

FROM THE LEFT

THE MARXIST SECTION NEWSLETTER of ASA

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T.R. Young, Senior Editor



Market Socialism?? I've thought a bit about it. Maybe It's time to thing about it again. Labor? Commodities? Capital? Which? How much should we socialize? Gutes frages, nicht var?

****Cartoon fromCrumb**

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MARKET SOCIALISM: A SYMPOSIUM

The Radical Philosophy Association convened a symposium to consider a new book on market socialism; *AGAINST CAPITALISM* by David Schweickart. What follows is a summary of that symposium. It appeared in the *RPA Review of Book*, No. 11-12, 1995. [Additional References](#)

MICHAEL HOWARD, UMaine, led off the Symposium by setting forth the basic features of the Schweickart plan:

- **All firms above a given size would be funded by the state.
- **Each firm would pay a use tax [interest] on the funds required.
- **Each firm would be worker-managed.
- **Each firm would buy and sell on the market.
- **Each firm would set aside funds from income to replace/rebuild.
- **Workers would decide on how to share out net income.
- **State funds are allocated to new firms on the basis of both regional and market needs.

Howard notes that the plan retains market competition in goods and services but eliminates markets in labor and capital goods. He also notes that there is a great deal to be said for worker-managed firms in terms of improving worker morale, stopping capital flight, providing job security, reducing income inequality, giving flexibility in trade-off between paid labor and fringe benefits; pensions, vacations health and child care and the like. Risk is socialized; greater balance between public and private investment devolves; full employment can be built into such a plan; destructive export policies in food and unsafe products can be avoided; workplace safety and environmental concerns can be met.

In short, Howard says, its democratic, it's feminist, it's green, it's pro-labor and its egalitarian.

But, the Schweickart model has problems:

1. State managers may not/will not impose hard budget constraints on poorly run firms ... they will, as in USSR, continue to subsidize.
2. There is de facto loss of control by workers to state creditors.
3. There is loss of loyalty or commitment by workers to firms since they do not own but merely rent the means of production.
4. There is an incentive for de-capitalization... let machines and buildings fall into disrepair. Workers may opt to divide up income at the expense of depreciation funding.

JUSTIN SCHWARTZ, UMich-Ann Arbor, also has praise for the Schweickart book: it is carefully argued, readable, knowledgeable about economics. His listing of the features of the S. plan are similar to that of Howard except he says that the state allocates funds on the basis of jobs and profits.

Schwartz contemplates the ethical arguments Schweickart makes in favor of democratic economics. Democracy, as set forth in the S. book, is too thin a notion; it is excessively political and economic rather than fully social. The case in point is what to do with 'Bureaucracy.' Schweickart assumes it. Schwartz wants to think about it more.

The next moral imperative S. looks at and Schwartz critiques is Happiness. Efficiency is important since it satisfies people's needs and desires. Schwartz notes that dem/soc would be desirable even if it could not do as well as capitalism to meet such needs/ desires. [One of the real problems of any free market in goods and services centers around harmful goods and demeaning services ... not treated in the book or the critiques--TRY]. Schwartz notes that markets are ethically grounded in that they provide for Irrational calculation-' He says that S. is 'dismissive,' of that argument for markets.

S. looks better on Welfare. S.'s plan for investment for jobs tends to reduce/eliminate the surplus labor reserve and the attendant problems/requirements called forth by it. Environment concerns are met better by market socialism: capitalism tends to 'externalize' costs to workers, customers, the state and to the environment. M. socialism would reduce consumption of nonrenewable resources [petroleum, scarce metals, minerals]. Pollution of land, sea and air would be greatly improved by the plan.

S. mentions that market socialist would tend to reduce the periodic crises attendant to capitalism. [One needs a mass market to have mass production and mass markets ... full employment provides those; Capitalism doesn't--TRY]. Schwartz notes that both consumer demand and investor confidence is subverted when profits fall and people disemployed... triggering downturns which last 5, 15, 50 years.

Finally, Schwartz mentions some of the historical failures of market socialism from which we should draw lessons. Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland, and now China. And he praises S. for mentioning the global effects of both capitalism and market socialism... in brief, there is less inequality between countries with m. socialism than between the rich capitalist countries and the poor capitalist states.

The third panel member was CHARLES MILLS, U-III/Chicago. Mills takes up S.'s argument that market socialism is better for:

1. Liberty: 'No socialist country yet established has had a record on Civil Liberties as good as the best of Western Capitalism., says Schweickart. Mills commends his 'frankness.' Mills argues, for S., against socialist apologists who overlook repression and exploitation in really existing socialist states.
2. Equality: Mills agrees that capitalism produces more inequality than market socialism. Mills wants us to consider the conservative argument that one cannot prevent inequalities in outcomes.
3. Democracy: Mills says that a state fostering market socialism would not, repeat, not be a one-party state. That democratic socialism would work against the present situation in which an elite/class obstructs political democracy for the mass. Mills notes that market socialism might have a bureaucratic class but they would not have the

tremendous economic power that the capitalism class has. Finally, Mills brings up a most interesting feature: worker managed firms have no built-in motive to subvert labor organizations in third world countries.

RICHARD SCHMITT, Brown U., focusses in on the Preconditions for Protective Democracy. In addition to free speech, assembly, voting, and access to public office, Schmitt sets preconditions and agrees that market socialism provide/must provide them.

1. Economic resources. The average person does not have the time the money, the connections to make a successful run for office. Class status dictates who will run. Mills says that it is not 'unreasonable' to expect market soc to do better than capitalism but, Mills says, reducing the great inequalities in wealth is not enough for Protective Democracy.

2. One needs access to information. Citizens need to know against whom they must protect themselves and thus know who and what candidates stand for. Profit-oriented media do not do that. Mills says that worker-owned media would not betray the citizen to the rich sponsor/candidate.

3. Some cultural requirements for market socialism to build-in:

- a. Democracy must be valued for its own sake.
- b. Public officials must tell the truth and be accountable if they don't.
- c. Candidates should not treat politics as if it were a market transaction ... winning is not everything.

RONALD ARONSON, Wayne State, says that Schweickart should have ended the book on its strongest chapter, Ch. 6. In it, S. makes a compelling case for market socialism and against market capitalism. Aronson wonders why S. goes on to talk about the power of feminism, the important of a marxist vision for the future, and among other things, the Brazilian Worker's Party. Aronson says that S. is Against Capitalism and thus must go on to make a case for his market socialism in the last three chapters. Aronson says that S.'s project is a Post-marxian Project; Marx was concerned with, according to A., objective analysis and making the proletarian revolution... not argue about whether it should or should not take place. S. makes an unmarxian case for what should take place and giving it an ethical grounding... in sum, the S. book is an unmarxist book inspired by and falling within the marxian orbit. But one need not use marxian theory to do the same thing.

PATRICIA MANN, Hofstra, praises the S. book for doing what Aronson says unnecessary. She says that marxian methodology and marxian theory of immanent contradictions remain a powerful theoretical legacy but the virtue of the S. book is that it goes beyond class struggle to consider revolutionary struggle and change in terms of gender hierarchies, ethnic conflicts, environmental concerns, and sexuality. She praises S. for asserting that Marxism has lost its hegemony as a philosophy of liberation [lost its hegemony; not its relevance ... pay attention!]. Mann goes on to call for a richer, deeper, more extensive form of radical analysis... and that S. is a step in the right direction.

The final contribution to a critique of the Schweickart Program is FRANK THOMPSON, also at Umich-Ann Arbor. Thompson uses several pages of algebraic formulae to argue against some technical features of the S. plan. Thompson takes up the 'micro-economic' point regarding the interaction between enterprize and personal finance. While I am unable to follow the argument, I think he is saying that the Schweickart plan that socialism firms balance debt and assets... not necessary; maybe impossible. Thompson worries about paying a real zero interest rate... [the state tax for use only covers capital funds and is not flexible... as I understand Thompson. TRY]. Thompson says that market socialism would be more likely to survive it debt could exceed assets and if interest could vary... I think. At any rate, Frank is interested in helping David make it work..

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 GRADUATE STUDENT PAGE 

****Do copy the GRADUATE STUDENT PAGE for each of the Grad Students in your Department.**

JOIN THE SOCGRAD NETWORK!!! It provides a great deal of information about graduate programs in sociology around the country as well as problems common to all grad students. Remember what INSTRUCTIONS: type: LISTSERV@UCSD.EDU. Then type: SUBSCRIBE SOCGRAD YOUR_NAME.

ATTEND the 1996 Meetings of the Association for Humanist Sociology. Oct. 31-Nov. 3, 1996 at the Holiday Inn in Hartford, Ct.. THEME: Social Equity, decentralization, and participation, East and West. Bases for a globally relevant sociology. JOHN LEGGETT, Rutgers, is Program Chair. Send ideas to him.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: Nominations for our Section Award for 1996 are solicited. Send Nominations to Sara Schoonmaker at Redlands University, re: THE AL SYZMANSKI AWARD for an outstanding Graduate Student Award.

THE RED FEATHER AWARD for outstanding scholarship by graduate students has been awarded to:

****JAMES YARBROUGH**, Texas Woman's University, for his paper on 'Science and Society in the Postmodern.' Yarbrough builds on the work of Vico and Comte to provides a concise and grounded definition of the Postmodern.

****MELISSA HERMAN**, Stanford, for her work on tracking in high school. She found that mono-tracking occurs mostly in low and high tracks. Those in low tracks did not know of the track into which they were placed. Those tracked to college prep courses were constantly reminded. Those in middle tracks had a great deal more flexibility in their choice of classes.

****BRIAN AULT**, University of Minnesota, for his work on 'Graduate Student Failure.' Ault takes issue with the self-serving views of graduate student failure put forth by faculty. Blalock, for example, attributes grad student failure to 'low standards' of admission. Ault offers more sociological explanations. Ault finds several structural obstacles to success. He ends the paper with some ideas helpful ideas from BILL GAMSON, Michigan and THERESA SULLIVAN, Texas.

*****MARINO BRUCE, JACQUELINE JOHNSON and VINCENT ROSCIGNO**, NCSU, for their work in organizing sessions at the Southern Sociological Society meetings in Richmond, VA on April 11-14. Graduate students seldom organize sessions at scholarly conferences; usually these arise through an 'old-boy' network. Bruce, Johnson and Roscigno are exemplars both in their productivity as graduate students and in their efforts to transform the politics of American Sociology. Themes for which they have organized sessions at SSS are listed below:

- 1) "Matrices of domination: Critical Issues Surrounding the Interaction of Gender, Race and Class."
- 2) "When "Just-us" Reigns: Critical Perspectives on the Relationship between Crime and Inequality."
- 3) "Building Bridges or Burning Them: Coalition Building in an Identity-Political Climate."
- 4) "Inequality and the Powerful: Acknowledging the Role Played by the Movers and Shakers."

TOM VAN VALEY, Western Michigan University, has data on the new students entering college. PAT ASHTON, Indiana/Purdue, Ft. Wayne and JAMES CRONE, Hanover College offers ideas on how to teach these new students. Grad students who want a head start on the task of teaching students in the 21st century will want to write them.

****Get ready for Montreal. The ISA will meet there in July, 1998. AND there is a Competition for Young Sociologists: Send an original paper on important issues. Contact: <Inglis@edfac.usyd.edu.au>**

ELISABETH BRIANT LEE was born in 1908. A talented artist and intellectual, Lee was the second woman to graduate from Yale with a doctorate in Sociology. Lee is a living testament to the challenges women in Sociology have faced. A brilliant and dedicated student, Lee confronted resistance from Universities whose discrimination against scholarly women prevented her from ever holding a full-time, permanent position in the academic world. Lee has made dramatic impacts on Sociology in a different, much more creative role: editing, reworking and proofing eleven books co-authored by her husband, Alfred McClung Lee. Particularly well known is *The Fine Art of Propaganda* by A.M. Lee and E.B. Lee where they have made sociological concepts and analysis available to the public in a readable manner. In association with the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, the Lees examined the power and influence of mass communications with important criticism. Her activism has promoted the emancipation of peoples with social problems. As founder, facilitator and major supporter of the Association for a Humanist Sociology, Society for the Study of Social Problems, and Sociological Practice Association, her efforts in this regard have touched most people in the profession today. Lee survives her husband and is currently living in Durham, North Carolina near her family. She insists that she has yet to produce her most significant work: on American women.

HEIDI HENRICKSON is Assistant Editor for a series of brief biographies on women in American Sociology. She and MINDY EPHRAIM interviewed Betty Briant Lee at her Durham, N.C., home.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS/NEWS

****REPORT OF THE BUSINESS MEETING:** Chairs and members of four Committees were appointed. GARY WELBORN will chair the nominations committee, with BRIAN SHERMAN, TALMADGE WRIGHT and JULIA FOX are members. MARTHA GIMENEZ will chair the membership recruitment committee, with ALAN SPECTOR and JACKIE CORROGAN as members. MARTIN MURRAY will chair the Syzmanski Award Committee, with LINDA BELGRAVE and ABBY FULLER as members. STEPHANIE SHANKS-MEILE will chair the Marxist Scholarship Award committee, with SARA SCHOONMAKER and LARRY MILLER as members.

****DAVE CURRY** sent in his formal resignation as Editor of FROM THE LEFT, our official newsletter. He has very graciously agreed to stay on as special advisor and consultant to the new editor, T.R. Young.

****BUILDING MEMBERSHIP** is a key goal for the section for this year. Thanks to ART JIPSON, MARTHA GIMENEZ and others who helped us reach 400 memberships. Their work made it possible for us to have three sessions on the program for next year. Let's keep up the momentum, and keep organizing to recruit new members so we can have 600 by September of 1996. That will give us four sessions on the program, expanding the opportunities for our members to present their work and to discuss current themes in Marxist scholarship. I encourage all our members to increase dialogue about their work as Marxist sociologists, and to help build the section. SARA SCHOONMAKER, Chair.

****RESOLUTION:** At the section business meeting in D.C., we passed a resolution to send to ASA council asking them to support justice for Abu Jamal. The Chair, Sara Schoonmaker received a letter from the Council saying that the resolution had "received support" at the business meeting. However, the Council decided not to take any action on the resolution because it did not meet the guidelines for resolutions coming to Council. Our resolution "asked the Council to take a position on the death penalty case solely as a human rights issue," instead of drawing on sociological research in sentencing and its applicability to the case. Given the Council's response, it looks like

we should think about how to present resolutions in the future.

**RICHARD APPELBAUM, Santa Barbara, organized a session for the annual meetings of the Pacific Sociological Association on the topic "Theorizing the State in the World System." The meetings are March 21-24, 1996, in Seattle, Washington. Contact him for results of the session.

**KEN NEUBECK AND DAVITA SILFEN GLASBERG have a new INTRO TEXT for you to consider in making adoptions this Spring. Published by McGraw-Hill, the text integrates race, class and gender at work, in politics, in socialization and in strategies for the future. Do give SOCIOLOGY: A Critical Approach a very good look when you adopt.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 1996 Meetings of NCSA, Apr 12-14:

**MORT WENGER has organized a session which offers some ideas on how to teach stratification. LYNDIA ANN EWEN, ALAN SPECTOR, DEBRA HARVEY-SWANSON will join him.

**ROBERT PERRUCCI talks about how to reclaim community in a global economy.

**DAVID FASENFEST offers ideas about how to replace market use values with social use values in communities.

**ART JIPSON organized two sessions on The White Supremacy Movement. LIN COLLETTE and ROBERT PARKER join him in the first; RICHARD BALL, PAMELA LABELLE, GERALD MARKLE and PAUL BECKER report on their work in the second.

**DENA TARG, CAROLYN PERRUCCI AND ROBERT PERRUCCI have a paper on gender effects from plant closings.

**MARIE RICHMOND-ABBOTT discusses the attitudes of dis-employed white males toward women and minorities.

Some HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MSS MEETINGS THE MSS: APR 3-6 in Chicago

**CLARENCE Y.H. LO has assembled papers on the State, the Economy and political responses to the globalization of the economy. LO has organized several sessions on LEFT and RIGHT social movements.

**JOHN LEGGETT assembles radicals from the 60's to reflect on their legacy 30 years later.

**KEVIN ANDERSON continues to try to develop a postmodern marxism in his session on Classical Social Theory; DAVID DICKENS, JOHN RHODES, HORST HELLE and LOU TURNER work with him.

**MIDWEST SWS sponsor a session on Women and Justice Issues as well as one on Race, Gender and Class.

**MICHAEL TIMBERLAKE organized two sessions on the Global Economy. R. SCOTT FREY, WM. BREEDLOE and LANCE HUNTLEY help sort out effects on well being in the first; LUIS POSAS, JONATHON LONDON, AND W.R. GOE think about how Multi-national capital links with local economies.

**MARK HOROWITZ has a paper on DSA: American Socialism at Crossroads.

**ANNA ZAJICEK has organized an interesting session on Feminist/Womanist Sociology. MEETA MEHROTRA, NAOMI LACY, ANDREA WILSON and ANGELA FARRAR join TONI CALASANTI to think about it.

**KENT SANDSTROM, JODI BURMEISTER-MAY, DAVID BERGER, and TOM HANSON have ideas on Critical Pedagogy to share.

**JOANE NAGEL has invited several people to report on the great changes in Communist China.

The SPRING ISSUE will offer several views on MARX and POSTMODERNITY. It should be as evocative of lively

discussion as is that on Market Socialism. Plans for the SUMMER ISSUE now center around new and interesting work on KONDRATIEFF Waves. MARXISM and FEMINISM will be topic for the FALL ISSUE.

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