

## Remembering the future

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### ABSTRACT

There was a period, from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, when a section of Western educationists, wider than was usual, paid at least some attention to radical discourse and the requirements of struggling for alternatives to capitalist education. This period of 'radicalism' passed quickly as, Delacroix-like, 'socialists' for the season retreated into more congenial intellectual frameworks and academic rituals. Within educational theory the many facets of the paradigm of relative autonomy were launched and socialism as an educational vision of the future began to fade. And the fading has continued. This roughly, is the current situation so far as socialist thinking in education is concerned. In this essay I want to express my own assessment of this retreat from socialism, and I want to reflect on the socialist significance of remembering the future - in Milan Kundera's (1983: 3) words, "man's struggle against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting".

### Introduction

On May 8, 1848, Eugene Delacroix - aristocrat by instinct, high bourgeois by education, sentimental revolutionary by romantic inclination - confided to a friend his loss of all radical illusions: "I have buried the man I used to be, along with his hopes and his dreams of the future, and now I walk quite calmly past his grave as if it were that of a stranger". A few weeks before Marx and Engels had penned their revolutionary hopes for the future. They concluded that "in place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all". For so-called post-marxists, Delacroix's letter undoubtedly speaks more directly to the politics of our time than does the manifesto of Marx and Engels. What can be said in the other direction?

There was a period, from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, when a section of Western educationists, wider than was usual, paid at least some attention to radical discourse and the requirements of struggling for alternatives to capitalist education. This period of 'radicalism' passed quickly as, Delacroix-like, 'socialists' for the season retreated into more congenial intellectual frameworks and academic rituals. Within educational theory the many facets of the paradigm of relative autonomy were launched and socialism as an educational vision of the future began to fade. And the fading has continued.

This roughly, is the current situation so far as socialist thinking in education is concerned. In this essay I want to express my own assessment of this retreat from socialism, and I want to reflect on the socialist significance of remembering the future - in Milan Kundera's (1983: 3) words, "man's struggle against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting".

The conflation of socialism with official communism and official social democracy over much of this century has meant that the resources of socialism have not coped well in the face of the recent capitalist onslaught. At the very least these resources have steadily eroded. We seem now to stare at ruins. We are told by posties not simply that the centre cannot hold but, much more disturbingly, that there is no centre to hold in the first place. Academic colleagues of mine whose status, security, and social well-being are well secured, are among the first to discourse about discourse, even as, to take just one index of our world, the gap between rich and poor in New Zealand currently continues to increase more rapidly than in almost any other advanced capitalist society.

## Memory against forgetting

A few months before his death on September 26, 1940, Walter Benjamin described the ruins of history in the following terms:

A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But the storm is blowing from Paradise: it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress (1970: 259-60).

Half a century on, are we capable of seeing anything more than an endless chain of events which the ruling classes are determined to call progress? For much of capitalism's history we have been presented with images of modernity which fail to register the dark perceptions of the angel and these images have, on occasions, come from ostensibly socialist sources. In the 1890s, for instance, Bernstein concluded that capitalism was moving beyond the old fashioned class struggle. This he understood as the evolution to socialism and it was to be nurtured by the enlightened and liberal middle classes. In the 1950s it became fashionable among social scientists to announce the end of ideology. According to this assessment we were about to enter a post-industrial civilization based on consumption, service and an end to class conflict. Since the 1980s new voices have announced the arrival of new classes and new forms of flexible production. Flexible production in the advanced capitalist countries, as long as the dirty work is done on assembly lines elsewhere; devolution and deregulation as long as the capitalist state loses none of its power; talk of democracy and worker participation as long as real decision-making power is contained within the capitalist class.

Walter Benjamin, by contrast, was more impressed with what is essential, with what is old and destructive about capitalism rather than with what is new being treated as an anticipation of the end of capitalism or as a transition to a benign regime. This is not to deny the revolutionary thrust of capitalism which has raised human development to unprecedented levels of achievement. But perceptions of history which stare wide-eyed at each new technological advance, thinking that community and solidarity will be found in interstices of cyberspace, but which, at the same time, are blind to the exploitation of working people and to rapacious accumulation are naive. In relation to the problem and necessity of socialist pedagogy Benjamin replied: "... nothing has corrupted the German working class so much as the notion that it was moving with the current. It regarded technological developments as the fall of the stream with which it thought it was moving" (1970: 260). Among others, the Futurists, with their mad love of machines, war and fascism, showed that technological determinism is not a path to socialism.

The fall of the stream in capitalist society is determined by the patterns of accumulation. From a working class point of view the only answer to this system is for the great mass of people instead to determine democratically the requirements of production and distribution. But in New Zealand, to cite a single case, this is not how the labour movement and social democracy have seen it, and

the price paid for moving with the fall of the ruling class stream has, during the past decade specifically, been momentous. Many of the roots of working class politics have been annihilated, no more so than by the enactment of what is now possibly the most draconian labour legislation in the advanced capitalist world.

With only half a view of capitalist development we will see little more than a chain of events, a succession of happenings, names, headlines, and images. And in times of capitalist crisis we will, perversely enough, call this tumbling of events the storm of progress.

Catastrophe and progress are two sides of capitalist history. There are moments when the chances of the angel turning and closing his wings in the face of the future seem bleak indeed. 1940 was one such time, the end of the twentieth century is, though differently, another. The power of marxism is its capacity to both signal the class forces behind catastrophe and locate the collective means to build beyond the storm. This is a time when socialists need to stand again with the angel of history and find ways not just to check backwards but to turn and see a future as well. This is not something socialists are finding easy to do.

Looking across the industrial landscape of nineteenth century capitalism Marx (1954: 604) saw it as a revolution; "accumulation of wealth at one pole, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole". Looking across the landscape of twentieth century capitalism there is no need to alter the essentials of the picture, apart from, that is, noting the vastly increased international scale of exploitation and misery.

Whatever else can be said about revolutions taking us forwards the fact is that we have too often seen how they can propel us backwards too. Visions carried by the events of 1917 are now distant and more or less obscured. But more striking, perhaps, than recalling hope and a momentary break in history, is the horror of what has happened since. The ruling classes, in their various costumes, remain in power. Can we really still use the word revolution or envisage a future for socialism?

From the perspective of classical marxism many revolutions have had the effect of maintaining class rule and class exploitation, albeit new classes with oversight over new economies. I think Marx was the first to recognize, in a strong sense, the possible leap of revolution back into the past:

The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something entirely new, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, slogans and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language (1973: 147).

Resonating with Marx, Benjamin wrote:

History ... is time filled by the presence of the now. Thus, to Robespierre, ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome reincarnated. It evoked ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger's leap into the past. This jump, however, takes place in an arena where the ruling class gives the commands. The same leap into the open air of history is the dialectic one, which is how Marx understood the revolution (1970: 263).

The openness of history, guaranteed by the weight of working people against the state, is what will finally allow socialist history to begin. Without a successful transformation the tiger will, once more, leap into the past. Finding paths to the openness of history is the task socialists now confront.

Many obituaries to a socialist future have been written during the past century and a half. Many more have been written during the past half decade. For nominally left social scientists, it was a single line by Robert Heilbroner which best captured what they felt had to be said: " ... less than seventy-five years after it officially began, the contest between capitalism and socialism is over:

capitalism has won" (1989: 98). This line spoke to many who read it, perhaps, because it recalled one final time the comfortable logic of the cold war. This truly was an end for all but those socialists who, while recognizing that capitalism has won, still want to insist that capitalism has not succeeded in realizing the goals of liberty, equality and community for the great mass of people. The socialist indictment against capitalism has not been answered. That is our position.

Hegel was right to conclude that the one thing we learn from history is that we do not learn from history. It seems that each time the owl flies at dusk we are forced to look backwards across the chaos of the past; the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce, now for a third time, for too many, without hope at all. One of the great historical achievements of socialism, in theory and in practice, was to offer real contexts of hope, action and solidarity. Over a long span of decades these contexts of socialist community kept alive the notion and the practicality of an alternative to the present. With the failure of socialism to get beyond capitalism and the rank electoral opportunism of contemporary social democracy, the contexts of historical memory are much less evident. When I speak, for example, to my undergraduate son about these things, he smiles sympathetically and replies, "it sounds kind of funny".

The challenge for socialists, then, is how, in the face of this historical smile, to turn and catch a glimpse of the future and communicate what we can see. Socialists and anarchists have long understood that this ability to view the future is what constitutes the pedagogy of history. People individually and, in the mass, learn by having an end-in-view in terms of which means can be understood, attempted and adjusted. I think that it is the duty of socialists and anarchists to keep this potential for historical pedagogy alive and intellectuals can play a limited but useful role here. The failure to maintain this historical perspective is what will finally end socialism, not the failure of a single revolution and the rubble of its collapse just a lifetime later. It is a paltry way to treat our most fruitful hypothesis, the permanence of class struggle, to suppose that its decisive refutation has occurred precisely in the span of years between 1917 and now. That we, of all human beings over three million years, could have experienced both the period of greatest growth and the end of history in less than a single life-time is implausible. To accept this as the conclusion on the twentieth century, as much postmodernism seems to do, amounts to substituting uncritical subjectivity for the objective point of view.

When experience establishes the limits of the present people are forced to try and view a future that would transcend it. Those without peace, land or bread easily call up an alternative future; first, perhaps, in imagination, then as a daily hope, then as a noisy demand on the streets with others. When people are under the yoke of oppression, not surprisingly, they envisage a future where life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness will be unalienable. There are innumerable instances in the history of socialism which are, precisely, instances of remembering the future. Practically the first line of our tradition, "there is a spectre haunting Europe, the spectre of communism" is an early fragment of such hope. The *Communist Manifesto* is a short document which tried to catch the drift of history, look forward and orient a movement. Such an exercise is regarded as mistaken by those who think there is nothing between a grandly written metanarrative and completely differentiated contingency. Most of the time social process is too messy and too complicated to get an easy sense of structured movement. All revolutions are like this and so is everyday life. Yet history is replete with revolutions, struggles and movements by ordinary people outrageously unaware of the need to choose between the extreme academic alternatives just noted. Again and again people have caught ambiguous history and moved it forwards a little. Perhaps they believed, without qualification, that children should not suffer, that the poor should inherit the earth, that people should have work, that women should have votes, that minorities should have civil rights, that folk should not be subject to the stupidities and tyrannies of an English Queen, a French King or a Russian Tsar, and other ordinary things like these. In this regard people repeatedly break beyond the limits of imposed education and yet very little educational theory takes this prosaic fact of rebellion seriously.

## Education

For an audience raised on the democratic potentialities of liberal education, no other educational theory has so firmly registered the impossibility of realizing the goals of liberation within a capitalist order, as has the theory of correspondence, set out in *Schooling in Capitalist America*. We all learn as we go along, and what the current post-marxist liberals learned from Bowles and Gintis is that educational thought has to be stated in an avowedly political key. In fact, in a way that has never been true of liberalism or marxism, this new sense of the importance of politics led eventually to positions being adopted which claimed, extremely enough, to find politics everywhere. When politics and power are everywhere they are simultaneously located nowhere, centred nowhere, and nowhere resolvable. This appearance of radicalism - expressed as the ubiquity of power - defines an intellectual standpoint in which the structured brutality of class violence is effectively dismissed as insufficiently subtle in its reading of the social discourse. With this move comes also a sense that socialism can be set to one side, forgotten. Discourse seemingly defeats the materiality of the capitalist world and offers instead a free-floating politics of identity. In this case it is hardly surprising that the cardboard box as symbol is likely to hold the postmodern attention more surely than does the fact that the box is a miserable home.

We can state quite clearly that socialist educational theory has scientifically confirmed the reproductive nature of capitalist education. This being so, socialist pedagogy should aim to understand how the reproductive force of social institutions in class society can be ruptured. It appears, however, that few of those who have learned about the conservative function of education have been much inclined to accept the full implications of this finding. Unlike the conservative antiliberal attacks evident in many strands of communitarianism, poststructuralism and postmodernism - each of which variously eschews the hope of liberation altogether - socialism has sought to find a resolution to the aspirations of liberalism by starting out from the foundation of the material and cultural conditions developed by capitalism. Long ago C. Wright Mills made a similar point in his apt remark that marxism is the first position to take the liberal ideals of freedom and equality seriously. It does so by enquiring into the material conditions necessary for the realization of these ideals. Marxism is one of the ways in which ideals of the Enlightenment have been cherished, including the ideals of rationality, criticism and scepticism.

Left liberal and social democratic educational theorists have missed, if they ever fully recognized, the force of the correspondence theory. This failure to grasp the theory finds its common expression in the misguided claim that the implications of the theory are pessimistic. By pessimistic is meant here that nothing can be done. This conclusion on the limits of action is wholly limited to what can be done within a liberal capitalist framework and it is generally advanced from a position of unargued political realism. Even to draw this practical advice from the theory is already to have denied the socialist point of view. After publication of the theory, in 1976, educational theorists fairly rapidly pulled back from the demands of the theory for socialist transformation. Theoretical refinement became the preferred response. In this way revolutionary science was turned into normal (time-serving) science and crucial insights were forgotten.

Closeted inside the cultural mileaux, the intricacies and the egocentricities of academic life, this relatively gentle process of amnesia passed more or less unnoticed. By now this process is so nearly complete that the real issues raised by the theory of correspondence are scarcely mentioned, if remembered at all. Elitist policy analysis and a conventional liberalism, sometimes draped in the robes of poststructuralism and postmodernism, hold wide sway at the present time. Outside the domestic routines of academia the real world is not so obliging. So long as systemic inequality is a feature of social relations there are going to be struggles between those who want justice and those who resist, because they call the current social structure just, or the best that is possible, or what is irreducibly necessary for liberal capitalism and democracy to survive.

It is hard to know how this struggle over plain, unvarnished inequality will evolve but it can be expected to continue. And at some point one of the results of the struggle will be to reassert the



radical implications of the correspondence between capitalist political economy and education. Recognizing the reality of class struggle forces us to accept the consequence of forgetting the future. This consequence will be the loss of developing a programme which aims at an equality of condition for the majority in a set of social arrangements that do not tie education to continued capitalist domination.

Bowles and Gintis describe the reproductive nature of education like this: "The educational system, basically, neither adds to nor subtracts from the degree of inequality and repression originating in the economic sphere. Rather, it reproduces and legitimates a pre-existing pattern in the process of training and stratifying the work force"(1976: 265). Typical responses of 'left-wing' educationists to *Schooling in Capitalist America* have overlooked the main point of the book which is that, over the long term, education is a social force which tends to correspond to the requirements of economic activity. For its scientific integrity this thesis does not require that, at every point, there be a seamlessly fitting structural correspondence. To suppose so is to make one possible, but unsustainable, interpretation of the theory the only acceptable one. A tendency is just that. Consequently, it is unnecessary obviously to treat the correspondence theory as requiring a perfect structural integration. If Bowles and Gintis themselves overestimated the degree of fit then this is unfortunate, but it is not critically damaging to the core of the theory itself. Indeed, the requirement of perfect functional fit would reduce the theory to a single empirical claim which would, at any given moment of testing, almost certainly turn out to be wrong.

Correspondence theory is not to be understood as a point-to-point connection, but as a relationship of demonstratable causation over time. What social democratic and liberal critics typically dismissed as a "crude piece of Marxist theory" was, instead, a bold attempt to establish an explanatory framework within which the causes and effects operating in the domain of capitalist education can be understood. As such the correspondence theory makes intelligible the effects of a wide range of causal events as well as the countertendencies and contradictions which are more or less permanently in evidence. This theory is an attempt to explain education by setting it within an appropriate materialist framework, in a way more recently elaborated, for example, by Fisk (1989).

If the main point of those who adopted the thesis of relative autonomy is that correspondence is not a one-to-one functional relation then this would be perfectly consistent with a marxian materialist conception of history. Marxian approaches to explanation are not committed to the inevitability of historical stages, to mechanical or aprioristic teleologies or to the singularity of economic causation. In so far as marxists have resorted to such restrictive explanatory procedures they have been mistaken to do so. But this is not the main point which lies behind the apparent attractiveness of the relative autonomy thesis which is, instead, that it effectively frees education (politics, the state, culture, etc.) from the explanatory strictures of a marxian framework. Relative autonomy was taken up by liberal educationists, influenced by radical theory, because it provided a way to insulate the core of the liberal programme while giving some credence, under the political conditions of the day, to a powerful socialist critique which was difficult to answer. Relative autonomy effectively protects the liberal theory of education from the full critical implications of the correspondence thesis. It proved too much about the world for the left-liberals in transition, and in this sense they adopted post-marxism with something like a sense of relief.

As I have noted the agenda of radical possibilities has weakened progressively during the past two decades. Within the radical, if not exactly the socialist tradition, this has occurred as former 'socialists' retreated. Externally this weakening has been caused by the culture of resurgent capitalist power. As this shift has proceeded since the late 1970s there has consequently been less and less pressure to maintain any kind of post-liberal socialist position whatsoever. One result we have observed is a return to a version of mainstream liberalism, perhaps accompanied by the retention of some features of the socialist account. More noisily, there have been shifts to one of several post-marxist or anti-liberal positions and towards a new conservatism misleadingly dressed up in an arcane and pseudo-radical language which is increasingly elitist and exclusionary, even as it declares

its concern for the voice of the 'other', even worse as it idealizes discourse and insistently repeats that there is nothing outside the text, or if there is, that it is unknowable. This largely fashionable 'put on', as Hilary Putnam (1995) rightly describes the excesses of poststructural relativism distracts attention away from real problems deserving of serious inquiry, whose solution would make a difference as opposed to the cultivation of overspecialized knowledge and academic manners which are precious rather than humane.

In essence, the correspondence theory speaks to the objective requirement that capitalism be transformed. Bowles and Gintis drew this conclusion in the last chapter of their book where they discuss the possibilities for a participatory socialist society as the means to solving the problems posed by the relationship between education and capitalism. Because the theory of correspondence identifies the outer limits of capitalist education it poses the future unambiguously as an option. In a later essay Bowles spelt out what the theory means: "To discuss the egalitarian or growth functions of education ... in the absence of rebellion against the capitalist order is worse than ideal speculation. It is to offer a false promise, an ideological palliative which seeks to buy time for capitalism ..." (quoted in Sharp: 206).

Left liberals have seldom had more than a passing interest in moving beyond the limits of capitalist correspondence, and this has been the context for much of the ensuing academic debate, most of which has had the effect of distracting attention away from socialism as such. There are a number of reasons supporting this distraction but it is the role of the conventional professional intellectual which likely plays the dominant part. Like any other branch of the social sciences educational theory is divided into specialized research programmes. What is common to these research programmes is the demarcation of education (formal teaching and learning) from other considerations and from an overall view of society and history. This specialization has increased over the century, markedly since World War II, as can be observed by comparing, for example, the kind of generous educational perspective that comes through in the writings of Dewey, with the much narrower perspectives that now seem to be taken as the hallmark of rigorous educational thinking. Socialism has consistently attempted to locate phenomenon within a wider account of social relations, though it is not unique in claiming the importance of this.

To refer to Dewey again, his programme of nascent liberalism is ample proof of this within liberalism itself. Not surprisingly, I take the correspondence theory to be a claim that overall theoretical explanation is necessary if we are to understand education as a process of capitalist reproduction. On the other hand, the logic of relative autonomy-type theories is more conducive to forms of social and political explanation which support fragmentation. By pulling back from capitalism as the framework of explanation forms of institutional analysis are encouraged which are, for instance, state-centred and essentially unlocated within the social structure. The capitalist nature of education, of the state, of work, of technology and so on becomes steadily more obscured. From a socialist perspective this amounts once again to forgetting about capitalism altogether. Without a clear view of capitalism it is quite impossible in turn to see socialism as an alternative. All of this naturally represents no gain for left scholarship, and corresponds much more closely to the real success of the right over the past two decades. As socialists working in education at the present time we have a sense that the wind has gone out of our sails. The appropriate response to this is to take the socialist critique of education seriously, not to forget it altogether. We have a choice: either we follow the post-marxist, post-liberal path of relative autonomy, or we acknowledge the full implications of the correspondence theory.

## Remembering

I do not mind the principled conservative who rejects socialist theses or the principled liberal who pulls back from the implications for radical transformation. I can understand their respective positions and I know there are things they can teach me to appreciate more deeply about building

a future: what must be conserved, what freedoms must be protected and matters of this sort about which we socialists have too often been too casual. The social democrat and the 'socialist' who apparently accept the reproductive thesis but who cannot also accept that a limit has been reached leave me puzzled, even irritated. The question needs to turn from how education is reproductive for capitalism to how education functions in any scheme of transformation aimed at getting beyond capitalism.

The ways in which people have held on to the future are multifarious and by no means confined to the socialist tradition though socialism is our concern here. Looking back on the traditions of socialism we can find ways of worldmaking that do not, any longer, make sense to us, and it is hard for our owl eyes to accept that they could have made sense in the past either. Take, for example, the orthodoxy of productive force determinism familiar to socialists in the days of the Second International. This tough theory delivered a dialectic of stages which was then used to underwrite an account of the inevitable movement of history towards socialism. Bebel, among others, gave speeches about socialism that made it seem almost as imminent as the arrival of the next bus. And before that, in a now-famous letter to Weydemeyer in 1852, Marx used the language of inevitability when he linked the class basis of production to the necessary emergence of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the transition to a classless society.

Much in these positions has been harshly dealt with by later scholars, yet it seems to me we should also be prepared to see how these earlier propositions and metaphors played a vital and necessary pedagogical role. They gave ways to think about experience, they framed actions, they sustained hopes and gave meaning, all of which is crucial to a living programme of socialist practice and theory. If this is granted then we need, as socialists, to substitute new elements of pedagogy as old elements drop off, become tired, or are recognized to be wrong. There is naturally much more to socialist struggle than this and perhaps I will be criticized for attending to the trivial; yet it seems to me that a necessary part of building movements is to have ready ways of pointing to the future beyond the grey flight of the owl. I am not talking here of what might dismissively be called slogans and banner headings, or at least not just of these things, but of thoughts and theories which, though simply summarized, give insight at any moment into what is historically possible for socialism.

As befits the class struggle classes other than the working class will also be finding ways to view the future. The pedagogical point here is that what remains unviewed cannot be fought for, let alone achieved. Socialists have lost much of this ability to view the future and we have all heard attempts at it decried as utopian, even as incipiently totalitarian. But without this ability we will almost certainly fall back into conventional capitalist understandings. This tendency is even more likely in the present period when no strong socialist political movement is there to sustain theory.

Left-leaning educational theorists have typically borrowed a conventional non-socialist view of the century and this explains, in part, the ease with which so many of them have subsequently dropped almost all elements of the left-wing critique. The standardly accepted rules of international class struggle, rarely questioned outside the mostly marginalized circles of the anti-stalinist left, always assumed that it was socialism that was being opposed in Eastern Europe. Marxism = Stalinism = Socialism (Communism) = socialism (communism), was the crude and unquestioned formula. It is, therefore, socialism that has failed; end of story. I think educational theorists mostly adopted fragments of this line of thinking and they have come to suppose that socialism, in relation to education, is now an irrelevant issue. The evidence for this claim is indirect, but it rests on observing just how little attention is given to discussing the possibility of socialism among educational theorists. Outside a small number of so-called 'Monday Morning' chapters written during the 1970s and early 1980s there has been little which has engaged with the issues of socialism which has not at the same time been flawed by false assumptions about the connection between Stalinism and socialism. At the same time, socialist-sounding rhetoric to one side, educational theorists effectively remained committed to a liberal framework in their understanding of what needs to be done to achieve equality. What is now not being remembered is the singular



most important contribution of socialist theory to educational theory; the pointed highlighting of capitalist limits to equality of opportunity. Either we accept these limits and work within them or we try to get beyond them.

Socialism is not inevitable, but the permanence of class struggle is so long as capitalism continues to exist. And it is from this perspective that the socialist secures an historical objectivity in the face of events that, to so many others - ex-Communists, social democrats and left-leaning liberals - bespeak the end, if not of history, then of that part of history defined by a socialist struggle against capitalism. What Alexis de Tocqueville said of democracy in 1835 might also be said of socialism in 1995, though we would want to avoid putting any weight on the notion of fate:

the gradual progress of equality is something fated. The main features of this progress are the following: it is universal and permanent, it is daily passing beyond human control, and every event and every man helps it along. Is it wise to suppose that a movement which has been so long in train could be halted by one generation? Does anyone imagine that democracy, which has destroyed the feudal system and vanquished kings, will fall back before the middle classes and the rich? (1966: 12).

One who has recently expressed a strong view about the impossibility of checking the development of socialist democracy in the longer term is Ralph Miliband. I will make use of some of what he has to say about the programme of socialism. At the end of his last published work, *Socialism for a Skeptical Age*, he wrote about the future in the following simple way:

In all countries, there are people, in numbers large and small, who are moved by the vision of a new social order in which democracy, egalitarianism and cooperation - the essential values of socialism - would be the prevailing principles of social organization. It is in the growth in their numbers and in the success of their struggles that lies the best hope for humankind (1994: 194-95).

Miliband's socialism is not one of ideal dreaming but of a vision extended outwards from actual struggle in the present. The experience of struggle may defeat the subordinated class but it cannot finally quiet socialist aspiration so long as capitalism continues to sustain the conditions which necessitate struggle in the first place. In this sense, as Marx insisted, capitalism is forever producing its own gravediggers. A dominant class must remain ever vigilant because struggle encourages the fragments of vision to reassemble themselves, and socialism is centrally about this activity of reassembling.

Democracy, egalitarianism and cooperation in Miliband's concept of socialism recall the central features of the liberal social democratic theory of education, best summarized by the notion of equality of opportunity. These words also hint at the repressive limits imposed on this liberal vision, and after a period of neo-liberal advance the limits have been drawn in very tightly for whole layers of the population. It is not just that we have failed to achieve the goal of social equality and with it educational equality. More profoundly, across all the advanced capitalist societies, there has been a serious dismantling, if not total demolition, of that culture of politics, economics and legal rights which is necessary to sustaining the strength of those classes who have an objective interest in equality as the goal.

It is frequently said that the working class has so changed that it is no longer a creditable candidate for the mantle of the universal class of liberation. This notion, incidentally, has always appealed more to the critics of marxism than to marxists who operate with rather more complex views of class than is implied by this metaphysical category. There has never been a time when the working class was unambiguously the universal class as a matter of empirically demonstrated fact. This is the point which lies behind the long-recognized necessity for political organization. It is not the disappearance of the working class or its postmodern and postindustrial reincarnation which is the problem but the grounds on which class organization is to be struggled for. Late in the twentieth century these grounds are not so obvious nor are the conditions of political organization so

propitious. This, however, is a long way from concluding that working class political organization is now a thing of the past and something to be farewelled.

Miliband's words also prompt us to enquire into the vision of socialism and why this vision should matter to educationists? Anything stronger than a weak sense of mild social democracy has rarely been the animating perspective for more than a minority of educational theorists working in capitalist societies in this century. There is no way in which the successful socialist transformation of capitalism can be proved in advance. But neither can it be proved that socialism is just an idle dream. Opposition by the ruling classes in this matter should be taken for granted, a truism of history. The ruling classes and their most persuasive defendants have consistently argued that there is no road beyond the present or some form of class system. Plato could not see beyond philosophical guardianship as the guarantee of a wisely ordered society against the potential anarchy of many voices and democracy. Aristotle could not see beyond slavery and mass exclusion as the fundamental basis of democracy for enlightened citizens recognized as members of the polis. Schumpeter could only envisage a future for democracy as one advanced by elected elites not subject to the irrationalities and low mental performances of the masses. Fukuyama, to mention just one contemporary theorist, sees no path beyond the administration of capitalist democracy's technical functions.

In the present conjuncture what sustains the socialist project? To take just my own country, the unions are in a weakened state and mostly ineffectual (since 1991 when the Employment Contracts Act was introduced into the centre of New Zealand industrial relations union membership has dropped from 600,000 plus to about 300,000), the social movements are fragmented, feminism has largely become the preserve of middle class women, there is no unambiguously clear example of a social democratic party, and the conditions of work and unemployment all combine to undermine the sort of action in solidarity that is minimally necessary to activating a socialist movement. By contrast, during the same period agencies of the state, successive governments, employer and manufacturing organizations have all displayed a class confidence that has been reinforced by the sense that they are somewhere near the real movement of history. But at least the ruling classes of this country, as elsewhere, have not overlooked the importance of class struggle. They have organized to move history in a way that, for instance, the labour movement has mostly failed to do in over a decade.

The current nadir of socialist politics has created just the opposite sense and a lack of confidence that both registers and expresses a shift to the right in the balance of class forces. This shift has been pointed to and felt by socialists in various ways over the past decade, especially since the events of 1989. Reflectively, Joel Kovel characterizes his political mood - by implication also the mood of socialism more generally - in the following way:

from mid-1989 to mid-1991, socialism and Communism went to pieces, literally disintegrating before our eyes from Managua to Moscow. Suddenly, a new epoch was upon us, and the great battle that had defined the twentieth century was apparently over. I reacted with a mixture of emotions: sadness that liberatory movements I had cared so much about for so many years had taken such a beating; excitement that the Soviet system, with its bureaucracy and injustice was at last out of the way; bitterness that those I had considered, as the Sandinista anthem put it, the 'enemy of humanity', were now strutting about and boasting that history had ended on their terms; but most of all, confusion, the cognitive reshuffle of a man rethinking in midstream (1994: x).

This is the sensitive reaction of a socialist with roots deep in the tradition. For many intellectuals, of course, the interest in socialism was a good deal weaker than what Kovel expresses here. In these latter cases, without doubt the majority, the inclination to get rid of any elements of socialism from one's thinking was consequently stronger, and it followed.

Virtually nothing like a socialist vision is now to be found among educational writers unless one extends the term socialism to include what are historically, in this century, the weakest forms of

social democracy. But then the root meaning of socialism as the transformation of capitalism becomes substantially meaningless. Obviously, there is an important difference between a political party and a theory which makes a few gestures in the direction of socialism, for whatever reason, and parties and theories which are explicitly and carefully socialist. The current situation is much more a function of the state of socialist politics than of socialist thought, since without relatively strong movements socialist thought is bound to weaken. This is not meant to imply that there is nothing wrong with socialist theory. This has never been the case and it could never be the case with a structure of thought and action as complex and historically involved as socialism. There is nothing unique to socialism about this and the same, for example, holds for liberalism. There will always be points of debate, deepseated and even intractable differences of standpoint and orientation, and only a dogmatic approach to socialist politics would bemoan such variation and internal differentiation. The essential corrections and reorientations, which will always be necessary in a dynamic socialist movement, can only finally come from the practical movement itself within whose context ideas will be subject to test and development.

For this to occur there will have to be a shift in the current disposition of the class struggle. There is no easy way forward for socialist politics at the present time because the commonsense of the age runs in other channels. Although forms of thought like postmodernism and poststructuralism register this commonsense extravagantly as the end of metanarratives and sometimes of history as well it is precisely this reaction which socialists need to resist. Among other faults this particular critique of the so-called Enlightenment project is just too gross, too one-sided to be theoretically convincing or politically practical. Across the spectrum of contemporary socialist thought one can find suitable reminders of the need to restore and restate the central core of socialism as the first step towards the reassertion of socialist struggle. Here I cite four diverse but thoughtful examples. At the end of a defence of classical socialist democracy John Ehrenberg advises as follows:

If Marxism is to be taken seriously it must take itself seriously, and further repudiation of its theoretical underpinnings will only intensify a crisis whose long-run solution is more socialism rather than less. Their 'bourgeois' character notwithstanding, democratic liberties and social rights were tom from the bourgeoisie only by protracted and costly popular struggles. Socialism's current crisis is mirrored by that of democracy, for it remains as true as ever that both can grow stronger only if they enrich each other (1992: 187-88).

In an essay appropriately entitled *The Future of a Disillusion* Gerald Cohen quotes from a letter by Engels by way of reminding us that there are times when we need to look to resources of confidence, that it is simply hard to maintain a dedication to socialist analysis " ... in a climate where it is regarded a irrelevant". Against the pull of the commonsense of his day Engels wrote as follows:

Local lights and lesser minds, if not the humbugs, will now have a free hand. The final victory is certain, but circuitous paths, temporary and local errors - things which even now are so unavoidable - will become more common than ever. Well, we must see it through. What else are we here for? And we are not near losing courage yet (1991: 20).

As a conclusion to a book defending the perspective of market socialism, a position which other socialists have argued is itself evidence of the dominance of the right, John Roemer speaks in a voice recognizable to the intuitions of most socialists:

Morale is a key problem for socialists today: to keep the objective point of view, to understand how brief a moment is seventy years in human history, to remember how continuous has been the struggle for mankind against inequality and injustice, and to realize how enduring are those problems that engendered the socialist idea two centuries ago ... There is still ample reason to believe, as Marx once said, that real human history - the history of society that, for the vast majority of people, has eliminated material scarcity as the unbreachable barrier to self-realization - has not yet begun (1994: 130-31).

I have already quoted Kovel who further (1994: 243) recommends that we must try again to imagine a socialist future and to do this we need, principally, to " ... reclaim what was great about the rejected

radical traditions". What these various statements have in common, and what distinguishes them clearly from those who have rejected socialism, is a belief that socialism is to be both preserved and advanced by active construction.

Conservatives are good at reminding us that the future is importantly about conserving elements of the past. It is canonical in the marxian tradition that while societies, people and actions make history they do so under conditions that are already given. As socialists we are the inheritors of a tradition and like other human traditions ours can and should be subject to moral and political judgement. There are parts that need correction, adjustment or jettisoning. Indeed, it is just because socialism is a living tradition that this is so. That the current historical conditions are difficult for socialism are not grounds, however, for supposing that the tradition needs abandonment, on the contrary. The test of socialism, let us not forget, is not to be found in those moments, if they exist, when dominant history rolls over dead, but in all those moments when history obstructs, opposes, and batons. It is we socialists, after all, who are supposed to be the ones that believe in the permanence of class struggle.

In an observation about societies in trouble the conservative social theorist Michael Oakeshott once commented that:

political crisis ... always appears *within* a tradition of political activity; and 'salvation' comes from the unimpaired resources of the tradition itself. Those societies which retain, in changing circumstances, a lively sense of their own identity and continuity (which are without that hatred of their own experience which makes them desire to efface it) are to be counted fortunate (1962: 126).

The same can be said for crises within traditions of political activity and thought, including socialism. If there is to be a vigorous socialist educational theory then we need first to restore a clear sense of socialism, a sense which is presently occluded. Of course, there are external circumstances, beyond the control of socialists and socialist theory, which must be accounted for. Nevertheless, socialists, including those who have long rejected the idea that the Russian Revolution says anything positive about the reality of socialist society, have probably not attended sufficiently to the resources of their own tradition. It is time for socialists to be appropriately conservative about their tradition, not by being indifferent to the problems but by being deliberately radical about the core propositions. We have roots to go to and this is one of the major educational tasks for socialists in these times.

To appropriate another of Oakeshott's formulations we need the disposition of conservation because we should, more than ever, be acutely aware of losing something which it is our task to care for. Oakeshott, speaking of political education puts the matter of essential learning within the conservative tradition like this:

And if the understanding of politics I have recommended is not a misunderstanding, there is little doubt about the kind of knowledge and the sort of education which belongs to it. It is knowledge, as profound as we can make it, of our tradition of political behaviour. Other knowledge, certainly, is desirable in addition; but this is the knowledge without which we cannot make use of whatever else we may have learned (Ibid: 128).

By remembering our resources and our past we surely make more probable the likelihood of fighting effectively for a future which will ensure avoiding the outcome which an earlier generation called barbarism. It is paradoxical that we, who have a much deeper historical explanation and understanding of barbarism, are now more wary of speaking truth to power without qualification.

At the end of the twentieth century socialists too easily overlook the truth that, inside class societies, economics, politics, culture and consciousness will forever be permanently contested. The changing structures of classes and their relative strengths, the defeat of revolutionary hopes, the bureaucratisation of socialist beginnings, the loss of local participative communities and the weakening of class solidarities is rightly regarded as deeply frustrating, and these shifts leave us understandably angry and confused. However, whatever our feelings about these matters they should also, and more importantly, so far as the future is concerned, be seen as confirmations of that

central core of propositions - the materialist conception of history and politics - which has long defined socialist theory.

As an example of the many tasks which need to be tackled I refer to an essay by Cohen (1994) in which he asks us to consider the recent elimination of Clause 4 from the programme of the British Labour Party. According to opponents socialization is not what a modern social democratic party should be thinking about. Furthermore, Clause 4 is just the kind of position which is likely, in the view of political realists, to frighten potential electoral support away. According to Cohen, the elimination of Clause 4 means the end of a context for the possible re-examination of the whole question of socialization, an issue which, whatever the differences in debate, is central to any attempt to work out a vision of a socialist future. But this shift also signals the loss of a culture of debate which is fundamental to developing and extending the tradition of socialism. Collective control, however that is worked out, is part of the irreducible core of the socialist tradition. With this central strand of socialist debate thus eliminated the main energy can now be turned to calculations of electoral advantage, but at the expense of commitment to principle; 'get elected', advises the realist; 'but for what ends?', asks the socialist. What should the response of socialists be to this drift towards electoralism?

Searching for an answer to this question Cohen thinks we can draw some useful lessons from the Right. The aim of the Left, in his view, is to speak clearly in its own voice. Cohen makes a number of observations. First, an important aspect of the Right's success has been its commitment to fundamental theoretical work - by the likes of Friedman, Hayek and Nozick - which has variously restated, reaffirmed and explored "traditional principles" (1994: 4). Noting this the Left needs to restore contact with its traditional foundations and restate its foundational content. The task here is to restore the content of socialism:

customary inherited socialist rhetoric now turns people off ... the remedy is not to cast about for a different rhetoric, or 'buzz-phrase', irrespective of what its relationship to traditional principles may be, but to restore our own contact with those principles, from which exercise a new rhetoric may indeed emerge. The old rhetoric now sounds 'dated' not because everybody knows the content behind it but partly because its content has been forgotten. The Left will not recoup itself ideologically without addressing that foundational content (Ibid).

A further aspect of Cohen's assessment is his conclusion that the theories of the Right are, in an important way, 'crazy'. What he means by 'crazy' here is that the theories are "uncompromisingly fundamental". Paradoxically, it is this very feature which gives them their great force:

Politicians and activists can press not-so-crazy right-wing proposals with conviction because they have the strength of conviction that depends upon depth of conviction, and depth comes from theory that is too fundamental to be practicable in a direct sense (Ibid: 5, Cohen's emphasis).

What follows for Cohen from this is the possibility that we develop a socialist politics that is forthright rather than furtive. With our sights on our most fundamental, our most utopian values, Cohen believes that we can then rethink those values and ask, 'how can they can be sustained?', 'what should they now mean?', 'what agencies are there to support them?', and 'what agencies will advocate for them?' This is the programme that Cohen calls foundational reflection, and he illustrates this concretely by offering brief discussions of two basic socialist values, community and equality.

Another way of thinking about foundational reflection is to treat it as a theoretical guide to political meaning and motivation. This connects with something I said earlier in this essay. The concrete features of struggle, the messy hard-to-understand flow of actual events constantly disrupts our capacity to see historical continuity. Being in touch with socialist foundations supports a sense of continuity which is necessary to working out a programme of progressive political struggle. Utopian schemes can certainly serve this purpose as tools of hope. On the Right the utopia of the free market has performed admirable service both as a resource of right-wing confidence and



as a critical model with which to criticize current arrangements seen as too socialist, too socially democratic.

Looking at the socialist tradition through the lens of foundational reflection suggests some helpful ways to proceed. First, it gives a different slant on the so-called error of utopian thinking. Utopian theory, it has often been maintained, is mistaken because it contravenes a consistent materialism. For instance, Luxemburg mockingly dismissed utopian thinking as amounting to the substitution of rocking horses for surer means of historical transportation. The strictures against utopian thinking, first advanced by Marx and Engels, it should be noted, rested either on the ground that the utopia in question was reactionary or that it was insufficiently grounded in an historical agency powerful and developed enough to carry the programme through. It should also be noted that Marx and Engels were looking forward with no historical experience of significant failure. That, crucially, is not where we stand now. We cannot be so relaxed in dismissing talk of the future on the grounds that all such talk can be left to those who finally confront the issue of building socialism after the revolution. This is not to deny that pressing practical problems will require contextually bound solutions, nor that there cannot be variants of socialism, just as there are variants of capitalism. This aside, it seems unlikely that any struggle for socialism which did not articulate a convincing vision of socialist society would gain the assent of anything more than a minority of people.

As a document the *Communist Manifesto* is a practically accessible example of foundational thinking. *State and Revolution*, long written off as hopelessly simple-minded, is another fragment of such reflection, worked out in a context of urgent revolutionary action. It might be replied that these two examples fail us nowadays precisely because their foundational force was sustained, to the degree it was, by the powerful historical circumstances which provided the occasion of their composition. Certainly the circumstances of reflection are relevant and socialists should not be among those who deny this materialist point. But one of the kinds of activity relevant to the changing of circumstances is surely to be found in the exercise of foundational reflection. The two components of revolutionary practice as understood by classical marxism - the changing of circumstances and human activity - do not always neatly coincide. However, it is, at the very least, a weak reason for failing to attend to one of the poles of revolutionary practice that the other is conjuncturally missing, in retreat or temporarily quiescent. How foundational principles are to be sustained and advocated in relation to daily political practice is the question which needs reframing and reasking, though the current conditions are far from encouraging in this respect. The kinds of answers we need must, in some fairly obvious sense, reach well beyond where we are now if we are to advance and defend socialism with confidence.

Beyond encouraging utopian thinking foundational thinking is critical to ongoing socialist education as a means of sustaining a sense of realism. It is now widely thought that capitalism has changed so radically as to render much, if not all, socialist thinking on major questions irrelevant. For example, the nature of production, commodity distribution, class structures and social administration have changed such that forms of class solidarity, which might sustain the cultures and politics of socialism, are now gone forever. Gone also, it is claimed, are the touchstones necessary for a theory which must be centrally built on working class organization and aspiration. While Cohen does not subscribe to the theses of postmodernism and postindustrialism, nor does he believe that capitalism has remained static. It has long been one of the merits of classical marxism to insist on the dynamic nature of capitalism. As socialists, we need to be clear that our explanatory frameworks are attuned to capitalist change in a way that allows us to show that history is still the history of class struggle. Out of these reflections will flow what is distinctively socialist in our values of community, equality and democracy.

In this respect, Cohen (1994: 7) suggests that more recently right-wing values took over the space occupied by left-wing values when the latter went "on vacation because their class base was eroded". Cohen concludes that there is a persuasive moral-cum-intellectual reason for sustaining a

commitment to foundational values. The reason is that these values "never depended on the social force supporting them that is now disappearing". According to Cohen (Ibid: 6), these values of community and equality apparently struck their supporters as authoritative in their own right.

In his search for foundational socialist values Cohen is here conflating justificatory and causal considerations. Why the members of a class accept the validity of socialist ideas is a matter of the causal nexus within which the ideas live, move and have their being. Socialist values of community, equality and self-realization fell within cultures of belief, action and means-ends relationships which objectively captured the truth about working class life as it was daily experienced. The ruling ideas may ever be the ideas of the ruling class, but the ideas that strike most deeply, most authoritatively, are ever the ideas consonant with class identities, habits and intuitions. What is ruling and what is deep can be two very different things in social life. Indeed, the socialist project depends crucially on just this difference. Because, over long periods of time, the values of community and equality so closely resonated with daily life it was unnecessary, much of the time, for anyone who believed them to say, as Cohen (Ibid: 7) puts it, "that she believed in them *because* they expressed the sentiments of a social movement".

Nevertheless, Cohen overlooks just how often this connection back to the material background of commonsense and the fabric of everyday life is actually made. This suggests to me not that Cohen is wrong to advocate authoritative values, but that the values must be more obviously reflective of the changes in the structures and experiences of classes than he appears to allow for. Socialism must also seek to ground these values in what is currently deep in the commonsense of the working classes if these same values are to stand any chance of being inherently authoritative. In my view it is not the erosion of class per se, but changes in the structure of the class base which have too easily been forgotten. Perhaps we socialists falsely imagined that a particular portrait of the working class would serve us for all time.

It is a specific contribution of foundational reflection to show what the material basis of socialist authority within the working class consists in. This is a very different matter from enunciating some values or principles that might be thought, to return to the original example, to aid electoral success or political advantage regardless of their socialist integrity. It is also a very different matter from stating a few brief abstractions like socialization, equality and democracy without also elucidating their concrete details in relation to the current sociology of the working classes.

One of the immediate legacies of the prevailing pessimism about socialism is the way in which capitalism itself has disappeared from view. Lacking a sense of a future at the same time we are more likely to limit our view of history to a process which simply qualifies the present. This is a lesson postmodernism has unwittingly demonstrated. While appearing to announce the final outcome of modernity postmodernists, in fact, fail to see that the underlying cause of postmodern culture is capitalist development.

The sense that there is no future history is well captured, from a capitalist perspective, in the last paragraph of Fukuyama's essay:

The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one's life for a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism, will be replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands. In the post-historical period there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual caretaking of the museum of human history (1989: 18).

Evaporated altogether from this description is the reality of class struggle and the dynamic that simultaneously accounts for capitalist existence and its own transformation. This is, of course, the exact point of Fukuyama's thesis but I am citing him here as the representative of a wider viewpoint on the capitalist limits of history and social change. Losing our feel for a socialist future pushes us back into a world in which class itself is fractured into endless identities, voices and differences. The

capitalist structures of domination and exploitation are finally disaggregated, but so are the possibilities of transforming capitalism.

In the case of postmodernism and postindustrialism this position degenerates into a form of empiricism, entertaining for the moment maybe, passé on reflection. For those left-postmodernists with a residual commitment to social democracy the view of the future is typically restricted to fiddling with the present. Miliband's (1994: 29) plain socialism replies: " ... reform, however valuable, only qualifies but does not abolish the exploitation that characterizes the capitalist mode of production and the domination which exploitation demands".

One of the current weaknesses of socialist thought has been to lose sight of its role as the interrogator of capitalism. The consequence is to strengthen a tendency to regard what exists as 'natural'. This naturalisation of the present also corresponds to a loss of socialist confidence and to the loss of any usable conception of socialism itself as transformation. As an example of this loss of perspective consider the following assessment of contemporary capitalism by Avineri:

one may say of today's capitalism, in contrast with the rampant capitalism of the nineteenth century, that it is beginning to show signs of being a 'capitalism with a human face'. As distant as it is, even in Western Europe and the United States, from being a perfect system (something no human system will ever be), still, it is not the monster that emerges from the *Communist Manifesto* or the writings of Dickens (1992: 10).

In Avineri's assessment memory has been overwhelmed by forgetting. The monster has been let off the hook, perhaps because green and pleasant lands, closer to home, distract the eye from predatory capitalism elsewhere, every bit as exploitative as the nineteenth century capitalism of Marx and Dickens and Zola, possibly more so. Avineri plainly doesn't know what he is talking about.

Miliband takes the defence of socialism seriously since without it the best that can be offered is a piecemeal approach to the future which reduces social change to tackling a succession of social problems. Within an overall transformative view Miliband identifies the need also for a utopian conception of socialism to provide the underlying rationale for the many elements of socialist struggle, particularly as these relate to questions of tackling pre-existing capitalist structures in the period of transition. Echoing the kind of reason Cohen gives for foundational thinking, Miliband (1994:9) notes that " ... the abandonment of a radical transformative perspective ... also has a profound influence on the nature and scope of reform itself". Socialists need to counteract this influence by imparting confidence to reform struggles in the direction of orientating them in an explicitly socialist direction. Miliband puts the strategy like this:

there does exist a great deal of support for demands which socialism encompasses, and which constitute a challenge to conservative ideology and practice - demands relating to welfare, public services, right, democracy, fairness, justice, humane behaviour. Such demands and socialism are at present firmly dissociated. The problem for socialists is to show and make acceptable the link between them, and to explain that radical demands, for democratization, for equal rights for all, for the creation of communities of citizens, can only very partially be met, if they can be met at all, within the existing structures of power and ... why their fulfilment requires the kind of comprehensive transformation which socialism signifies (Ibid: 157).

Without in anyway defending political elitism, Miliband believes that intellectuals can be of use to political movements if they provide the tools and analyses which help to clear the view. Some part of this activity will be basic theoretical work, in the first instance possibly far removed from the immediate demands of action. But to be truly foundational these reflections need to connect with the lives of working class people and existing avenues for action. Miliband (Ibid: 158), however, seems to be less certain that marxism's speculative visions of communist society are so valuable in this regard: "It is not very difficult to outline in the abstract what an ideal socialist society would look like. It seems to me much more useful to discuss socialist purposes in the light of the real conditions their advancement would be most likely to confront". We should note that Miliband's suggestion here is ambiguous since it is difficult to understand what meaning can be given to the notion of "socialist purposes" short of engaging in something like utopian thought. By definition socialism

goes beyond where we are now, and the idea of the goal gives point to the identification of ends-in-view and appropriate means. Utopian thinking, then, must remain as an important method for articulating our deepest commitments.

Although Miliband regards his core propositions as equally important and mutually supportive, in fact it is the socialization of the economy which is the most crucial. Democratic citizenship depends on equality and socialization is necessary to equality. But there is a second sense in which socialization lies at the centre of the socialist project and it is that it provides a criterion of what, materially speaking, socialism means, namely the collective control of society. Socialist democracy is the attempt to work out the meaning of citizenship and equality within a framework of collective control. The programme of democracy and equality minus socialization is really the definition of social democracy or reformism. The issue for socialists, according to Miliband (Ibid: 56), is not to deny or soften the demand for socialization but to find appropriate ways to " ... explain that old-style nationalization greatly differs in form, content, and purpose from socialization, conceived as an intrinsic part of the democratic process".

The end of history, not as the administration of liberal capitalism, but as the withering away of the state is also linked to this proposal. The socialization of the economy is the first step towards that equalization of human relations which gives the project of ending all power in human affairs a cogent theoretical rationale. That it is a long-term perspective, maybe never finally to be realized - and in the interim socialist society administration will still require the mediation of state structures - does not diminish its significance to the socialist project. On the contrary, the utopian vision of communism - though this does not mean a static final social order - presents itself as a potential standard of human association, administration and morality in terms of which the project of socialism and the diminution of power in society, can, in fact, be assessed. Without socialization the values of democracy and equality, ultimately understood as the condition for the free development of each and of all, lose a basis in material reality which is required for their realization.

Miliband considers the kinds of institutional arrangements which will be required to realise socialist democracy. In relation to the extension of representative democracy these include the separation of powers, the accountability of officials, the devolution of power, the constraint on executive power, electoral results reflective of the votes cast. Beyond problems connected with representation are those which centre on the limits and possibilities of participation. Whatever utopian hopes some socialists have held for the total erosion of representation in favour of complete direct participation the real issues are how to reduce the distance between representatives and represented, and how to creatively combine the two forms of democracy. But, as Miliband (Ibid: 91) admits, all of this is in the realm of good intentions, of which there is no shortage in the socialist tradition. "For the intentions to be turned into real advances, certain conditions *imperatively need to be met* (my emphasis). If these conditions do not obtain, as they do not in capitalist democracies, the democratic process ... is fatally undermined". The conditions Miliband lists are collective control of economic, administrative and coercive power, democratic control of the media, and egalitarian education for democratic citizenship.

The classical answer to this problem of imperative conditions is the dictatorship of the proletariat, which in one of its formulations - "rule won and maintained by the use of violence by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, rule that is unrestricted by any laws" - is rejected by Miliband because he believes that in practice it encourages elite dictatorship rather than popular rule. A second reason offered for rejecting this view of class dictatorship is that, even if it did mean popular rule, it would still be incompatible with socialist democracy which requires restraint on all forms of power, including in this case, popular rule. At the same time, Miliband (Ibid: 62) appreciates the necessity for a socialist government to be strong in the face of opposition since the period of transition can be expected to be a relatively extended one. "The day may come when state coercion will no longer be required, and when the state will indeed 'wither away'; but it will long remain an essential element in the construction of a new social order".

The core of the dictatorship of the proletariat is the requirement that there be a strong enough, democratically extensive enough state to both support mass democracy, and simultaneously impose conditions definite enough to repress those class forces which still stand in opposition to the newly emerging forms of democratic participation. The state in this difficult situation needs to ensure that socialist democracy has a chance to develop rather than being destroyed at birth. Miliband quotes Geras to the effect that emphasis placed on the requirement to smash the state overlooks certain norms and institutions which will be carried across, and, hence, the continuities are obscured. The kinds of continuities Geras has in mind are just those institutional arrangements listed above. But there is another side to this which Miliband fails sufficiently to note. Geras (1990: 54) puts it as follows: "... even if there is some historical continuities between the parliamentary democracy at the origin of this whole process and the polity that emerges from it, this could not be exactly the same state unchanged in its fundamental features. If not in a word, 'smashed' then certainly significantly transformed". Without this qualitatively significant transformation the new state will be insufficiently independent of the old class state, and thus not be in a position to have sufficient power to ensure the success of a programme of socialist democracy. As Miliband well recognizes, the means have to be found to combine state power and popular power. The socialist tradition is rich with experience and theory which relates to how this combination might now be worked out, and it is this material that we must retrieve and reappraise if we are to state with confidence what it is we are after.

## Conclusion

These are hard times for socialists. The organizations and projects around which socialists have traditionally focused are seriously weakened, many are on the ropes and many have disappeared altogether. I do not mean to imply by this that there are not forms of activism and resistance in response to all kinds of issues, but these actions are a long way from the organized opposition necessary to effect a fundamental challenge to the system, though these forms are the places to begin. Trade unions everywhere are trying to find ways to survive and so are individual citizens. World-wide, parties with at least some historical allegiance to the labour and socialist traditions are, at best, mostly concerned with how to make capitalism work more efficiently for the whole community, whatever that means. On occasions, some of these parties remember that they should be committed to equality. Many more, like the New Zealand Labour Party, have sold out altogether or have collapsed inwardly under the weight of opportunism and corruption.

Socialist politics cannot grow out of schematic fantasies about what the left once did, or what labour unions were once supposed to be, or what other class organizations managed to achieve. If we think like this the socialist tradition will be a burden to us, or at least to those who think that there are ready-made formulae which can be simply applied. At the same time we need to remember that we are part of a great tradition of political experience on which we can draw.

We cannot be indifferent to our past or cynical about the future. Socialist educational theory achieved deep insight into the reproductive forces of capitalism with the construction of the correspondence theory. The other side of reproduction is transformation and, in identifying the limits of the liberal theory of education, correspondence theory pointed at the same time to the need for a new theory of education. The next challenge is to develop an account of education which is able to make sense of the transition from capitalism to socialist democracy. Within educational circles I suspect that we now face a long period in which our wits will be fully concentrated by the struggle of memory against forgetting, in other words by the class struggle as it is expressed in the development of a convincing socialist pedagogy.

In the meantime it is our duty to use the socialist tradition creatively. The purpose: to build political movements that can ensure successful opposition to a system that threatens to destroy our



environment, that excludes the majority from effective control over their lives and that consigns billions of others to lives of misery and degradation well short of human flourishing.

"... Far below ... the stubborn tapping of the picks continued ... High in the sky the April sun now shone in its full glory ... Beneath the blazing rays of the sun, in that morning of new growth, the countryside rang with song, as its belly swelled with a black and avenging army of men, germinating slowly in its furrows, growing upwards in readiness for harvests to come, until one day soon their ripening would burst open the earth itself', is how Emile Zola remembered the future in 1885, at the end of *Germinal*. Many seasons have since passed. Much in the world has changed. Much has not. But the world is still a long way from "summertime and the livin' is easy". We too must find active ways to remember the future.

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