

MOS ON THE NORTH SIDE

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Last minute rush, as usual. DENYS -- from now on, please send my CRAPA mailing airmail. This last one didn't arrive till Sept. 17. Even so, I procrastinated a few days too long in getting started, because my boss decided last week to quit, and everything has been pretty chaotic since. I'm happy about it in some ways, because he was a terrible supervisor, in addition to being an obnoxious human being (the former due to inexperience, but not helped by the latter). A technical hotshot, but not real good at dealing with people.

The problem is, he's been with the bank for four years, has been doing a lot of things, and never wrote anything down. Besides this, we have a bunch of deadlines to make or the head of our department will be in the soup, and I think after all she's put up with from Alec, he could have picked a better time to walk out. (It's ironic -- her boss, a senior vice president, was canned the same day Alec told her he was leaving. Uh, what was that about worker/boss class distinctions being blurred in today's business world?)

Anyway, I've been putting in a lot of overtime the last week...

JERRY: LeGuin's Dispossessed has an example of non-conformists getting shafted in a non-capitalist society, and yes, that was my point -- I think that's a problem that will occur whenever government is supporting art. It's less critical when there are other sources of power/money, though.

PAUL: Re your union bargaining away your freedom of speech -- are there limits, in law, to what can be bargained over? At VGH, the union constitution had a clause in it that said you could be expelled for "anti-union" statements or activities, which, considering union membership was a condition of employment, sounded un(U.S.)constitutional to me. Anyway, I would hope that your union would protect you from being fired on account of trashing Twit's politics, unless it's completely powerless.

I don't see, though, where Twit is in any way unique to capitalism. When you say "socialist countries" do you mean an ultimate utopian government, or specific existing countries? I think power is power, and whether it's the Party, or the Rockefellers, or a democratically elected government like the National Socialists (Germany, 1933), most of the population is going to get shafted. In practice, all you can do is disperse the power so no one group can get too firm a grip. I think the theory of local workers' groups running things is fine -- I just don't believe it would stay that way (until, of course, a computer utopia makes every person their own boss; and then the 'droids would revolt ...).

KEITH: Autodescriptive? Autotype? I'll bet Goedel, Escher, Bach has your word somewhere in it, since it's all about self-reference.

JANE: re yct Robert on good things happening when you're feeling solid -- "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." (Matthew, 13:12) There's also a comparable Zen quote.

Re computerization and service industries -- this is one of my problems in understanding where wealth comes from: Once society as a whole has taken care of the basics (food, clothing, shelter), isn't everything else a question of taking in each other's washing, i.e. service industries? I pay you so I can talk to you over a phone system, so you can afford to pay an airline to fly you to Boston, so they can have money to put in my bank, which pays my salary... I don't understand ... Maybe the crux of it is that 3% of the population can feed us all, so the rest of us are playing a convoluted game with the spare capacity. (And most of us are losing.)

DENYS: As usual, I've got a zillion check marks in your zine.

You don't see the point of advertising for food? Aside from the terrible choices facing the modern consumer (Wonder bread vs. whole wheat), advertising also provides information about hitherto unknown foods. Perhaps some people could deduce the existence of frozen pizza without advertising, but...

Your various criteria for boss vs. worker distinctions seem to me to be either too rigid or beside the point. I thought the class distinction was between workers (who must sell their labor) and owners (who can live off rents). Owners and bosses used to be synonymous, but are not anymore, so hiring and firing power becomes more diffuse, and legal and contractual limits are placed on it. If (as some would have it) the true power in this country is intensely concentrated in the hands of a very few, can you really talk about a "class" of rulers? If not, and there is mobility across the lines (self-made millionaires and bankrupt stockholders) what do your class distinctions mean?

Hey, to change the subject, when you were studying Genesis, did you come across any of Robert Graves' interpretations? The Hebrew would be literally "the earth (or the land) was 'Tohu' and 'Bohu'", usually translated 'without form' and 'void'. Graves maintained that Tohu and Bohu were actually Babylonian deities, similar to the personified Chaos and so forth of other mythologies. That doesn't do much for creatio ex nihilo either.

You'll have to tell me how to determine the "full value" of labor. I'm suspicious of any equation that ignores the importance of concentrated wealth, as provided by the capitalist (a million people, each with a dollar, can do nothing unless all those dollars can be gathered together). No, I don't think usury is sinful, and in certain circumstances it may be essential as a catalyst to get things flowing. But I also have trouble understanding how new wealth is created, so maybe you can convince me. I'm not, by the way, saying that capitalists are essential, only that they perform an essential function, which can also be done by governments or even large unions. But whoever does it, it's not free.

No room. You have a limited view of math ($8+5=1$; look at a clock). Math is an art form, but much of it is "realistic".