or training for meeting the needs of their children. How many parents actually know anything about how children learn? The kind of child care which is implied by the demand for community control would be far better than the sterile, barbaric home of today, and better than the current child care centers, precisely because those who send their children are concerned about the quality of care. These parents would make sure that the people who staff the centers like children and know how to work with them. While I think it is safe to assert that even mediocre child care centers are better than the care most children receive at home, the issue of good child care will be determined by the dynamic of women fighting to liberate themselves, demanding that the total society be responsible for the rearing of its children.

Some ultra-lefts have already raised the quality of child care as the reason why women's demand for these centers is incorrect. Here, too, the ultra-lefts fear that the government will co-opt the demand. They say that the state will be able to socialize the child to accept stereotyped roles and authoritarian structures at two rather than in first grade. Such a mechanistic view of the child care fight also assumes that children are not in fact socialized within the family structure to accept society's assumptions!

Another ultra-left argument which also leads to an abstentionist position revolves around women workers fighting for child care centers where they work. Some unions have already won at least a partial victory on this issue. While no union has currently demanded that the union control the center, there are instances of union control during child care centers set up during World War II. However, the ultra-lefts point out that as women win child care facilities on their jobs, this will not free them, but further enslave them. Then they will be unable to quit, because if they quit they will have no child care. The ultra-lefts say that the only places where child care facilities will be set up is in areas where women earn incredibly low wages.

The S.W.P. understands the dynamic which is unleashed in the course of a struggle is the most important factor in considering the implementation of any demand that is raised. We believe that fighting for child care is better than not fighting, which is really the program these ultra-lefts advance. Implementing child care in any factory, or on any campus, or in a community,

will be a victory that will inspire others to struggle.

The issue of child care is complex. It is so costly that it will be a difficult fight to win. That's why discussion within the women's liberation movement is necessary on an educational level at this point. As women win equal pay lawsuits or abortion repeal or a child care center, these victories will help to build the strength and understanding which can provide the base for launching a coalition around child care.

In any area where child care becomes an issue, it will be necessary to make sure that masses of women understand the aims of the coalition. Educating the community will be the most important part of the struggle. These educationals will also test the readiness of women to move into action around the issue. On campus, holding teach-ins, debating the administration, holding referenda during campus elections and petitioning campaigns are excellent organizing tools.

The two greatest dangers around fighting for child care will be:

1. In explaining the demand so that it sounds like a realistic possibility rather than a hopelessly utopian dream,
2. In sharply distinguishing the fight for child care facilities available to all and controlled by those who use them from setting up child care facilities for a few.

The pressure to set something -- anything -- up will be great because the need for child care is so desperate. It is essential to make the point that only the government or corporations have the amount of money necessary to finance such a project. Of course, we do not oppose any people who want to set up child care for a handful right here and now, but we do not mistake such programs for the kind of massive child care facilities necessary if women are to be freed from their oppressive role within the society.

Some women in the feminist movement believe that child care is a more "revolutionary" issue than the other demands being raised by the movement. As socialists, we know that the dynamic of winning any demand will set the stage for winning the other demands. With abortion repeal so clearly on the agenda, it is important that women intervene in the fight. Abstaining on the issue of abortion would be a politically incorrect decision for the

feminist movement.

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

The ERA, first proposed in 1923, is, in the light of the feminist movement, once again on the agenda. The amendment would outlaw discrimination on the basis of sex, particularly in areas of employment and education. During the last year this question has been discussed within the women's liberation movement. The S.W.P. position has been outlined in Militant articles and in a pamphlet, Women and the Equal Rights Amendment.

This is an issue which divides the women's liberation movement. Many women have been influenced by the ultra-left argument that in ending legal discrimination women may lose protective legislation. It is necessary for us as socialists to explain why women should support passage of the ERA, and in fact, use the public discussion to educate people about the nature of women's oppression and the demands of the movement. It is therefore essential that members of the S.W.P. be familiar with the arguments for and against the ERA, and be able to explain the S.W.P.'s support of the amendment. The issue is clouded by the fact that some organizations are for the amendment for incorrect reasons, and some are against it because they incorrectly assume that formal equality will wipe out all protective laws. Organizations like the Communist Party deliberately misrepresent what is at stake.

Since the ERA is a question that divides the women's liberation movement, it is first necessary to discuss and debate the issues. Revolutionaries should encourage debates and forums within the feminist movement, and should intervene in them in order to clarify why women must fight to secure passage of the ERA as a vehicle to build the movement. This debate will be reflected in feminist newspapers as well. Wherever it is possible to build a coalition in support of the ERA, the coalition itself will put out literature, sponsor forums and teach-ins, and intervene in the various state and national hearings which are being conducted.

The two biggest debates on whether to support the ERA revolve around the questions of protective legislation and the draft. In each case the Communist Party and the ultra-lefts assume that the mass movement will have no impact upon determining what real equality means. Their lack of confidence in the ability of women to demand full control over their lives allows them

to side with the most reactionary congressmen, who claim that the "ladies" must be protected.

1. The S.W.P. supports the passage of the ERA. We also support the extension of "protective legislation" (which provides special working conditions for women) to cover all workers. Today's protective laws are used by employers to keep women locked out of jobs. Certainly all human beings should be protected against sweatshop conditions. The hypocrisy and timidity of those who imply that women should hold on dearly to what they now have is clearly illustrated when one discovers that most agricultural and domestic workers are outside the scope of this legislation.

If women are to be securely protected from dangerous working conditions, then everyone must be protected. Otherwise the law is just a mechanism to screen women out of most jobs, and to reinforce the social assumption that women are weak creatures who need special protection. Government counsel has ruled that if the ERA is passed, protective laws would have to be extended to all. It will be necessary for a strong mass movement to insure that these laws are indeed extended.

2. The ERA would toss out the draft regulation that women could not be drafted. Some women fear this. Opposed

to the war and to the draft, they find themselves willing to hide behind the legal justification that women are weak creatures and therefore exempt from the armed service. Yet with the overwhelming majority of women convinced that the U.S. should immediately withdraw from Vietnam, why should they fear masses of women confronting the government over the issue of the draft? If the government were forced to draft women that might just be the decisive confrontation between the American people and the government. It could well be the incident that could end the war!

A REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY

The key difference between the perspective which the Political Committee Draft Resolution, Toward A Mass Feminist Movement, and the strategy of other working class tendencies lies in the confidence of the S.W.P. that masses of women can, through independent political action, win their liberation. In so doing, they will provide a powerful force in the coming American revolution. Socialists have the obligation to learn from this mass movement, to contribute to it, and to recruit its most conscious organizers to the revolutionary party. These coalitions, and the debates which will undoubtedly take place within them, will be a mechanism for all of these.

May 19, 1971

ON PROGRESSIVE LABOR AND MAOISM

by Arthur Maglin, Upper West Side Branch

There is a certain amount of confusion within our movement about the current politics of the Progressive Labor Party. This has given rise to contradictory statements in the revolutionary socialist press:

(1) An unsigned article in the May 7 Militant ("On the Fringes of the March") refers to the "Maoist Progressive Labor Party."

(2) Caroline Lund in the May 21 Militant ("The Insurgent Majority" column) refers to "the Progressive Labor Party, a Maoist organization."

(3) Allen Meyers in the May 3 Intercontinental Press ("April 24 Shows Growing Power of Antiwar Forces") refers to "the formerly Maoist Progressive Labor party."

Well now, which is it? We obviously can't have it both ways.

Further, Frank Boehm makes the following comment in his March 15 "Youth Report to SWP National Committee Plenum" (Internal Information Bulletin, No. 2 in 1971):

"They [PL] still have a certain attraction because of their identification with Mao and China -- however tenuous that may be -- and because of their superworkerism."

This gives us a third evaluation of PL's politics within a rather short time span. What has been happening to cause their apparently confusing situation?

Simply, over the last two years PL has moved from orthodox Maoist to unorthodox Maoist to formerly Maoist political positions.

Very soon after the articles by Mary-Alice Waters on the history of the Progressive Labor Party were published in The Militant (between April 4 and September 12, 1969) it became apparent that PL was pulling away from Maoist orthodoxy. The fundamental position that led PL in this direction was its opposition to Black nationalism. In the course of developing a perverse consistency on this question, PL was led into a more and more generalized opposition to nationalism in any form. By the time the September 1970 issue of Progressive Labor magazine was published they were capable of concluding their lead editorial with the words: "The four horsemen of imperial-

ism: anti-communism, revisionism, racism and nationalism will be destroyed by a united working class."

This opposition to the struggle for national liberation led PL into head-on conflict with the Peking line. Whenever it deems it opportune the Chinese Communist Party gives support to all kinds of nationalists and national liberation struggles. The Maoist theory of the two stage revolution is in fact based on incorrectly counterposing the fight for national liberation to the fight for socialism. PL was led to a rejection of the theory of the two stage revolution by accepting this incorrect counterposition while maintaining its "principled" opposition to the nationalism of the oppressed. In other words, PL is not equipped to think in terms of a transitional program for permanent revolution.

The anti-dialectical method that led PL into this kind of error also led them into several other deviations from the Peking line. PL's method is to set up dogmatic conceptions as rigid principles and then to rail at the world when things fail to measure up to their utopian ideals of social struggle.

For example, when the Vietnamese began to negotiate with U.S. imperialism, PL denied them the right to make concessions to get American armed forces out of Vietnam. When divisions over the Vietnam war appeared in the ruling class and liberal politicians began to cooperate with the antiwar movement (for their own ignoble reasons), PL denied the antiwar movement the right to utilize these people to build opposition to the imperialist war. When the Chinese agreed to negotiate the China-Soviet border dispute, PL stated that negotiating with revisionists could only lead to revisionist agreements.

The CCP line on all these matters has been quite different. So far as its public stance is concerned, with the exception of a short period during the cultural revolution, Peking has taken a completely uncritical attitude towards the NLF and North Vietnam. With regard to having truck with liberals, Mao has frequently deemed it opportune to be excessively zealous in allying himself with all sorts of liberal politicians-- Sukarno, for example. (Sukarno, by the way, who is now retrospectively despised by the PLP, was once a contributor to Progressive Labor magazine, "The Road Since Bandung", October, 1965.) With regard to the China-Soviet border dispute,

Peking quite sensibly decided that negotiations with the Soviet Union was the reasonable alternative to escalating the incident into a nuclear war.

While this process of its increasing divergence from Mao was proceeding apace, PL tried to minimize their significance. They refrained from openly polemicizing with the CCP as much as they could, although they felt compelled to break this rule on a couple of occasions. However, as Frank Boehm indicated, they tried to maintain their identification with Mao and China. When I asked a PLer late last year about the differences they had with the Chinese CP, she stated that they did have certain differences with Mao including whether revolutionaries should fight for "new democracy" rather than socialism. But she was quick to add that PL still thought that "Mao is a great Marxist-Leninist." Even if they themselves did not realize the full significance of what was happening to them, a close reading of PL's press shows clearly that they were becoming more and more uncomfortable with their identification with Maoism.

Just recently, they made their break with Maoism definitive. Seizing upon the issues of Pakistan and Ping Pong, they stated in clear and open terms just where they now stand -- or possibly sink. In an editorial in the May 1 Challenge ("Pakistani Bosses Use Nationalism to Slaughter Workers"), after stating their opposition to both the "boss-led independence movement" and the suppression of that movement by the "West Pakistani bosses," PL concludes as follows:

"Alliances with nationalists a betrayal of the working class. The Chinese Communists have been giving guns to the West Pakistani army for many years. Now Chou En-lai applauds the massacre of Pakistani workers, saying ruler Yahya Kahn and his cronies have 'done a lot of useful work to uphold the unification of Pakistan and to prevent it from moving toward a split.' Chou said that through Yahya's efforts 'Pakistan will certainly be restored to normal. In our opinion unification and unity...are basic guarantees for Pakistan to attain prosperity and strength.' Yes, 'strength' for Pakistani bosses to continue to exploit workers and peasants there.

"During the 1969 worker rebellion, Chou En-lai warmly welcomed Pakistani army envoys in Peking. The Pakistani army guarded government buildings from 'rioting masses' with Chinese-supplied tanks. Today, East Pakistanis are being

massacred by Chinese -- as well as American and Soviet -- bullets and rifles. This is the inevitable result of relying on alliances with nationalist bosses rather than on the international working class. To ally with a boss -- any boss -- means sooner or later to support him against his workers." (Their emphasis.)

In the May 21 Challenge ("Workers Will Doom China-U.S. Marriage") they go further. The occasion for this editorial was the diplomatic exchanges between the U.S. and China -- the title given the article in the Spanish-language section translates to "Communist Revolution -- Not Ping Pong." However, they review the recent history of Peking policy and say such things as:

(1) "One easily can see that the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) which took place in China in the mid-1960's has been reversed."

(2) "The record of U.S. bosses is clear. You can't beat them with a ping pong racket. You can't beat them by trying to get into their U.N. You can't beat them by talking 'love and brotherhood' between Chinese and American imperialism.

(3) "Obviously, the line of the Chinese leaders is to preserve their power by all means necessary. Look at the lengths they have gone to in order to do this:

"*They are working for a complete accommodation with U.S. bosses, the most ruthless that ever existed;

"*They are supporting the fascist generals in Pakistan who are slaughtering millions of Pakistani workers;

"*They have started negotiations with Soviet bosses (who they also characterized as 'worse than Hitler');

"*They are expanding trade with the fascist USSR bosses;

"*Using the fascist Pakistani generals, large amounts of arms were recently sent to Ceylon where rebels were fighting gun-in-hand to end the rule of the reactionary, Trotskyite-supported Ceylonese government. This government was getting arms from the U.S., the Soviets and the Chinese via Pakistan -- so Chinese leaders are in a united front against Ceylonese rebels;

"*China has restored diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia. For years the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) told the world that Tito & Co. were the worst of the worst opportunists (and they are!).

"Unfortunately, this list could go on endlessly. The point is, the CCP is no longer following a revolutionary course. It is aligned with the most backward sections of the world's bosses. And it represents those forces in China who wanted to, and did, derail the GPCR." (Their emphasis.)

There is much more of this confused mess of correct and incorrect ideas, but one thing stands out clearly: this is not Maoism in any shape or form. At the end of the editorial a note is appended which states that "during the past two years our Party has been having discussions with members and friends, anticipating the above-mentioned events. More important, we are trying to analyze those flaws which lead to betrayal of the revolution. In the September issue of PL magazine we will publish an initial set of ideas on this crucial matter."

It will be interesting to see what they come up with, although we can be assured in advance that it won't be any good. In any case, it should be apparent that between the two "attractive" features of PL pointed out by Comrade Boehm, their tenuous Maoism and their ardent superworkerism, there was an inherent contradiction. Superworkerism won out. As is illustrated by the cases of a number of our opponents, superworkerism -- the attempt to substitute trade union struggles for all other aspects of the class struggle -- leads to opposition to national liberation (and female liberation and gay liberation). (The Workers League and the Labor Committee are crystal clear examples of this phenomenon.)

In PL's case, superworkerism goes even further. Anyone that gives even verbal support to any nationalist is ipso facto a revisionist in the eyes of PL. (Be it noted that PL has a persecution complex in this regard and sees nationalists in every closet and under every bed.) Further, according to PL, revisionists can only rule capitalist countries, therefore the Soviet Union and Cuba are capitalist countries. Before long, PL will in all likelihood reveal to us that China has also been mystically restored to capitalism through revisionist magic. In PL's way of looking at things, revolutions come hard and counter-

revolutions come easy.

Where, then, is PL heading? Currently, they are centrists with a bad Stalinist hangover. They are not, as the Spartacist League maintains, "Trotskyists with a pre-frontal lobotomy" -- a position the Spartacists can maintain only because of certain pre-frontal problems of their own.

The most likely alternatives are the following:

(1) PL could become a Social Democratic grouping. On many things its positions already paralleled those of the International Socialists.

(2) PL might move towards syndicalism. They are already reluctant to discuss international questions in their press, preferring to keep their minds as much as possible on bread and butter union work to the exclusion of all else. PL has long since dropped World Revolution, their journal of international affairs. At the time they indicated that they wanted to be able to put more international analysis in their other publications, but in actuality they have put less and less international coverage in Challenge and Progressive Labor since the demise of World Revolution.

(3) PL might go poof. They have been losing numerous leaders, members and groupings over the last year or two. Most of them have retreated into one or another brand of orthodox Maoism. Some have joined such groups as the Workers League, the Spartacist League or the Young Lords Party. This decomposition process is far from over and there is no telling how far developments will carry it.

Whatever the ultimate outcome -- social democracy, syndicalism or poof -- one thing is clear: For the present, PL is a declining force. Its abandonment of identification, however tenuous, with China will reduce its attractive power for a good while to come. Its evident ideological crisis will absorb it in internal struggles and throw it off balance in external struggles. It will be much less of a problem for us than it has sometimes been in the past.

May 19, 1971