

simply learn to accept. But if winning a reform further empowers the reformers, and whets their appetite for more democracy, more economic justice, and more environmental protection than capitalism can provide, it can hasten the fall of capitalism.

In any case, it turns out we are a more cautious and social species than most twentieth century libertarian socialists realized. And it turns out that capitalism is far more resilient than libertarian socialists expected it to be. More than a half century of libertarian socialist failures belie the myth that it is possible for social revolutionaries committed to democracy to eschew reform work without becoming socially isolated. Avoidance of participation in reform work is simply not a viable option and only guarantees defeat for any who opt out. Moreover, no miraculous non-reformist reform is going to come riding to our rescue. Though many twentieth century libertarian socialists failed to realize it, their only hope was to throw themselves wholeheartedly into reform struggles while searching for ways to minimize the corrupting pressures that inevitably are brought to bear on them as a result.

Combine Reform Work with Experiments in Equitable Cooperation

If the answer does not lie in finding a special kind of reform, how are we to prevent reform work from weakening our rejection of capitalism and sabotaging our efforts to eventually replace it with a system of equitable cooperation? Beside working for reforms in ways that lead to demands for further progress, and besides working in ways that strengthen progressive movements and progressive voices within movements, I believe the answer lies in combining reform work with building what I call imperfect experiments in equitable cooperation.

Before we will be able to replace competition and greed with equitable cooperation, before we can replace private enterprise and markets with worker and consumer councils and participatory planning, we will have to devise intermediate means to prevent backsliding and regenerate forward momentum. For the foreseeable future most of this must be done by combining reform work with work to establish and expand imperfect experiments in equitable cooperation. Both kinds of work are necessary. Neither strategy is effective by itself.

Reforms alone cannot achieve equitable cooperation because as long as the institutions of private enterprise and markets are left in place to reinforce anti-social behavior based on greed and fear, progress toward equitable cooperation will be limited, and the danger of retrogression will be ever present. Moreover, reform campaigns undermine their leaders' commitment to full economic justice and democracy in a number of ways, and do little to demonstrate that equitable cooperation is possible, or establish new norms and expectations. On the other hand, concentrating exclusively on →

Democratic Economies

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The crisis which faced the authoritarian command economic systems in communist countries of the 1970s prompted a great deal of rethinking about economic planning and co-ordination in non-market societies within and outside the East Bloc. As well, the acceptance of capitalism by governing social democratic parties in the Western countries, and their accommodation to neoliberalism (including the NDP in Canada), encouraged numerous writers and movements to begin to pose alternative economic strategies. Interventions from the feminist, ecology and anti-colonial movements also added to critiques of all existing models and insistence that alternate economic strategies and models incorporate greater complexity. Much more than simply seizing the 'commanding heights' of the economy was needed.

From all these sides, there has been a proliferation of new models of socialism and alternate economic strategies. They have had in common an attempt to extend democratic participation in a decentralised fashion. This can be achieved by extending workers' control and user participation in the management of enterprises and organizations and to formulate new representative bodies, administrative means and strategies at the centre to control the economic surplus and redistribute it toward need and sustainable production. Although the neoliberal mantra that 'there is no alternative' sometimes blinds us, there has never been more creative thinking on possible socialist futures, concrete transitional strategies and specific egalitarian policy measures in history. With the end of the historical communist parties and the thorough integration of social democratic parties into capitalist market policies and values (the NDP being a telling example), there is a lack of political agencies with enough organizational capacity to put alternatives on the public agenda.

These strategic interventions have been numerous and important. They have provided some of the most innovative thinking on socialist strategies since the oddly called 'calculation debate' that, in a broad sense, spanned the 1920s-1940s, as theorists furiously waged war over the possibility and content of socialism, in light of the Russian Revolution and the emergence of mass working class movements demanding an alternative to capitalism. This debate was revisited in the dialogue between Paul Sweezy and Charles Bettelheim, collected in *On the Transition to Socialism* (1972), over the 'laws of motion' of Soviet societies. But new

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promote programs like pollution taxes that modify incentives for private corporations in the market system, we must also make clear that production for profit and market forces are the worst enemies of the environment, and that the environment will never be adequately protected until those economic institutions are replaced. Even while we work to protect consumers from price gouging and defective products we must make clear how the market system inefficiently promotes excessive individual consumption at the expense of social consumption and leisure. And finally, even while anti-globalization activists work to stop the spread of corporate-sponsored, neoliberal globalization, we must explain how a different kind of globalization from below can improve people's lives rather than destroy their livelihoods.

Strong economic reform movements are necessary — and in the United States not one of the above movements is nearly strong enough at present. But strong economic reform movements are not enough. Twenty-first century activists must also nurture, build, and begin to connect a variety of creative living experiments in equitable cooperation within capitalism if we want to avoid the fate of our twentieth century social democratic predecessors.

Build Experiments in Equitable Cooperation

The culture of capitalism is firmly rooted among citizens of the advanced economies. The only sense in which capitalism serves as midwife for its heir is by forcing people to learn to think and live non-capitalistically in order to meet needs it leaves unfulfilled. It falls to progressives to learn and teach others how to do this. And there can be no mistake about it, this is a monumental task. But where can the culture of equitable cooperation grow in modern capitalism? A variety of existing experiments in equitable cooperation need to be strengthened, new kinds of experiments must be created, and ways to link experiments together must be found — to offer an increasingly attractive alternative to capitalism. In chapter 13 of *Economic Justice and Democracy* I discuss important experiments in equitable cooperation that already exist like local currency systems, producer and consumer cooperatives, egalitarian and ecological intentional communities, citizen planning in places like Kerala India and Porto Alegre Brazil, and experiments in participatory economics.

I argue that it is important not to put any particular experiment in equitable cooperation on a pedestal and blind oneself to its limitations. It is also important not to focus exclusively on the limitations of a particular experiment and fail to recognize important ways in which it advances the cause of equitable cooperation. But it is most important not to underestimate the value of living experiments in equitable cooperation in general.

The glass will always be part full and part empty. All real world experiments in equitable cooperation in capitalist economies will not only be imperfect because →

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parameters for the discussion of socialist alternatives really came with the debate over 'markets and plans' in the context of extending democratic economic coordination in the late 1970s. There were numerous interventions. A sampling of the more significant would include: Alec Nove, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism* (1983); Raymond Williams, *Toward 2000* (1985); Pat Devine, *Democracy and Economic Planning* (1988); Michael Ellman, *Socialist Planning* (1989); Robin Blackburn, *After the Fall* (1991); and Ernest Mandel, *Power and Money* (1992). More recently this line of thinking has been placed in the context of globalization and neoliberalism, with Walden Bello, *Deglobalization* (2002) and *Monthly Review's* 'Socialism for the 21st Century' issue of July-August 2005, being as representative of current approaches as any.

The contributions by Robin Hahnel to these debates have been significant reference points, reflective of the intersection between libertarian socialism and left-anarchism, if one has to try to label his standpoint. His writings have often been in collaboration with Michael Albert (and loosely in connection with *Z Magazine*, *Z-Net* and that element of the U.S. anti-globalization movement). The intellectual project has gone under the name 'participatory economics' or 'parecon'. The texts go back to Albert and Hahnel's 1981 *Socialism Today and Tomorrow*, but the most significant contributions have been their *The Political Economy of Participatory Economics* (1991) and *Looking Forward: Participatory Economics for the 21st Century* (1991), the latter being the more accessible text. Hahnel's recent book, *Economic Justice and Democracy: From Competition to Cooperation* (2005), extends the 'parecon' analysis, but also develops more immediate programmatic demands and orientations than the 'models' that characterize his previous work. Here, like so many other radical movements and efforts today, the question of political agency is as often asserted as adequately assessed, particularly in the American context, where further political fragmentation is hard to imagine and socialist ideas are not even on the margins.

Hahnel's writings on alternatives are a vital contribution to the global anti-capitalist movement. They have added an enormous amount to our re-imagining what socialism might be, and the insistence that we pursue 'practical utopias' today. The re-making of a viable Left today surely lies with critical engagement with these ideas, and the struggle they insist upon in moving from theory to practice. **R**

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