

# A COMMUNIST RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE. MOBILIZING THE SOCIAL OR COMMON FUND.

Peter Kudis and Kevin Anderson have brought out a new publication based on Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme. The link to the launch discussion can be viewed [here](#) on YouTube. Another book recently launched which is noteworthy is *Capitalism in the Anthropocene: Ecological Ruin or Ecological Revolution*. by John Bellamy Foster. (I intend to review this book at a later stage as it is a must read for anyone concerned with the state and future of our planet.)

What do these two publications have in common? Both deal with a communist future and its physiognomy. Both are interpretations of this future but both ignore the purpose and functionality of the **social fund** (or common fund) in a communist society which Marx addressed all too briefly in his Critique. To avoid me repeating myself and for a fuller insight into its importance please study my [Draft Programme](#). If you agree with it please circulate it because the crisis of capitalism is now becoming acute as [Michael Roberts](#) pointed out in an exemplary presentation recently.

The most strategic weakness of the proletariat in the sphere of ideology is the failure to discern an alternative to capitalism which is real and dynamic. Until such an alternative is popularized the wall before the working class will be solid and without an exit, no door will be found through which workers can and must pass to escape the yoke of capitalism. I believe that my programme based on the *Critique* and which draws on the lessons which felled the USSR, has begun to deliver the outline for such a door.

## The social fund.

In the Critique Marx harshly criticises the Lasallian slogan "*the proceeds of labor belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society*". Marx points out that if this is the case there could not be a reserve fund to insure against accidents and natural calamities nor a common fund to resource childcare, social care, education, healthcare, additional investment and so on. In the words of Marx, "*These deductions from the "undiminished" proceeds of labor are an economic necessity, and their magnitude is to be determined according to available means and forces, and partly by computation of probabilities, but they are in no way calculable by equity.*" Thus while these deductions are a necessity they do not alter the net amount the producer receives back from society, it is still proportional to their contribution, viz *Accordingly, the individual producer receives back from society -- after the deductions have been made -- exactly what he gives to it.* These deductions then go into the common fund.

Instead of the common fund I use the term social fund. I prefer the word social because it implies that those who contribute to the fund do not necessarily benefit directly from it and therefore it is not common to all. But despite the difference in wording, the social reality and consequences of this fund is the same.

In the second quote Marx talks about the fund being inhibited by available means and forces. To this we can add the following quote. *But these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society as it is when it has just emerged after prolonged birth pangs from capitalist society. Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby.* Right and fund fall into the same category. Together they imply that the magnitude of the social fund cannot be higher than the economic structure of society. Thus the distribution of this fund at first will be a compromise driven by agreed priorities, including repairing the planet.

Notably, it is the social fund which transforms society because it provides the resources for additional investment, for educating all to the highest and other upliftment's. In every way it is the escalator from the lower to the higher state of communism. As this fund provides for social need, we may define the higher stage of communism - from each according to their ability to each according to their need - as that stage when the social fund exceeds half the output of society for that is the point where the deductions from the individual producer's account exceeds the share they consume themselves individually. This then is the importance of the social or common fund.

Unfortunately Marx's Critique is polemical rather than pedagogical which means Marx's concern with the issue of deductions is focused on rebutting LaSalle's assertion that workers can consume the entire fruits of their labour. He did not expand on this. In reality the deductions to, and the distribution from, the social fund is the focus of working class democracy and the beating heart of a communist society as is shown in my programme. It is the arena where committees, factions, learned bodies and so on function for this is the arena for collective decision making. Planning is not. Planning is based on individual choices, what I call consumer led planning. The producer gives of her or his labour, and receives in return the products of their choice. No one is allowed to intervene in this relationship less they break the link between contribution and reward. This is one of the primary lessons drawn from the failure of the USSR.

In his book Bellamy Foster discusses at length why a communist society would need to reign in its consumption to reduce individual carbon footprints until such time as sufficient carbon dioxide has been leached from the atmosphere and diversity restored. However, nowhere does he discuss the use of the social fund. In fact when we understand the social fund and its relationship to individual consumption the issue is clarified. For any given social output, increasing the relative size of the social fund would reduce individual consumption.

One of the reasons for the imminent overthrow of capitalism will be the climate emergency. Thus an emancipated working class would come ready armed with its tasks, which first and foremost will be repairing the planet and avoiding the threat to life, not only human life. In this light workers would be prepared to accept significant deductions from their contributions in order to resource the social fund to the point where there will be sufficient resources for planetary repair. This increase in contributions will automatically reduce what they have left over for their own personal consumption. A case of saving two birds with one kernel.

No doubt, a future communist society would spend a great deal of time and effort debating the scale of the deductions and the purpose to which the resulting resources should be put. This debate will not be fractured by competition, perverted by vested interests nor constricted by nationalism as it is under capitalism. Instead it will be wholesome and comprehensive, honest and reflective, leading to results which are of mutual benefit to all.

Having said this, we should not under-estimate the technical achievements which will be made possible by freed up collective effort no longer deranged by capitalist intrigues and wasted on their opulence. Over time it will be possible to repair the planet as well as to raise standards of living with the emphasis on those in the poorer parts of the world. There is no end to history, but there is a beginning to true human history - history freed from subservience, suffering, threat and want - and it begins by ending capitalism.

Brian Green, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2022.