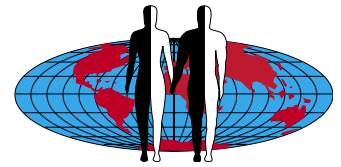


# IMAGINE

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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

## The Tyranny of Copyright

### Trouble at the Fourth International

Last year, the Trotskyist online newspaper *World Socialist Web Site*, or WSWS (no relation to us and the World Socialist Movement), published a press release and an open letter to the Madrid-based magazine *Amanecer del Nuevo Siglo* accusing them of translating and reprinting WSWS articles without their permission [10,8]. The charge was compounded by the allegation that the Spanish magazine had deliberately misrepresented the source of the

articles either by attributing them to their own editorial staff and writers or by removing the byline altogether.

The WSWS staff was understandably surprised and upset at this unsanctioned reproduction, but more surprising still were the threats and capitalist-tinged language contained in their accusations. Terms such as “piracy” and “stealing” were used to describe the actions of the *Amanecer*, implying that the unauthorized copying of political literature is the equivalent attacking a ship, looting its cargo, and kidnapping or killing the people onboard. The WSWS claims its articles enjoy special status as “protected literary works”, as if to imply that copyright laws exist to prevent their articles from destruction or damage by malicious third parties.

While the SPC does not condone the *Amanecer*'s actions, it is clear from the WSWS's reaction to this incident that their brand of politics has little in common with the Socialism we advocate. Not only is their conception of copyright and so-called “intellectual property” inconsistent with a Socialist viewpoint, it is also largely unsupported by the current legal systems of the US (whence the WSWS operates), Spain, and other countries. In short, the

### WHAT'S INSIDE

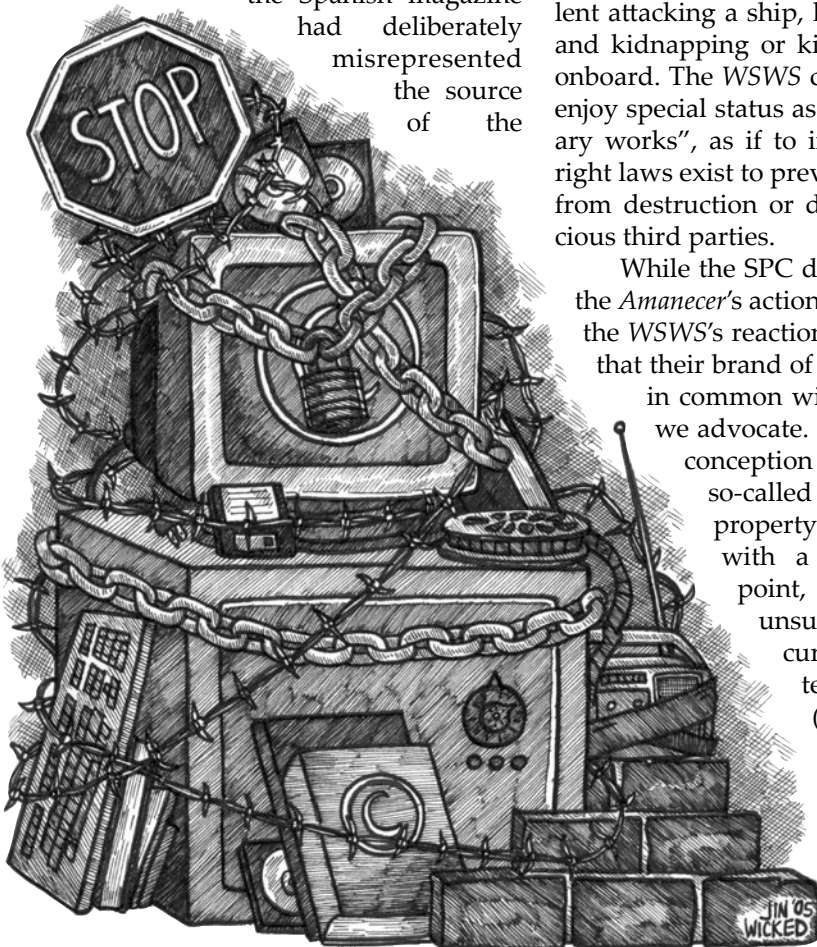
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WSWS has a far more narrowly construed and materialistic view of its “property rights” than even capitalist copyright law affords.

### The monopoly of information in nascent capitalism

Before examining this issue further, however, it is helpful to review a few basic concepts about copyright and its history in the Common Law world. Since the very invention of writing, the copying of literary works had traditionally been a painstakingly slow process performed manually by trained scribes. Almost all literature was commissioned or issued by the Church or the state, and nearly everyone outside the ruling and religious classes was illiterate. For these three reasons, the idea of placing restrictions on the reproduction and distribution of written information would have seemed ridiculous at the time. Indeed, there were countless benefits to the free flow of ideas—philosophers and mathematicians were free to borrow, critique, and expand upon

see **COPYRIGHT**, page 8



# The numbers game

## Can “social activism” really change the way society works?

The World Socialist Movement (WSM) is small. It has been small since the first of the Companion Parties was founded in 1904. Socialists assert that only a vast majority of the world’s population, as socialists, can create socialism. According to some, this means that our approach is wrong, because it hasn’t generated the billions of socialists required to create socialism.

Before reviewing that issue, let us first review the flipside of the issue. That is, can socialism be created in any other way, or can the problems be solved any other way?

The World Socialist Movement, over the years, and socialists before us, have created a large library of literature showing that the answer to those two questions is no. There is no solution but socialism, and socialism cannot be created by a minority. So it is a choice between more of the same — wars, pov-

erty, environmental destruction—and working to get the world’s working class majority to convince itself to create socialism.

The World Socialist Movement now contains about one six millionth of the world’s population. If we assume that membership today is ten times what it was 100 years ago, and that rate of growth continues, we can extrapolate into the future. That extrapolation will show that socialism is therefore impossible.

But we haven’t closed the door quite yet. Sluggish growth can be replaced by sufficient growth.

If today you are a reformer, perhaps a supporter of Greenpeace, consider how far you are from where Greenpeace thinks we need to be. And consider the current rate, scale, and success of reforms. We offer a sure-fire approach to getting the reforms Greenpeace and other reform groups want.

As the numbers of socialists increases towards a majority (or even a sizable minority), reforms (such as the ones sought by “social activists”) will be easier to get, because the threat to capitalism will have significantly increased.

Consider a world in which Greenpeace has 2.8 million supporters (same as today) seeking to limit the worst excesses of capitalism (same as today). Consider now that there are also 2.8 million active, conscious socialists in the world. Capitalism will not be on its knees, by any stretch of imagination, but it will notice us, and will have an obvious interest, and powerful impetus, to prevent those 2.8 million socialists from recruiting new socialists. Capital will try to convince those who are not yet socialists that capitalism can solve the problems and therefore that socialism is not needed. Capital cannot solve the problems inherent in capitalism. So the capitalists will attempt to correct the worst excesses of capital-

ism—as it does today—to appease the Greenpeacers and other reformers.

When the appeasement fails, and there are 28 million socialists, the reforms will become a steady flow. When there are 280 million socialists, the river of reforms will overflow its banks, if there are any more reforms possible at that time. When there are 2.8 billion socialists we will be only a step from ruling the world and eliminating the cause of the problems, and the supposed need for reforms.

There are not a lot of socialists. Few people have heard of the World Socialist Movement, and the media is not exactly helpful in promoting socialism. It takes a lot of time, and a lot of work to get people to convince themselves to work for socialism.

Everyone who spends time working for reforms, or donates to reform organizations, is proving by their actions that they believe that reforms are a useful route to a solution. History has shown, time and time again, that they are wrong. The reforms are always too little, too late.

Socialists want to solve the problems. Therefore, socialists want socialism, and work to build a socialist majority.

The Companion Parties of Socialism, in the World Socialist Movement, are socialist parties. They promote socialism because that is all a socialist party can promote.

If you find a “socialist” party promoting “social activism,” you will have found a non-socialist party ignoring socialism and working for reforms.

—STEVE SZALAI

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The Socialist Party of Canada provides educational material and forums to explain capitalism and socialism, and works to promote working class understanding of socialism. Although primarily active in Canada, the Party sends information to people around the world.

The Socialist Party of Canada was founded in 1905. It is a companion party in an international organization of socialist parties known as the World Socialist Movement, whose Object and Declaration of Principles can be found elsewhere in this issue.

**We welcome correspondence from all our readers — you can write us by post or e-mail at the address shown at the left.**



# Bolshevik bullshit

## What Leninists failed to learn from the Winnipeg General Strike

Ian Angus, author of *Canadian Bolsheviks* (just re-issued) and a latter-day Canadian Bolshevik himself, gave a talk in Toronto last May on “What Socialists Learned from the Winnipeg General Strike” of 1919 (the full text of which can be found at <http://www.socialisthistory.ca/Docs/History/WinnipegStrike.htm>).

In it he attacked the old Socialist Party of Canada for adopting a non-interventionist attitude towards the strike. According to him, instead of leaving the workers involved to plan and run the strike themselves, the SPC should have tried to turn it into the Bolshevik insurrection to seize power that the capitalist press of the time claimed it was.

Despite the press’s Red-scare-mongering, the Winnipeg General Strike was what it claimed to be: a strike to win collective bargaining rights with local employers. And it had not been organized by the SPC. There were a number of SPC members on the strike committee, but they were there as workers directly involved in the economic side of the class struggle alongside other workers who—the vast majority—were not socialists, and they were aware that without a majority of socialists, socialism was not on the agenda and certainly couldn’t be the outcome of the strike. Given this situation, all a socialist party could do—and what the SPC did do—was to express and organize support while continuing its policy of “education for revolution”.

This position was not to Angus’s liking. The SPC, he said, “failed to lead”:

While Socialist Party leaders played a central role in leading the Winnipeg Strike and in parallel strikes across the country, they did so as labor militants. The SPC as a party played a minimal role, and the strike wave had no political strategy. That was a critical weak-



Workers demonstrate on Main Street during the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919

ness. A general strike by its very nature is a challenge to the established order... But the leaders of the Winnipeg strike, including the socialists, failed to see the political implications of this. On the contrary, they did their utmost to confine the strike to simple questions of trade union rights and wages. They exerted every effort to avoid conflict with the government.

Given that the strike was in fact over “trade union rights and wages” this was the intelligent thing to have done. Any action to try to overthrow the government, as advocated today by arm-chair Bolsheviks like Angus, would have failed and resulted in widespread and senseless bloodshed. As it was, the government decided to use its superior power to make a stand in Winnipeg to try to stop the post-war labor unrest. They arrested eight persons who they considered to be the strike’s organiz-

ers and put them on trial for seditious conspiracy, thus effectively breaking the strike. All eight, five of whom were SPC members, were convicted and sent to prison.

According to Angus, “most of the leaders of the 1919 strike wave were not social democrats or liberals—they were revolutionary socialists. And the experience did not lead them to the CCF—it led them to build a new revolutionary party, the Communist Party of Canada.”

This is not true, as far as the Winnipeg General Strike is concerned. None of the eight singled out by the government and sent to prison joined the Communist Party. Nearly all of them tried to become Labor politicians and some of them succeeded—A. A. Heaps, for instance, becoming a federal MP for the CCF. Two later returned to

*continued on page 12*

# In Ontario

## The more governments change, the more they stay the same

### Can You Spot The Difference?

In the last two years we have suffered through two elections in Ontario, one provincial and one federal. I say suffered because it is an exercise in futility for the voter to sort out the different parties by listening to their politicians and platforms. The Socialist Party of Canada/World Socialist Movement stands against all other political parties and even has a clause in its Declaration of Principles to that effect, and with good reason! We hold that all other parties are capitalist in that they openly support that system, or offer no alternatives to ownership of the means of production by a tiny minority, no alternative to commodity production for profit, no alternative to exploitation through wage-labour, no alternative to the class system. The confines that these political parties operate in is so narrow that meaningful alternatives are not even heard or considered, leaving little choice for voters. This is partly the result of the control of the media by capitalist interests to preclude any other real alternative. In the federal election, the Green Party ran in every single riding but was excluded from the national televised debate, as was Ralph Nader and many others in the US presidential election. Any thinking outside these narrow parameters is labelled extreme and dismissed. Given that, it is not surprising that Canadian voters have simply exchanged the two major parties for decades like changing underwear.

In the Ontario election, the Conservative Party, which had been in power for two terms on the basis of their neo-liberal agenda of mean and lean government, were exchanged for the Liberal party. The electorate simply became fed up with cutbacks in services and the party was exposed as fraudulent when, during the campaign, it was revealed that their much-touted balanced budget was going to show a

\$5.6 billion deficit. The new “alternative” immediately moved in the same direction as its predecessor by passing Bill 8, which provides “accountability” in the health care system. That means, among other things, that the Minister of Health will receive more control to cancel services and to amend collective bargaining agreements to implement wage, benefit, and staff cuts, and disallow job security provisions. New Premier McGuinty commented, “It’s about slowing down growth... that is our objective, to begin to better manage our health care expenditures...” (*Toronto Star*, 24 April 2004). This was followed by news that the promised tuition freeze for beleaguered students would now not apply in all cases—news not much different than that of McGuinty’s political predecessors.

This sameness in administering capitalism, of course, illustrates that every government is constrained by the economic system we currently have in place, the capitalist system, where the largest chunk of the value created by the worker must go to the capitalist to pay for production costs and profit. The other small fraction of the wealth produced, the cost of wages, represents the cost of maintenance of workers and their families to keep the supply of workers coming. Such constraints also mean that workers cannot be expected to fork out for the cost of social programs, education, hospitals, and so on, without impacting on their maintenance. The money for these necessary programs must come out of profits—profits indirectly cloaked as apparent taxes on workers’ wages over and above workers’ living costs, and out of which necessary societal benefits are in part paid. In other words, the employers pay the taxes, not the workers. If taxes go up, wages must rise to account for it. If taxes go down, wages will correspondingly be

depressed. That’s why the greatest cry for tax reduction comes from corporate-funded think tanks like the Fraser and C. D. Howe Institutes and the capitalist media. They have attempted to hoodwink workers into believing that if they had lower taxes they would have more disposable income, but in reality lower taxes mean higher profits and lower real wages.

We have a third party in Canada, the New Democratic Party, with which the word “socialist” is sometimes linked. During the federal campaign, I walked into my local NDP office and stated I was a socialist looking for a party to vote for, and could anyone recommend a suitable one? The surprised campaign manager replied that they were known as social democrats now, but they would like to re-nationalize Ontario’s electricity industry. “Is that the same as capitalism?” I enquired, tongue in cheek. He nodded sheepishly and grinned. Not much difference there, then. Likewise, the Communist Party platform contained the ideas of giving students a better deal with tuition fees, striving to give everyone the right to have a job (presumably so more of us could be exploited and increase the capital accumulation for the capitalists) and tax the corporations more. Sounds just like the NDP platform. They go on to say that although these reforms will not lead to socialism, they could very well lead to larger reforms. That they say nothing about ending the system of exploitation, the class system, or ownership of the means of production, puts them in the same category as all the other capitalist parties.

In the federal election, the Liberals posed as the defenders of social programs even though their leader, Paul Martin, as finance minister in the 1990s was the person responsible for slashing funding to them in unprecedented measures. During the campaign, the

current Liberal finance minister, Ralph Goodale, accused Tory leader Stephen Harper of proposing deep tax cuts that would lead to deeper cuts in government programs. It is a matter of record, however, that it was Martin who made the deepest cuts with his deficit-slaying-on-the-backs-of -the-poor budget of 1996 that reduced federal spending from 16% to 12% of Canada's GDP, a level not seen since the 1940s before we had a public health care system (*Toronto Star*, 5 April 2004). This was highly praised by a former Tory finance minister and executive director of the right wing Fraser Institute, Michael Wilson, as exactly the cuts they had proposed. Equal praise came from the same sources when Martin refunded a \$100 billion tax give away, mainly to major corporations and rich Canadians, in 2000 when surpluses appeared from an expanding economy. This surplus would have eliminated the deficit without any program-cutting.

What it all boils down to is that there is no alternative party to the array of capitalist parties masquerading as a wide choice, other than the Socialist Party of Canada, the only one with just one objective—the establishment of socialism. Isn't it time that YOU, the reader, joined and worked for a party that proposes the only system of society that would end war, poverty, starvation, exploitation, and the class system!

### **And The Beat Goes On...**

Many capitalists, their minions, and apologists are fond of telling us that capitalism is a system that can solve world problems such as poverty and inequality, if only given a free rein and time to spread its benefits world-wide. They use the developed nations of the West to illustrate their point of wealthy workers and endless opportunities for those willing to work hard. The fact that 250 years of capitalism has left us with approximately half the world's

population eking out a living on \$2 a day or less, almost a billion people going to bed hungry every night, and millions without access to clean water, health services or education, all in a world of plenty, doesn't seem to register. Even when we look closely at the "successful" world, we see that report after report details growing poverty, hunger and homelessness. A recent United Way report entitled "Poverty by Postal Code" shows how, among 522 identified neighbourhoods of the city of Toronto, 120 contained more than 25% of families living in poverty (a number that has doubled since 1981), 23 neighbourhoods designated super-poor (40% in poverty), and just 177 neighbourhoods with low poverty (*Toronto Star*, 5 April 5 2004).

Poverty, it seems, is moving to the suburbs where 92 of the 120 neighbourhoods are located, and it is so widespread that Royson James (*Toronto Star*, 4 April 2004) commented, "In truth, our ghetto might just be the pockets of privilege—small islands of prosperity in a city-wide span of poverty." Poverty in Toronto is becoming increasingly widespread among recent immigrants and visible minorities as jobs with a living wage and benefits are being replaced by minimum wage, short-term jobs, continuing the trend to greater inequality between rich and poor. The median household income in the poorest 10% of the neighbourhoods was \$32 900, up just 2.6% since 1980, while that of the richest 10% of areas was \$92 800, a 17.4% increase.

All this is not exactly a ringing endorsement of our system in the richest city in Canada. With every report it is becoming ever clearer that, despite the promises, resolve, and desire of our politicians, these problems cannot be resolved under a system that is specifically designed to create wealth for a few and never, no matter what reforms are gained, work in the interests of all.

—J. AYERS

## **The Socialist Party of Canada**

### **Object**

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

### **Declaration of Principles**

The Socialist Party of Canada holds:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into an agent of emancipation and the overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
7. That as political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Canada, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

**Socialism needs your help:**

**Please consider passing this issue on to a friend!**



# Death at Dieppe

## Why 900 Canadian soldiers were sacrificed for the botched raid

An event of 62 years ago would hardly come under the heading of current affairs, but with the media's near-frenzy concerning the 60th anniversary of the Normandy landings, some have pointed out there was a landing in Northern France two years before. This was the disastrous Dieppe invasion of 19 August 1942—or perhaps “fiasco” would be the appropriate description. The Germans, obviously aware of the impending raid, had their “reception committee” in place, which left 900 Canadian soldiers dead on the beach.

What makes William Burrill's article in *The Toronto Star* (9 November 2004) different from all the other articles is his contention that the BBC, to put it mildly, tipped the Germans off. According to Mr. Burrill, the *Star's* radio expert, “BBC radio broadcast details of the attack to

France via Radio Free Europe. The BBC said an attack was taking place on Dieppe by thousands of soldiers in landing craft.” One may wonder what flight of madness would cause the British to tell their intentions to the enemy.

To the British and North American capitalists, it may not have seemed so mad. According to historian Barry Broadfoot in his book *Six War Years*, a convoy of eighteen ships taking supplies to the British army in North Africa left Southampton that morning. It was imperative to the Western capitalist class that it arrive safely. Defeat in

North Africa would mean the Germans would have access to British-owned oil wells in the Middle East, thereby crippling, if not destroying, their war effort. It would also mean the German army could push through the Middle East to link up with their own troops in Russia and with the Japanese army in Burma. Could, one wonders, the tip-off have been a diversionary tactic? If not, it certainly was an enormous coincidence. What one may believe is in direct proportion to how much one

capitalist, excuse the estimated 100 000 deaths in Iraq with the lie of weapons of mass destruction—the blatant hypocrisy being that no one has more control of weapons of mass destruction than Bush himself.

Most people this writer converses with about war tend to group war-related deaths into two categories: those that are necessary for the normal prosecution of war (as if war could be considered normal); and those caused by stupidity and/or blind ambition, two



Corpses litter the beach after the disastrous 1942 raid on German-occupied Dieppe

believes in coincidence. According to Broadfoot, the Canadians were chosen because many had complained that they hadn't enlisted just to “sit around the barracks for years”. Boy! What some workers won't do for the capitalists! By sending them to death at Dieppe, they were effectively silenced, figuratively and literally.

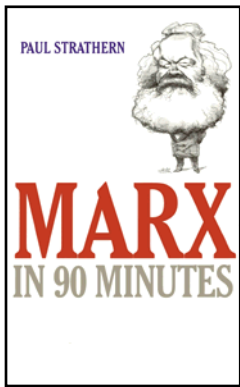
The reason (excuse) for the raid was to capture the German's radar so British scientists could see how it worked. There is a never-ending stream of excuses to make people fight. We've all witnessed Bush, a politician and oil

related aspects. The charge of the Light Brigade and the battle of the Little Big Horn would be two prime examples. Clive Ponting, in his excellent work, *Winston Churchill*, asserts that 30 000 died in the insane Gallipoli venture in 1915, in the honourable gentleman's attempt to further his career.

Many consider atrocities such as the Holocaust and other forms of genocide, all of which make the mind recoil in horror, as unnecessary to war. Socialists draw no such distinctions. When one understands the case for socialism, one realizes that all wars, and therefore all war-related deaths, are unnecessary, as indeed are those deaths caused by other social ills that could be prevented by the establishment of a sane society. The companion parties of socialism have explained very clearly for a century that the working class has no stake in wars, which are caused by competing sections of the capitalist class for

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# Book review



*Marx in 90 Minutes*  
by Paul Strathern

*Philosophers in 90 Minutes* series  
Ivan R. Dee, Publisher, Chicago, 2001

ISBN 1-56663-354-0 (hardcover);  
1-56663-355-9 (paperback)

One of the most common requests from those new to socialist theory is for a short introductory text to the philosophical and economic writings of Marx himself. It's easy to see why—anyone who has casually leafed through the meaty *Das Kapital*, let alone the monstrous 50-volume *Marx/Engels Collected Works* by Progress Publishers, can easily feel overwhelmed at the sheer volume of text. For those who simply don't know where to start, Paul Strathern, author of the popular *Philosophers in 90 Minutes* series, promises to deliver a "concise, expert account of Marx's life and ideas" in this compact 90-page volume.

Instead of providing us with some brief biographical details to put Marx's work in context, however, Strathern immediately launches into various sordid details of Marx's personal life. There is no end to the vices with which the author gleefully attributes his subject: The infant Marx, we learn, was an abusive sibling who forced his sisters to eat mud-pies. In school, he was a habitual drunkard who brawled with the local gendarmerie and dodged the draft with a suspicious medical certificate. As a refugee in London, he took to stock market gambling and engaged in wanton vandalism of public property. The older Marx is described as a "grubby", dishevelled adulterer who squandered his family's meagre income on cheap cigars while he "sat sunning himself at the window in his underpants". And as if this image were not detailed enough, Strathern goes on

to describe the eruption of a boil on Marx's penis. If these facts are in any way relevant to Marx's philosophical and economic works, Strathern fails to mention it.

It's not until page 48—almost halfway through the book—that the gratuitous gossip ends and the treatment of Marxism proper begins. This leaves only about 20 pages before the appendices, which is not nearly enough to convey Marx's major ideas. Still, the author gives a more or less correct, if superficial, exposition of Marx's views on the division of labour, alienation, religion and the rise of Christianity, private property, social relations of production, monopolies, unemployment, and crises. It is questionable how useful or understandable this information is, though, given that Strathern almost completely glosses over such fundamental concepts as surplus value and the labour theory of value. In fact, he rejects outright the validity of the latter, using the opportunity to preach the distinctly non-Marxian notion that profit is a reward for taking financial risks.

Though Strathern places great emphasis on the historical context of Marx's ideas, he seems to willfully ignore this context when it suits his arguments. For example, he criticizes the reforms Marx advocated in *The Communist Manifesto* [2, p. 31–2], but fails to consider that they were made with specific reference to nascent 19th-century capitalism and were never intended to be applicable to today's global markets. He also seems at times to deliberately misinterpret Marx's use of the word "labour" as referring to manual labour only; in fact, the Marxian conception of a labourer is anyone who is compelled to sell their ability to work for wages or a salary, irrespective of the type of work performed. Perhaps the only other significant error Strathern commits is to claim that Marx predicted that capitalism would eventually self-destruct. In reality, Marx described

capitalism as going through repetitive cycles of prosperity, crisis, and stagnation, and that no crisis would ever be permanent [1, p. 373]. If capitalism were truly in imminent danger of collapse, of course, there would have been no need for Marx to advocate revolution; the proletariat could simply sit around and wait for socialism to arrive on its own.

The interested reader will be disappointed to discover that towards the end of the book, Strathern abandons Marx altogether and instead wastes space on his own theories on the nature of capitalism and socialism. The problems of capitalism, we are told, are not inherent in the system itself, but are rather the fault of a few overly greedy capitalists trying to cheat the system. Strathern furthermore drags out the tired old argument that the system can be made more humane through government intervention and nationalization. He criticizes the former USSR for taking such interventionism too far, using its failure as a state as a specious argument for the impossibility of socialism. In reality, the Bolsheviks could not have implemented socialism even if that had truly been their goal, for socialism must be a global economic system with the understanding and support of a vast majority of the world's people.

It seems clear that we cannot recommend this book as a general introduction to Marxian theory. It may hold some appeal for those who want the "National Enquirer" version of Marx, but for those who are interested in the facts that matter, the book is of very little value. Perhaps the most charitable thing that can be said about it is that it doesn't get *too* much about Marx's ideas wrong—but then again, this stems from the fact that precious few of Marx's ideas are mentioned in the first place.

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# Copyright under capitalism

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the works of their colleagues; historians were free to compile and summarize descriptions of events recorded by others; storytellers were free to retell existing tales while adding their own embellishments. In fact, many ancient texts survive to the present day only through the liberal quotations found in the critiques and summaries of contemporary authors.

This state of affairs changed drastically with the perfection of mechanized printing in the 15th century, which opened up a whole new economic sector for printers and booksellers to exploit. The increasing availability of books led to increasing literacy among the general population, which in turn led to some output of literature that was not necessarily in line with the status quo. It is not surprising, then, that one of the first known laws instituting prohibitions on copying, Britain's *Licensing Act of 1662*, was produced not to grant rights to authors but to censor works deemed objectionable by the government. The Act, whose full title is "An Act for Preventing the Frequent Abuses in Printing Seditious Treasonable and Unlicensed Books and Pamphlets and for Regulating of Printing and Printing Presses", essentially granted legal monopolies to printers who agreed to restrict the dissemination of political and religious ideas the state found unacceptable. Books and leaflets from unlicensed printers, including foreign imports, were completely outlawed.

As the book trade grew, printers and booksellers rose in economic clout, and the *Licensing Act* was superseded by the *Statute of Anne* (1710) which established the principle of "sole ownership" of a literary work. Initially this ownership, or *copyright*, rested with the author, but in order to be paid for the work the author had to assign the copyright to a publisher. The lump sum or

royalties the author earned from this sale helped support his upkeep while he produced his next work. In theory, an author could copy and sell the work himself, but because few authors had the capital necessary to purchase and operate their own printing presses, the *Statute* was clearly biased in favour of the bourgeois publishers.

With the Industrial Revolution, capitalism quickly established itself as the dominant socio-economic system in Europe, and with it came more rules and legislation designed to protect the profits of the established publishing houses. Foremost among these was the 1886 *Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works*, a treaty which harmonized the recognition of copyrights among national governments. Prior to its adoption, a book published, for instance, in London, was covered by copyright only in Britain, and could be reproduced and distributed with impunity by French and German publishers. Of greater importance to the actual *producers* of literary works was the fact that any author was theretofore free to translate and incorporate text from foreign works into his own; he did not need to seek prior permission from the author (or more likely, from the publisher, to which copyright was almost invariably assigned). In this way ideas flowed freely across national borders with the same ease they did from writer to writer in the ancient world, allowing for the rapid development and improvement of science, philosophy, and the arts.

Recognizing that maintaining this sort of freely reproducible public pool of works was important for the synthesis of new ideas, the drafters of the *Statute of Anne* and the *Berne Convention* tried to strike a balance between the short-term profit motives of publishers and the higher goal of advancing human

knowledge. They stipulated that copyright on any given work was in effect for a limited term, after which the work fell into the public domain and could be reprinted by anyone. The term specified by the *Statute* was fourteen years, renewable once if the author was still alive. The *Berne Convention* extended this to, at minimum, the lifetime of the author plus fifty years.

## The Mickey Mouse Preservation Act

In practice, however, publishers realized that some of the works they owned remained potentially profitable well after the expiry of the original copyright term, and lobbied their respective governments to extend copyright terms to ever greater lengths. For example, shortly before the copyrights on early Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and other cartoons were due to expire, Walt Disney Co. executives led an intense and highly successful lobbying campaign to the US government. Through extensive public propaganda, direct proselytizing to legislators in secret hearings, and that form of legalized bribery known as "campaign contributions", Disney and its allies in the Motion Picture Association of America were able to secure a twenty-year extension to US copyright [5].

No longer able to maintain the pretence that copyright exists simply to benefit authors (the retroactive extension affecting only works whose creators were long dead), lobbyists and legislators seeking extension upon extension resorted to outrageous claims such as that "lack of copyright protection actually restrains dissemination of the work, since publishers and other users cannot risk investing in the work unless assured of exclusive rights" [1, pp. 134–5; 2, pp. 117–18]. Of course, this claim is patently false in the majority of cases; witness the continued sales and profitability of classic public-domain



works from Dickens and Shakespeare all the way back to Homer and *Æsop*. The true issue is not the profitability of older works, but the right to concentrate that profit in the hands of a single publisher. The total sales of Mickey Mouse cartoons would be the same whether they were sold by one large company or a dozen different small ones. As the owner of the reproduction rights to the cartoons, however, Disney is strongly motivated to do whatever it can to preserve its income from its legal monopoly.

### Information under fire in the Digital Age

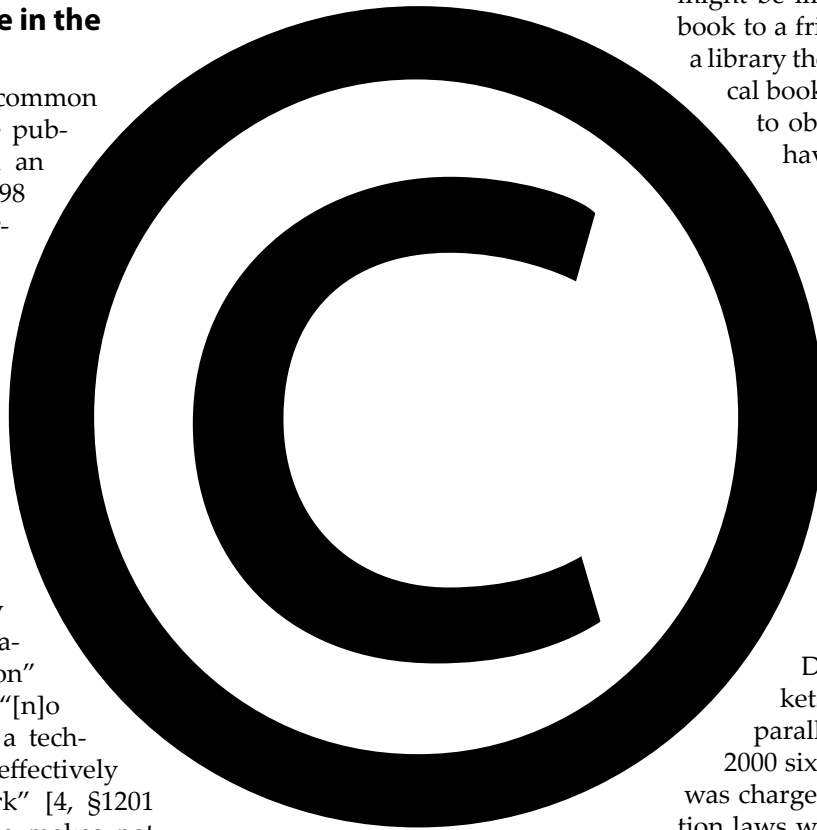
The freedom of the common people to access and use published materials suffered an even greater blow in 1998 with the passing in America of the *Digital Millennium Copyright Act*, or *DMCA*, most of the provisions of which were later adopted by the EU and 43 other countries as the *WIPO Copyright Treaty*. This radical new legislation essentially gives publishers of electronic media *carte blanche* to rewrite the law as they see fit. The key is the infamous “anti-circumvention” clause, which states that “[n]o person shall circumvent a technological measure that effectively controls access to a work” [4, §1201 ¶ (a); 9, §11]. This clause makes not only copying a book a crime, but even merely *reading* it or otherwise using it in any manner not approved by the publisher.

To recount one infamous example, in the late 1990s the software company Adobe Systems developed a computer file format for storing and distributing books electronically, along with a program which could access these files. Along with each “e-book” in Adobe’s format was stored a series of computer-readable rules specifying which actions were and were not authorized

uses—for example, there might be a rule against transferring the e-book to another computer, or a rule against using a speech synthesizer to read the e-book aloud. It is important to note that neither of these uses is illegal in and of itself; there is no law stating that someone may not lend a book to a friend, or read a book aloud in private. However, Adobe’s proprietary software for accessing these e-books would always abide by the rules encoded in the file, thus denying users the rights they would have enjoyed had the book

be restricted and exploited for profit. When someone buys a printed book, they’re free to keep it as long as they wish and read it as many times as they wish. An e-book, on the other hand, might have limits on reading it more than a certain number of times, or after a certain date; if you wish to continue to access it afterwards, you need to pay. A printed book can be bought from, sold to, or traded at a used bookstore. An e-book, however, might be licenced for use only on one device, making transfer impossible. For the same reason, it might be impossible to give a used e-book to a friend or check one out from a library the way you can with a physical book. Any time someone needs to obtain a book, he or she will have to pay the full price.

All of these restrictions could also be, and in many cases already are being, implemented for other types of electronic media. Most DVD players, for example, are specially programmed to refuse to play any DVD purchased outside its regional market. This helps movie publishers and sellers maximize revenue by preventing people from mail-ordering DVDs from cheaper markets. (In a case which grimly parallels that of Sklyarov, in 2000 sixteen-year-old Jon Johansen was charged under access circumvention laws when he published a simple computer program capable of playing DVDs from any region. Four years later, he was finally acquitted, but not without having accumulated nearly \$30000 in legal costs [6].) In an effort partly to prevent people from copying music to their computers and partly to lock users into certain commercially-produced media players, music publishers have recently begun releasing sabotaged CDs which can be played on a computer only with specially-licensed software. Those who do not have the necessary software must fork over the



been of the regular printed kind. When an independent programmer named Dmitry Sklyarov produced his own e-book-reading software which ignored the access restrictions, he was arrested by the FBI and charged with circumvention of the *DMCA*.

The benefit to the publishers of such a law may not be apparent at first, but consider the many freedoms people enjoy with printed books that with digital media can now

cash to buy it before being able to listen to the music.

### **Production for use or sabotage for profit?**

All these examples clearly show how, under capitalism, businesses use laws to manufacture scarcity of goods in the interests of turning a profit. Instead of allowing the public to freely reproduce and distribute venerable literary and artistic works that should belong to all of humanity, companies shackle them under restrictive copyright licenses, the contravention of which results in heavy fines and even prison sentences. Instead of distributing digital music and movies in standard, published formats which any device can understand, publishers and hardware manufacturers collude to engineer crippled discs which can be played only on certain proprietary systems, and prosecute anyone who builds a cheaper compatible player. Instead of innovation to improve existing media, businesses produce and promote digital books deliberately designed to deny readers the most basic of freedoms they enjoyed with the printed variety.

Faced with such evidence, how can anyone still believe the myth that capitalism works in the interest of the working class by providing us with useful consumer goods? With the advent of high-speed computer networks such as the Internet and inexpensive home computers which can store and copy digital media with the click of a mouse, for the first time in history the working people of this world are finding themselves with access to the means of production and mass distribution of information. Those who previously enjoyed exclusive rights to these means are now scrambling to re-establish their privileged position as their sole beneficiary. They will do this even if it means stopping and even reversing the course of technological innovation. They will do this even if it means using the threat of violence (criminal penalties) to deter those who would avail themselves of said innovation.

The fact of the matter, as has been demonstrated in this article, is that the law is and has always been designed by and for the possessing classes, not for those who must work to create or earn enough money to purchase the literary and artistic works copyright ostensibly “protects”. True, copyright works in part to ensure artists are compensated for their works, but as with all other types of labour, in the vast majority of cases this remuneration is simply a pittance intended to tide the artist over while they produce their next work. Even many famous, multiplatinum-selling rock stars don’t earn more than their country’s median household income [3]. The bulk of the money generated by writers and artists goes to the increasingly obsolescent and parasitic publishing and distribution companies; the artist who finds himself a millionaire is the rare exception, not the rule.

### **Copyright and socialism**

Before we return to the story of the *World Socialist Web Site*, we need to point out one further tactic that capitalist publishers use to justify copyright to the public. They claim that information is a kind of property—“intellectual property”—and that unauthorized copying of information is the same as stealing. However, this comparison is deliberately misleading. Stealing is when someone walks into a library, takes a book off the shelf, and leaves without checking it out. Copyright infringement is when someone walks into a library, photocopies a book for later reading at home, and then replaces the book on the shelf. In the first case, there is one less book in the library, and the public has been deprived of the ability to use it. In the second case, the book remains in the library, and other patrons can continue to read it. Unlike with physical property, ownership of so-called intellectual property is not exclusory; like the atmosphere we breathe, information can be owned and used concurrently by any number of people. Even the legislative and judicial systems have grudgingly

admitted to this, refusing to equate criminal copyright infringement with theft [7]. Nonetheless, publishers continue to propagandize to legislators and consumers that the unauthorized dissemination of information is akin to destructive crimes such as vandalism, armed robbery, and piracy on the high seas.

It is rather telling of the true motives and beliefs of left-wing organizations such as the WSWS, then, that they have no qualms about using the same misleading arguments and terminology respecting “intellectual property” as the capitalist class they purport to oppose. They nominally decry the artificial scarcity produced by capitalism’s laws while at the same time proudly espousing the property-mongering ideals of the monopolistic corporations these laws were designed to benefit. We in the World Socialist Movement believe that the purpose of political literature is not to turn a profit, but to change people’s ways of thinking about government, economics, and society. We want the widest possible audience for our ideas, and in fact encourage people to copy and spread our writings to the greatest extent possible. The WSWS’s characterization of its writings as “protected literary works”, and of those who republish it as thieves and pirates, suggests that they think of political literature in quite a different sense. As is typical of Trotskyist vanguardists, they consider themselves to have a monopoly on political ideas and that the working class cannot be trusted with them. Only their official party vanguard is authorized to dispense and interpret political writings; groups who republish their texts are seen as rival sects seeking to usurp their authority as the true leaders of the working class.

**I**n a true socialist society, however, there will be no need for leaders or owners. The means of production and distribution will be owned and controlled by the community at large. This includes not only factories and railways for the manufacture and

transportation of physical goods, but also instruments for the production and dissemination of information: printing presses, film studios, the computers that drive the Internet, and the television and radio airwaves themselves. Everyone will have free access to goods and services, and society will orient its patterns of production to meet these use needs, rather than for the purpose of turning a profit, which often entails producing artificial conditions of scarcity for certain goods. We have seen in this article how the system of copyright is one of the means capitalism employs to artificially restrict a supply of goods—information—that might otherwise be plentiful. Whereas we currently have the means to produce mass digital copies of a book, film, or music album instantly and at virtually no cost, under capitalism the technology to do so has been crippled or criminalized at the behest of publishers.

While some left-wing groups, like the WSWs, hypocritically support the notion that ideas should be owned and controlled, other less authoritarian organizations like the Free Software Foundation, the Creative Commons, and the Electronic Frontier Foundation lobby governments to modify copyright laws to make information more accessible to the general public, or propose new information licensing schemes which operate on top of the existing copyright framework. Such efforts have sometimes succeeded in eroding the power of publishers' monopolies, but they can never truly eliminate it. As long as capitalism is in place, governments will continue to institute and uphold laws to protect the profits of the publishers at the expense of withholding access to information from the working class. Only by replacing capitalism with a system of free access and common ownership will we be able to truly and finally liberate music, literature, and the arts for the benefit of all humanity.

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—TRISTAN MILLER

### A socialist world will be one...

- ...without classes.
  - ...without countries.
  - ...without governments.
  - ...without money.
  - ...without wages or employment.
  - ...without the need for war.
- 
- ...with the means of producing goods held democratically in the hands of all the people.
  - ...with production for use, not for profit.
  - ...with decisions on what and how to produce and how to develop made by each local community.
  - ...with sufficient food, clean water, health services, housing, and education for all the world's inhabitants.
  - ...with free access to all that society produces, based on one's personally determined needs.
  - ...with the maxim, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs".

## Contact us

Interested in learning more about socialism? Want to comment on something you've read in this issue? If so, feel free to contact our main office or your nearest regional contact volunteer.

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### WSM Companion Parties

The Socialist Party of Canada is just one member of a world-wide association of socialist parties known as the World Socialist Movement:

#### World Socialist Party of Australia.

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#### Socialist Party of Great Britain.

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#### World Socialist Party (New Zealand).

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# Bolshevik bullshit

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the “education for revolution” policy of the old SPC, Armstrong (after a spell as an MLA) in the reconstituted SPC in 1931 and Pritchard (after a spell with the CCF) in the World Socialist Party of the US.

Angus also claims that by the end of 1921 a majority of members of the SPC had been won over to the idea of forming a Communist Party in Canada on Bolshevik lines. Certainly, most members of the SPC of the time were carried away (mistakenly, if understandably, in our view today) by the coming to power of the Bolsheviks in Russia, but were sufficiently clear-headed to reject, when it came to a vote, accepting the 21 conditions for affiliation to the Communist International. They took the view that while Bolshevism was appropriate for Russian conditions, it wasn't for a developed capitalist country like Canada where a policy of “education for revolution” remained valid. The formation of the Communist Party—or Workers Party, as it was called—did contribute to the demise of the old SPC in 1925. But in 1931 a number of former SPC members and others reconstituted it as the present SPC, and without any

illusions about Bolshevism in Russia, not just in Canada.

The real lesson of the Winnipeg General Strike, which latter-day romantic Bolsheviks like Angus have yet to learn, was well stated by Pritchard in an article on the strike's 50th anniversary in 1969:

Strikes may result in changes and even so-called improvements but this is but superficial. This will continue until the workers in sufficient numbers free themselves from the concepts of this society, from ideas that bind them to the notion that the present is the only possible social system, and recognize that under this system “the more things change the more they remain the same”; that even now in their struggles over wages and conditions, like the character in Alice in Wonderland they have to keep running in order to stay in the same place. But the Winnipeg Strike will go down in history as a magnificent example of working class solidarity and courage.” (*Western Socialist*, No 3, 1969).

—ADAM BUICK

# Book review

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—TRISTAN MILLER

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# Death at Dieppe

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access to raw materials, capturing markets to sell products, or taking command of strategic positions. (Bush and his partners in crime didn't want Hussein selling oil to their prospective commercial rivals, China and the European Common Market.)

Whether or not the 900 Canadians were sent to their deaths so that the war effort could continue in North Africa is a question that can probably never be satisfactorily answered. One question that can be answered, however, is how to prevent future war deaths from

happening. By organizing, consciously and politically, for the capture of political power so that capitalism may be overthrown and socialism established, then, and only then, will we have a world free from war and all its many attendant evils. A world free from poverty, unemployment, pollution, racism, crime, famine, unnecessary disease, planned obsolescence, environmental destruction, regimentation (which pervades all areas of our lives, particularly culture), and the dehumanization of people leading to a multitude of psy-

chological problems. The list is endless.

In a socialist world, all will stand equal in relation to the tools of production and the Earth's natural resources, all of which will be democratically controlled by the whole community, in the interests of the whole community. In such a world, all will cherish all. Love of humanity will reign supreme.

Who wouldn't want such a world? So why not organize to speedily give it birth?

—STEVE SHANNON