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factories and their conversion towards "soft" forms of small, local production. These shifting priorities express the novelty of green syndicalism not the discourse of industrial management presented in the caricatures of its detractors.

Within green syndicalism one sees evidence of "deep green" perspectives which express new visions of relations between industrial workers and radical ecology. Green syndicalist perspectives are suggestive of some tentative synthesis. The emphasis still remains on possibility.

## Conclusion

In *Remaking Society* Bookchin, (1989: 172) concludes that "the bases for conflicting interests in society must themselves be confronted and resolved in a revolutionary manner. The earth can no longer be owned; it must be shared." These statements represent truly crucial aspects of a radical vision for an ecological society. What is perplexing is that Bookchin does not draw the necessary implications out of his own radical conclusions. The questions of ownership and control of the earth are nothing if not questions of class.

As conflicts over nature deepen and the theft represented by property becomes de-legitimized by the further destruction of varied eco-communities there is the potential for greater mobilizations of people as workers in a diverse but united struggle for communitarian reconstruction. It is from a standpoint of unity-in-diversity (social and ecological) that a newer, richer understanding of class and class struggle must begin. Through open communication and alliance workers as environmentalists (and indeed environmentalists as workers) will add to this deeper understanding of class struggle.



## Introduction

In recent years a variety of social movement and environmental commentators have devoted a great deal of energy to efforts which argue the demise of class struggle as a viable force for social change (See Eckersley, 1990; Bowles and Gintis, 1987; Bookchin, 1993; 1997). These writers argue that analyses of class struggle are unable to account for the plurality of expressions which hierarchy, domination and oppression take in advanced capitalist or what they prefer to call "postindustrial" societies (See Bookchin, 1980; 1986). They charge that class analyses render a one-dimensional portrayal of social relations. The result of this has been a broad practical and theoretical turn away from questions of class and especially class struggle.

In my view, both orthodox Marxist constructions of class struggle and the arguments raised against that conceptualization have been constrained by conceptually narrow visions of class struggle. Commentators have either taken class to mean an undifferentiated monolith (Bookchin, 1986; 1987) which acts, or more often fails to act, as the instrumental agent in history or else as a fiction generated to obscure hopelessly divided and antagonistic relations within the working class (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Bourdieu, 1987). What is generally missing from these otherwise disparate accounts is a dynamic understanding of people as workers and workers as activists.

Indeed one might argue that much of the difficulty arises from arguments over the sociologically constructed working class (e.g. the Marxist "totality" which treats workers in a deterministic manner) rather than the working class in its variety of daily negotiated manifestations. While it is worthwhile to criticize the economistic construction of the working class as constituted by orthodox Marxism, the outcome of such critiques should not be a rejection of the central importance of class and the revolutionary implications of class struggle.

## Social Ecology Against Class Struggle?

Anarchist social ecologist Murray Bookchin has gone beyond merely turning away from notions of class struggle to actively condemning them, even in their anarchist expressions. In *Toward an Ecological Society*, Bookchin (1980: 218) argues that it is "the very class nature of the proletariat… and its highly particularistic interests…[which] belie Marx's claims for its universality and its historic role as a revolutionary agent." Bookchin suggests that it is as class members that workers are at their most reactionary. In his view, the fact of workers' exploitation by the bourgeoisie and their position within the factory system only reinforce workers' "actual one-sided condition under capitalism as a 'productive force,' not as a revolutionary force" (Bookchin, 1980: 241).

Bookchin is rightly critical of the factory system and sees it as a major factor in the de-humanization of the working class. However, he goes a step further by suggesting that the factory system also assures the de-radicalization of the working class. In *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (1986), Bookchin argues that the factory system serves as the training ground for bourgeois society and for the instilling of bourgeois values. Through the imposition of a work ethic, the hierarchical organizations of management, and the demands for obedience, the factory system serves to indoctrinate workers as subservient upholders of capitalism.

Bookchin (1986: 205) states that, in a sad parody of the Marxist vision, the "factory serves not only to 'discipline,' 'unite,' and 'organize' the workers, but also to do so in a thoroughly bourgeois fashion." This leads Bookchin (1987: 187) to argue elsewhere that socialist, anarchist or syndicalist struggles focused around the factory give "social and psychological priority to the worker precisely where he or she is most co-joined to capitalism and most debased as a human being at the job site." (That Bookchin thinks of workers only in relation to the



tal control, only this time they're taking down not only the workers but the Earth as well. This, to me, is what the IWW-Earth First! link is really about (Bari, 1994: 18). In her work, Bari forged real connections between the suffering of timber workers with ecological destruction today. The history of workers' struggles becomes part of the history of ecology.

Significantly, green syndicalists reject the productivist premises of "old-style" Marxists who often viewed issues such as ecology as external to questions of production, distracting from the task of organizing workers at the point of production. Within green syndicalist perspectives, ecological concerns cannot properly be divorced from questions of production or economics. Rather than representing "separate worlds," nature, producers or workplace become understood as endlessly contested features in an always-shifting terrain. Furthermore these contests, both over materiality and over meanings, contradict notions of unitary or one-dimensional responses. Green syndicalists thus stress the mutuality and interaction of what had been conceptually separated nature, culture, workers (See Bari, 2001).

Through this expanded analysis of class struggles one may come to a more concrete understanding of the dynamic nature of conflict. No longer posited as one-sided or pre-given, it becomes clear that the struggles themselves lead to the emergence of entirely new issues and demands such as the quality of work and ecology.

Green syndicalists insist that overcoming ecological devastation depends on shared responsibilities towards developing convivial ways of living in which relations of affinity, both within our own species and with other species, are nurtured (See Bari, 2001). They envision, for example, an association of workers committed to the dismantling of the factory system, its work discipline, hierarchies and regimentation all of the things which Bookchin identifies (Kaufmann and Ditz, 1992; Purchase, 1994; 1997b). This involves both an actual destruction of some

## Green Syndicalism: One Alternative to Social Ecology

As a corrective to the retreat from class in much anarchist, new social movement and "radical" thought some activists have tried recently to learn the lessons shown by the history of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or "Wobblies"). The late Earth First! organizer Judi Bari used her knowledge of IWW organizing work to help build an alliance between timber workers and radical environmentalists in the redwood forests of Northern California. By showing that a radical working class perspective may also contain a radical ecological perspective, Bari contributed much to a deeper understanding of the root causes of ecological destruction and the destruction of logging communities. Moreover her efforts in Northern California provided a sharp and living critique of the common view among environmentalists (See Foreman, 1991; Bookchin, 1980; 1986; 1987) that class analyses and class struggle approaches have little to offer in the effort to bring about an ecological society.

This approach has led to the development of syndicalist practice informed by radical ecology a "green syndicalism." Green syndicalists have understood that labor struggles and ecological struggles are not separate (See Bari, 2001; Purchase, 1994; 1997a; 1997b). Within green syndicalism this assumption of connectedness between historical radical movements, including labor and ecology, has much significance. These green syndicalist perspectives are important in reminding (or informing) ecology activists and workers alike that there are radical working class histories in addition to the histories of compromise which so preoccupy Bookchin's thinking. "Historically, it was the IWW who broke the stranglehold of the timber barons on the loggers and millworkers in the nineteen teens" (Bari, 1994: 18). It is precisely this stranglehold which environmentalists are trying to break today. "Now the companies are back in to-



"factory system is another serious problem which I will not go into here.)

For Bookchin, the only answer is to leave the job site and turn solely to struggles within the "community" as though communities exist without workplaces or classes. In Bookchin's view communities are somehow separate from the class positions of those who live in them. He argues that the workers who are so brutalized at the job site are able to shed those experiences and become different people within their communities. "Their human focus is the community in which they live, not the factory in which they work" (Bookchin, 1987: 191). In Bookchin's analysis, as in liberal theory, "the most powerful form of collective organization in contemporary capitalism the modern business corporation is stripped of its communal status" (Bowles and Gintis, 1987: 16).

This perspective leads Bookchin (1987; 1997) to insist that the efforts of anarchist-communists or anarcho-syndicalists who organize amongst workers, especially if they do so at work, are only strengthening the very aspects of workers' social beings that must be overcome if a radical transformation of society is to occur. Such work, he argues, only serves to distract from the potentially beneficial developments of consciousness which he expects to arise from activities within the community.

While appreciating Bookchin's insights of course community initiatives are important, certainly the disciplined regimentation of the workplace must be overcome there remain difficulties which must be further discussed. First, if workers are to overcome their alienated class character, then they must at some point confront the growing contradiction between their developing community consciousness and the material confinement and dehumanization experienced at the job site. Rather than being simply left behind, or ignored, the job itself will be a crucial arena for struggle.

The constitution of new identities as expressive human beings in transcendence of alienated class identies implies a successful struggle over the very structures of domination, regimentation, hierarchy and discipline which exist concretely within the workplace. One cannot assume that the job site will simply wither away with the flowering of a new identity. More likely it will be impossible to fully develop the human expressiveness of which Bookchin (1986) speaks, given the continued existence of this significant nexus of capitalist power, domination and exploitation.

Appeals to humanity, conscience and personality cannot be made in abstraction from the very material conditions which restrict and deform peoples' humanity, conscience and personality. While struggles at the level of the workplace should not, indeed cannot, be elevated to the sole site of transformation, the corrective to this is not to abandon these struggles altogether. People learn through action. Likewise, it is not enough simply to condemn or ignore peoples' identies as workers. Rather the fullest implications of this subject position must be understood through the activities and through the voices of workers themselves.

Rather than arguing for or against the workplace as opposed to the community one must move forward to a fuller extent of engagement carried out at both sites. That each realm of experience and action is an important site for transformation and struggle must be appreciated. That the workplace must be transcended and the community developed, or even restored, does not erase the fact that the process through which each can occur will not allow a retreat from one and a romantic preoccupation with the other. The development of community must be the dissolution of the factory system and all that it entails.

When attempting to articulate a fuller understanding of class struggles it is worthwhile to remember that such struggles do not begin and end at the point of production. As Bookchin (1986: 249) himself has noted, without understanding the class



implications, "it may emerge from the poverty of the unemployed and unemployables, many of whom have never done a day's work in industry." Likewise, the class struggle entails an extremely crucial ideological dimension that extends far beyond any restricted notions of "class consciousness" or "superstructure." It is an ideological development which arises fundamentally from peoples' varied activities in a society ruled by the dictates of private property. Bookchin (1986: 249) comes up against this when he concedes that class struggle "may emerge from a new sense of possibility that slowly pervades society the tension between 'what is' and 'what could be.'" This tension is precisely the contradiction which workers in struggle experience between their desires for self-determination and the limits of the workplace.

As importantly, such an understanding may infuse struggles over class with radically new visions of the vast terrain from which social change can emerge. A deeper understanding of class struggle concerns itself with the expression of ethical and cultural insurrections which occur along with economic insurrections. Out of this awareness the potential for an ecological understanding of class society and a class analysis of ecological society might emerge.

Certainly the historic anarcho-syndicalist and anarchist-communist struggles have exhibited this conscious awareness that class struggle entails more than battles over economic issues carried out at the workplace (See Kornblugh, 1964; Thompson and Murfin, 1976; Salerno, 1989; Rosemont, 1997a; 1997b). Class struggles have been concerned with the broad manifestations of domination and control that are constituted along with the ruthlessly private ownership of the planet's ecosystems and their vast potentials for freedom.