

CHAPTER 15

SOCIALISM AND ECOLOGY

It seems to me that today there are three general socioeconomic trends giving rise to the possibility of a red green politics. The first is a global economy that is undergoing a process of “accumulation through crisis” that is impoverishing tens of millions of people, destroying communities, degrading hundreds of thousands of bioregions, and exacerbating a global ecological crisis. Crisis-ridden and crisis-driven capitalist accumulation is wrecking the conditions of production, and creating more poverty, unemployment, inequality, and economic insecurity and marginalization, on the one hand, and (often fatally) harming human health, urban and rural communities, and ecological systems, on the other. The second trend is the rise of environmental, urban, labor, peasant, and other social movements to defend the conditions of production and the conditions of life for workers and peasants, women, communities, and the environment. These movements are divided in a thousand ways, running ideologically from religious fundamentalism and reactionary nationalism to old-style Marxist–Leninist–Maoist armed struggle to a broad range of “new social movements.” The third premise is that solutions to the ecological crisis presuppose solutions to the economic crisis (and the problem of global capital generally) and vice versa. Red green politics is premised on the belief that both sets of solutions presuppose some kind of ecological socialism and socialist ecology.¹

Ecological socialism, in turn, presupposes the development of a specifically global class politics, first, because of growing economic oppression and exploitation, and second, because ecological degradation is increasingly a class issue (but rarely *only* a class issue). This is indicated, for example, by the growth of movements for environmental (and economic and social) justice in the North and the “environmentalism of the poor” in the South, where dominant groups owe an “ecological debt” to oppressed minorities and the third world as a whole, respectively (because the prosperity of dominant groups in the North is in some part based on the ecological damage done to minorities in the North and South). It is also indicated by the fact that present-day labor, community, and environmental struggles seek to make the workplace a healthier and safer place for both workers

and communities, hence fight for more influence or control of technology, work relations, and the conditions of work generally. Labor, community, and environmental groups challenge in various ways (implicitly if not explicitly) criteria of production based on market values and profit. Also, human laborpower, community organization, and the environment are all "conditions of production," hence politicized and regulated in various ways by the state.

In the minds of most labor, community, and environmental leaders, however, socialism (of any type) and ecology remain contradictions in terms. Socialists are still seen as "productivist," Greens as "antiproductivist." Most socialists still believe that ecology is merely an ideology of austerity or is simply a system for ensuring amenities for the middle and upper middle classes. Most Greens think that socialism is an ideology promoting growth without limit or end. The effect: business and other groups use the false choices between "jobs versus environment," "the capitalization of land and economic growth versus community values," and "economic development versus sustainable society" as a handy scheme to divide and conquer.

Historically, Western socialists have sought two remedies for the condition of labor. The first is a more equitable distribution of wealth and income. The second is higher levels of productivity and production (which sometimes have been seen as a condition of more equality). Greater productivity is needed to create more free or leisure time; greater production is required to expand the economic pie to mute struggles over the share of the pie appropriated by different classes. These remedies roughly approximate the programs of the old socialist, social democratic, and labor parties as they functioned through the 1970s (and in some countries through the 1980s).

There are at least two major problems with this way of thinking. One is that in a capitalist society (no matter how "reformed") an equitable distribution of wealth and income is almost certain to harm economic incentives and also to promote political unrest from the right, thus impairing productivity and production. The second is that expanding productivity and production usually presuppose a higher (not a lower) level of exploitation of labor, which itself is premised on more (not less) economic inequality.

For their part, Greens, too, have two general remedies for the degraded condition of nature. The first is the same as that promoted by labor and old-style socialism: a more suitable distribution of wealth and income such that poverty no longer leads producers to degrade nature out of material necessity. Even in the North, environmentalists have shown increasing sensitivity to equity concerns because the impact of environmental reform typically has been regressive: workplace pollution and toxic waste contamination disproportionately affect minorities and lower income strata. The second remedy is the opposite of that of labor and socialists: slow growth, no growth, or sustainable growth (there are different versions). Slow or zero growth of production scales down the use of nature as tap and sink for human production, thus (it is thought) reducing both the depletion and the exhaustion of resources and pollution of all kinds.

Since a significantly more equal distribution of wealth and income would harm economic incentives, it would seem that increased equity would lower production and slow down the economic growth rate. Seen this way, the green position is fully coherent. The problem is that in a capitalist economy, a low- or no-growth policy would create an economic crisis, which, in turn, would lead to more ecological degradation as business scrambled to reduce costs in various ways. An alliance between labor (and socialists) and Greens around the redistribution of wealth and income might be possible. But in capitalist economy such a redistribution would harm productivity and production and generate economic crisis, which would adversely affect both labor (and socialists) and Greens.

Clearly, no way exists to make an alliance between labor (and socialists) and Greens, *given the way the whole problem is usually framed*. (The main exceptions are labor-community alliances against workplace and community pollution.) For Greens, socialists are part of the problem, not the solution; for labor and socialists, Greens are part of the problem, not the solution. The former associate Greens with cutbacks and austerity; the latter identify labor and socialists with higher rates of economic growth, hence ecological unsustainability. The only way out of this trap is to redefine productivism: a society can achieve higher levels of productivity via more efficient reuse, recycling, and so on, of materials; via reducing energy use and the commute to work within reformed green cities; via preventing the "pesticide treadmill" by using organic agriculture; and so on, including and especially decommodifying labor and land. *Ecological* socialist productivism and ecological rationality are thus not mutually incompatible.

"Real socialism" in theory and practice has been declared by nonsocialists and many ex-socialists to be "dead on arrival." In theory, post-Marxist theorists of radical democracy are completing what they think is the final autopsy of socialism. In practice, in the North, socialism has been banalized into a species of welfare capitalism. In Eastern Europe, the moment for democratic socialism seems to have been missed almost 30 years ago and socialism has been overthrown. In the South, most socialist countries are introducing market incentives, reforming their tax structures, and taking other measures that they hope will enable them to find their niches in the world market. Everywhere market economy and liberal democratic ideas on the right, and radical democratic ideas on the left, seem to be defeating socialism and socialist ideas.

Meanwhile, a powerful new force in world politics has appeared, an ecology or green movement, that puts the earth first and makes the preservation of the ecological integrity of the planet the primary issue. The simultaneous rise of the free market and the Greens, together with the decline of socialism, suggests that capitalism has an ally in its war against socialism. This turns out to be the case, in fact. Most, if not all, Greens dismiss socialism as irrelevant. Some Greens attack socialism as dangerous. They are especially quick to condemn those whom they accuse of trying to appropriate ecology for Marxism.² The famous green slogan, "Neither left nor right, but out front," speaks for itself.³

But most Greens are not friends of capitalism, either, as the green slogan

makes clear. The question then arises, Who or what are the Greens allied with? The crude answer is “the small farmers and independent business,” that is, those who used to be called the “peasantry” and “petty bourgeoisie”; “liveable cities” visionaries and planners; “small is beautiful” technocrats; and artisans, cooperatives, and others engaged in ecologically friendly production. In the South, Greens typically support decentralized production organized within village communal politics; in the North, Greens are identified with municipal and local politics of all types.

By way of contrast, mainstream environmentalists might be called “fictitious Greens.”⁴ These environmentalists support environmental regulations consistent with profitability and the expansion of global capitalism, for example, resource conservation for long-run profitability and profit-oriented regulation or abolition of pollution. They are typically allied with national and international interests. In the United States, they are environmental reformers, lobbyists, lawyers, and others associated with most of the organizations making up the famous “Group of Ten.”

As for ecology, everywhere it is at least tinged with populism, a politics of resentment against not only big corporations and the national state and central planning but also against mainstream environmentalism.

Ecology (in the present usage) is thus associated with “localism,” which typically has been opposed to the centralizing powers of capitalism. If we put two and two together, we can conclude that ecology and localism in all of their rich varieties have combined to oppose both capitalism and socialism. Localism uses the medium of ecology and ecology uses the vehicle of localism. They are both the content and context of one another. Decentralism is an expression of a certain type of social relationship of production historically associated with self-earned property and small-scale enterprise. Ecology is an expression of a certain type of relationship between human beings and nature—a relationship that stresses biodiversity, the integrity of local and regional ecosystems, and the like. Together, ecology and localism constitute the most visible political and economic critique of capitalism (and traditional state socialism) today.

Besides the fact that both ecology and localism oppose global capital and the national state, there are two main reasons why they appear to be natural allies. First, ecology stresses the site-specificity of the interchange between human material activity and nature, hence opposes both the abstract valuation of nature made by capital and the idea of central planning of production, as well as centralist approaches to global issues generally.⁵ The concepts of site-specificity of ecology, local subsistence or semiautarkic economy, communal self-help principles, and direct forms of democracy all seem to be highly congruent.

Second, the socialist concept of the “masses” has been deconstructed and replaced by a new “politics of identity” and “politics of place,” in which cultural and ecological factors, respectively, are given the place of honor. The idea of the specificity of cultural identities seems to meld easily with the site-specificity of ecology in the context of a concept of social labor defined in ecogeographic terms. The

most dramatic examples today are the struggles of indigenous peoples to keep both their cultures and subsistence-type societies intact. In this case, the struggle to save local cultures and local ecosystems turns out to be two different sides of the same fight.

For their part (as noted above), most of the traditional Left, as well as the unions, remain focused on enhanced productivity, growth, and international competitiveness, that is, on jobs and wages, or more wage labor—not to abolish exploitation but (if anything) to be exploited less. This part of the Left does not want to be caught any more defending policies that can be identified with “economic austerity” or policies that labor leaders and others think would endanger past economic gains won by the working class. (Union and worker struggles for healthy and safe conditions inside and outside of the workplace obviously connect in positive ways with broader ecological struggles.) Most of those who oppose more growth and development are mainstream environmentalists from the urban middle classes who have the consumer goods that they want and also have the time and knowledge to oppose ecologically dangerous policies and practices. It would appear, therefore, that any effort to find a place for the working class in this equation, that is, any attempt to marry labor (and socialism) and ecology, is doomed from the start.

Yet, left green politics of different types has made an appearance in all of the major countries of the world. One bold initiative in the “developed” world is New Zealand’s Alliance, organized in 1991, uniting the Greens, the movement for Maori self-determination, the New Labour Party, and other small parties. In the 1980s, Germany’s Green Party was perhaps the most influential left green grouping in the world. In general, Western European countries have a wide variety of left green and green left tendencies. Holland’s Green Left Party and Norway’s Green Socialist Party, for example, are conscious attempts to fuse red green political tendencies via the parliamentary route. France’s Red Green Alternative and the Great Britain’s Red-Green Network are minuscule groupings which, however, have generated influential theoretical and practical ideas. One might also mention Canada’s New Democratic Party’s green caucuses, and the movements in the United States to reduce and eliminate toxics and fight for environmental justice; these latter are deeply influenced by the work of Barry Commoner, who calls for source reduction, the “social governance of technology,” and economic planning based on a “deep scientific understanding of nature.” In the North, there are also many left green/green left solidarity groups, as well as a greening of Labor, Socialist, and (ex-)Communist Parties, even if reluctantly and hesitatingly. In the South, there are thousands of organizations, electoral and otherwise, that have a green left perspective; both rural and urban movements (e.g., Brazil’s Landless Rural Workers Movement and Mexico’s Zapatistas) raise ecological along with socio-economic and political issues. In the big subimperialist countries of the South (e.g., Brazil, Mexico, India) where the contradictions of combined and uneven development are most acute, there are new ecological movements that engage many in the traditional working class and also new “peasant” movements con-

cerned with ecological issues. And we should not forget the Nicaraguan and Cuban experiments, which combined policies aimed at deep environmental reforms with populism and traditional state socialism, respectively.⁶

There are good reasons to believe that these and other ecosocialist tendencies, however tentative and experimental, are no flash in the pan, and that they permit us to discuss ecology and socialism as if they are *not* a contradiction in terms (this is obviously especially true of radical *urban* ecology movements). Or, to put the point differently, there are good reasons to believe that the contradictions of world capitalism themselves have created the conditions for an ecological socialist tendency. These reasons can be collected under two general headings. The first pertains to the causes and effects of the world social and ecological crisis from the mid-1970s to the present. The second pertains to the nature of the key ecological issues, most of which are national and international, as well as local, in scope.

First, the vitality of Western capitalism since World War II has in large part been based on the massive externalization of social and ecological costs of production. Since the slowdown of world economic growth in the mid-1970s, the concerns of both socialism and ecology have become more pressing than ever before in history. "Accumulation of capital through crisis" during the past two decades of slow growth in the West has produced even more devastating effects, not only on wealth and income distribution, norms of social justice, treatment of minorities, and so on, but also on the integrity of community and the environment. An "accelerated imbalance of (humanized) nature" is a phrase that neatly sums this up. Socially, there has been more wrenching poverty and violence, and rising misery in all parts of the world, especially the South; and, environmentally, the toxification of whole regions, the production of drought, the thinning of the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, the assault on biodiversity, rainforests, and wildlife. The issues of socioeconomic and ecological justice have surfaced as in no other period in history; in fact, it is increasingly clear that they are two sides of the same historical process.

Given the relatively slow rate of growth of worldwide market demand since the mid-1970s, capitalist enterprises have been less able to defend or restore profits by expanding their markets and selling more commodities in booming markets. Instead, big and small capitals alike have attempted to rescue themselves from a deepening crisis mainly by expanding exports and cutting costs, by raising the rate of exploitation of labor, by depleting and exhausting resources, and by subverting the integrity of local community.

This "socioeconomic restructuring" has a two-sided effect. Cost-cutting has led many, if not most, capitals to externalize more social and environmental costs, or to pay less attention to the global environment, pollution, depletion of resources, worker health and safety, and product safety (meanwhile, increasing efficiency in energy and raw material use in the factories). The modern ecological crisis is thus aggravated and deepened as a result of the way that capitalism has reorganized itself to get through its latest economic crisis.

In addition, new and deeper inequalities in the distribution of wealth and income are the result of a worldwide increase in the rate of exploitation of labor. In the United States during the 1980s and early 1990s, for example, property income increased three times as fast as average wage income, which has been stagnant for 20 years. Higher rates of exploitation have also depended upon the ability to abuse undocumented workers and set back labor unions, social democratic parties, and struggles for social justice generally, especially in the South. It is no accident that in those parts of the world where ecological degradation is greatest—Central America, for example—there is greater poverty and heightened class struggle. The feminization of poverty is also a crucial part of this trend of ecological destruction. The working class, oppressed minorities, women, and the rural and urban poor worldwide are the groups who suffer most from both economic and ecological exploitation. The burdens of “economic adjustments” and ecological destruction alike fall disproportionately on these groups.

Crisis-ridden and crisis-dependent capitalism has forced the traditional issues of socialism and the relatively new issues (“new” in terms of public awareness) of ecology to the top of the political agenda. Capitalism itself turns out to be a kind of marriage broker between socialism and ecology, or to be more cautious, if there is not yet a prospect for marriage, there are at least openings for an engagement.

The second point is that most ecological problems worldwide cannot be adequately addressed at the local (ecological/geographical) level. One reason pertains to the green concept of “site-specificity,” which means that in any given area or region a wide diversity of conditions exists, hence that an ecologically rational unit of production is necessarily small in scale; that is, site-specificity is (wrongly) equated with the “local.” But the former does not refer only or mainly to the scale of operations involved in productive activity, but also (or rather) to the necessary relationship between this activity and its necessary *conditions*, which in terms of scale may be regional, national, or even global in scope. The reproduction of fisheries, for example, presupposes that the fishing industry is able to deal with the consequences of its fishing activity for its own necessary conditions (e.g., a clean ocean, healthy fisheries elsewhere, etc.). These conditions can not be ignored, nor can the costs be externalized, without harming the reproductive capacity of the activity in question. Even (or especially) when the degradation of local ecological systems has local solutions, some planning mechanism is needed to integrate the local into the “general” or “total.” Concerning agriculture, Richard Levins writes that “it may seem that large-scale production is itself inimical to ecological sensitivity to local conditions and to the imperative of diversity. But this is a misconception. The unit of planning (e.g., of pest control) must be large enough to allow precisely for the integration of diversity of conditions, while the unit of production will be much smaller and reflect the needs for the mosaic, alley, and polyculture patterns.”⁷

Most ecological problems, as well as the socioeconomic problems that are both cause and effect of the ecological problems, cannot be solved at the local

level *alone*. Regional, national, and international planning is *also* necessary. The heart of ecology, after all, is the *interdependence* of specific sites and problems and the need to situate local responses in regional, national, and international contexts, that is, to sublimate the local and the central into new democratic socioeconomic and political forms.

National and international priorities are needed to deal with the problem of energy supplies and supplies of nonrenewal resources in general, not just for the present generation but especially for future generations. The availability of other natural resources, for example, water, is mainly a regional issue, but in many parts of the globe it is a national or an international issue. The same is true of many forests. Or take the problem of soil depletion, which seems to be local or site-specific. Insofar as there are problems of soil quantity and quality, or water quantity or quality, in big food exporting countries, for example, the United States, food importing countries are also affected. Further, industrial and agricultural pollution of all kinds spills over local, regional, and national boundaries. Ocean pollution, acid rain, ozone depletion, and global warming are obvious examples.

Localism also raises the danger that people will ground their resistance to neoliberalism and globalism in a sense of place alone—not also in the subjectivity of labor, women, peasant cultures, oppressed minorities, and so on.⁸

There is, finally, the problem of equity or distribution. Resource endowments vary widely from place to place, necessitating some central authority to redistribute wealth and income from rich to poor districts. Also, “a valid argument for channeling resources to certain segments of the population and to have a tight control over the resource flow is the high degree of inequality that usually exists in Third World countries [and between these countries and the North—]. O’C.]”⁹

If we broaden the concept of ecology to include urban environments, problems of urban transport and congestion, high rents and housing, and drugs (seemingly local issues amenable to local solutions) turn out to be global issues pertaining to financial speculation, and the ways that mortgage markets work and that money capital is allocated worldwide; the loss of foreign markets for “legal” raw materials and foodstuffs in drug-producing countries; and the absence of regional, national, and international planning of infrastructures oriented to the direct needs of the people.

If we broaden the concept of ecology even more to include the relationship between human health and well-being and environmental factors, given the increased mobility of labor nationally and internationally, and greater emigration and immigration, and an explosion of foreign trade and investment, we are also talking about problems with only or mainly national and international solutions.

Finally, if we address the question of technology and its transfer, and the relationship between new technologies and local, regional, and global ecologies, given that the dominant technology and its transfer are more or less monopolized by international corporations and nation states, we have another national and international issue.

In sum, we have good reasons to believe that both the causes and the consequences of, and also the solutions to, most ecological problems are national and international (i.e., pertain to national economies and the global economy). Hence, that far from being incompatible, socialism and ecology might make a good fit. Socialism needs ecology because the latter stresses site-specificity and reciprocity, as well as the central importance of the material interchanges within nature and between society and nature. Ecology needs socialism because the latter stresses democratic planning and the key role of the social interchanges between human beings. By contrast, popular organizations or movements confined to the community, municipality, or village cannot by themselves deal effectively with most of both the economic and ecological aspects of the general destructiveness of global capitalism, and still less with the destructive dialectic between economic and ecological crisis.

If we assume that ecology and socialism presuppose one another, the logical question is, Why haven't they gotten together before now? Why is Marxism especially regarded as unfriendly to ecology and vice versa? To put the question another way, Where did socialism go wrong, ecologically speaking?

The standard and (in my opinion) correct view is that socialism defined itself as a movement that would complete the historical tasks of fulfilling the promises of capitalism. This meant two things: first, socialism would put real social and political content into the formal claims of capitalism concerning equality, liberty, and fraternity. Second, socialism would realize the promise of material abundance that crisis-ridden capitalism was incapable of doing. The first pertains to the ethical and political meanings of socialism, the second, to the economic meaning.

It has been clear for a long time to almost everyone that this construction of socialism failed on both counts. First, instead of an ethical political society, in which the state is subordinated to civil society, we have the party bureaucratic state—and thus one justification for the post-Marxist attempt to reconcile social justice demands with liberalism.

Second, and related to the first point, in place of material abundance, we have the economic crisis of socialism—thus the post-Marxist attempt to reconcile not only social justice demands and liberalism but also both of these with markets and market incentives.

However, putting the focus on these obvious failures obscures two other issues that have moved into the center of political debates in the past decade or two. The first is that the ethical and political construction of socialism borrowed from bourgeois society ruled out any ethical or political practice that is not more or less thoroughly human-centered, as well as downplayed or ignored reciprocity and "discursive truth." The second is that the economic concept of abundance borrowed (with some modifications, of course) from capitalism ruled out any material practice that did not advance the productive forces, even when these practices were blind to nature's economy. Stalin's plan to green Siberia, which fortunately was never implemented, is perhaps the most grotesque example.

These two issues, or failures, one pertaining to politics and ethics, the other to the relationship between human economy and nature's economy, are connected to the failure of historical materialism itself. Hence they need to be addressed in methodological as well as theoretical and practical terms (see Chapter 1).

Historical materialism is flawed in two big ways. Marx tended to abstract his discussions of social labor, that is, the divisions of labor, from both culture and nature. A rich, developed concept of social labor that includes both society's culture and nature's economy cannot be found in Marx or traditional historical materialism.

The first flaw is that the traditional conception of the productive forces ignores or plays down the fact that these forces are *social* in nature, and include the mode of cooperation, which is deeply inscribed by particular cultural norms and values.

The second flaw is that the traditional conception of the productive forces also plays down or ignores the fact that these forces are *natural* as well as social in character.

It is worth recalling that Engels himself called Marxism the "materialist conception of history," where "history" is the noun and "materialist" is the modifier. Marxists know the expression "in material life social relations between people are produced and reproduced" by heart, but they know another important expression much less well: "in social life the material relations between people and nature are produced and reproduced." Marxists are very familiar with the "labor process" in which human beings are active agents, and much less familiar with the "waiting process" or "tending process" characteristic of agriculture, forestry, and other nature-based activities in which human beings are more passive partners and, more generally, where both parties are "active" in complex, interactive ways.

Marx constantly hammered away on the theme that the material activity of human beings is two-sided, that is, a social relationship as well as a material relationship; in other words, that capitalist production produced and reproduced a specific mode of exploitation and a particular class structure as well as the material basis of society. But in his determination to show that material life is also social life, Marx tended to play down the opposite and equally important fact that social life is also material life. To put the same point differently, in the formulation "material life determines consciousness," Marx stressed the idea that since material life is socially organized, the social relationships of production determine consciousness. He muted the equally true fact that since material life is also the interchange between human beings and nature, these material or natural relationships also determine consciousness. These points have been made in weak and strong ways by a number of people, although they have never been integrated and developed into a revised version of the materialist conception of history.

It has also been suggested *why* Marx played up history (albeit to the exclusion of culture) and played down nature. The reason is that the problem facing Marx in his time was to show that capitalist property relationships were historical,

not natural. But so intent was Marx to criticize those who naturalized, hence reified, capitalist production relationships, competition, the world market, and the like that he failed to emphasize sufficiently the fact that the development of human-made forms of “second nature” does not make nature any less natural. This was the price he paid for inverting Feuerbach’s passive materialism and Hegel’s active idealism into his own brand of active materialism. As Kate Soper has written, “The fact is that in its zeal to escape the charge of biological reductionism, Marxism has tended to fall prey to an antiethical form of reductionism, which in arguing the dominance of social over natural factors literally spirits the biological out of existence altogether.”¹⁰ Soper then calls for a “social biology.” We can equally call for a “social chemistry,” “social hydrology,” and so on, that is, a “social ecology,” which for socialists means “socialist ecology.”

Greens are forcing reds to pay close attention to the material interchanges between people and nature and to the general issue of biological exploitation, including the biological exploitation of labor, and also to adopt an ecological sensibility. Some reds have been trying to teach Greens to pay closer attention to capitalist production relationships, competition, the world market, and so on—to sensitize Greens to the exploitation of labor and the themes of economic crisis and social labor. And feminists have been teaching both Greens and reds to pay attention to the sphere of reproduction and women’s labor generally.

What does a green socialism mean politically? Green consciousness would have us put “earth first,” which can mean anything you want it to mean politically. As mentioned earlier, what most Greens mean in practice most of the time is the politics of localism. By contrast, pure red theory and practice historically have privileged the “central.”

To sublimate socialism and ecology does not mean in the first instance defining a new category that contains elements of both socialism and ecology but that is, in fact, neither. What needs to be sublated politically is localism (or decentralism) and centralism, that is, self-determination and the overall planning, coordination, and control of production. To circle back to the main theme, localism per se won’t work politically and centralism has self-destructed. To abolish the state will not work; to rely on the liberal democratic state in which “democracy” has merely a procedural or formal meaning will not work, either. In my view, the only political form that might work, that might be eminently suited to both ecological problems of site-specificity and global issues, is a democratic state—a state in which the administration of the division of social labor is democratically organized.¹¹

Finally, the only *ecological* form that might work is a sublation of two kinds of ecology, the “social biology” of the coastal plain, the plateau, the local hydrological cycle, and the like, and the energy economics, the regional and international “social climatology,” and so on, of the globe—that is, in general, the sublation of nature’s economy defined in local, regional, and international terms. To put the conclusion somewhat differently, we need “socialism” *at least* to make the social relations of production transparent, to end the rule of the market and

commodity fetishism, and to end the exploitation of human beings by other human beings; we need “ecology” *at least* to make the social productive forces transparent, to end the degradation and destruction of the earth.

NOTES

1. Ecological socialism means, generally, an ecologically rational and sensitive society based on democratic control of the means and objects of production, information, and so on, and characterized by a high degree of socioeconomic equality, and peace and social justice, where land and labor are decommodified and exchange value is subsumed under use value. “Socialist ecology” means (again roughly) a dialectical ecological science and sociopolitical practice that successfully sublates the local and the central, the spontaneous and the planned, and the like—in other words, the premises of traditional anarchism and traditional socialism.
2. This is a crude simplification of green thought and politics, which vary from country to country, and which are also undergoing internal changes. In the United States, for example, where Marxism historically has been hostile to ecology, “left green” is associated with anarchism or libertarian socialism.
3. This slogan was coined by a conservative cofounder of the German Greens and was popularized in the United States by the antisocialist “New Age” Greens, F. Capra and C. Spretnak. Needless to say, it was never accepted by left Greens of any variety.
4. “Mainstream environmentalists” is used to identify those who are trying to save capitalism from its ecologically self-destructive tendencies. Many individuals who call themselves “environmentalists” are alienated by, and hostile to, global capitalism, and also do not necessarily identify with the “local” (see below).
5. Martin O’Connor writes, “One of the striking ambivalencies of many writers on ‘environmental’ issues is their tendency to make recourse to authoritarian solutions, e.g., based on ethical elitism. An example is the uneasy posturings found in the collection by Herman Daly in 1973 on *Steady-State Economics*.”
6. “Social movements inscribed in the environmental perspective of development in Third World countries incorporate . . . a concept of environment that is much richer and more complex than that manifested by conservationist politics and ecological movements of the core countries. . . . The claims of environmental movements, even when incorporating the right to democratic access to resources and conditions for ecological equilibrium for a sustained development, are not guided by an ecological rationality. Environmentalism does not pretend to re-establish the ‘natural’ conditions of the human species’ insertion in nature, but rather to incorporate ecological and natural conditions into the conjuncture of social conditions that determine human development, and that of each community, to satisfy culturally defined needs and demands” (Enrique Leff, “The Environmental Movement in Mexico and Latin America,” *Ecologia: Politica/Cultura*, 2, 6, November 1988, translated by Margaret Villanueva).
7. Richard Levins, “The Struggle for Ecological Agriculture in Cuba,” *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, 5, October 1990.
8. For example: “The only political vision that offers any hope of salvation is one based

on an understanding of, a rootedness in, a deep commitment to, and a resacrilization of, *place*. Here is where any strategy of resistance to the industrial monolith and its merchants of death must begin; here is where any program of restoration and revitalization must be grounded” (Kirkpatrick Sale, “What Columbus Discovered,” *The Nation*, 22 October 1990, p. 446).

9. Jan Lundquist, “Right Food, Right Way, and Right People,” a revised version of a paper presented at a study group, “Famine Research and Food Production Systems,” Freiburg University, 10–14 November, 1989.
10. Quoted by Ken Post, “In Defense of Materialistic History,” *Socialism in the World*, 74–75, 1989, p. 67.
11. I realize that the idea of a “democratic state” seems to be a contradiction in terms, or at least immediately raises difficult questions about the desirability of the separation of powers, the problem of scale inherent in any coherent description of substantive democracy, and also the question of how to organize—much less plan—a nationally and internationally regulated division of social labor without a universal equivalent for measuring costs and productivity (however “costs” and “productivity” are defined) (courtesy of John Ely). On the other hand, we presently live under a bureaucratic democracy, so why cannot we have a democratic bureaucracy?