1 The Problem

The central failure of socialist thinking in this century is its failure to produce a plausibly realistic and attractive conception of how a socialist society might operate. The two major contenders for the allegiance of socialist theorists are either unattractive or unrealistic. Democratic centralism is increasingly seen as unattractive and communalism as unrealistic.

Democratic centralists conceive of a socialist society in the near future as a mode of production in which there is a planned mobilisation of natural and human resources to meet human needs coordinated over a very wide area by a pyramidal political structure. Usually this structure is conceived as an electoral one. The various base productive and administrative units manage their own internal affairs by direct participatory democracy, or, where problems of scale make this impracticable, by elected representatives, appointed for limited periods and subject to immediate recall by their electorate. The base organisations elect representatives under the same conditions to higher bodies which coordinate productive units within an industry or various industries and administrative-distributive organisations within a region. Various regional industrial and administrative bodies are in turn coordinated by bodies elected from their constituents until one reaches a central authority in which planning is finally unified. This central authority has overriding authority over all its subordinate elements.

Communists envisage a similar structure at the base, but advocates the restructuring of production as far as possible into small scale units so that relatively compact communities may have as direct a control as possible over the whole range of production and administration that is relevant to meeting most of the needs of the local community. Coordination between communities would be on the basis of voluntary arrangements between them to supply each other with products and facilities they cannot produce efficiently on a small scale and by particular organisations to arrange for common access to specific natural resources. Thus there might be a number of inter-community authorities to deal with such things as mineral resources, transportation, aid to underdeveloped areas and large-scale research projects, but no single central planning authority with overriding power over the local communes in all-respects.

The differences between these two models relate in part to different estimates of the problems involved in transforming the productive structure developed under capitalism into a system of production governed by an analysis of human needs. Advocates of democratic centralism often concede that in the long run communalism may be a more acceptable form of social organisation, but argue that it presupposes a very radical transformation of the productive forces of society and of the technical and social relations of production and distribution, as well as a solution to the problems of uneven development. Such a transformation and redistribution of social resources could be achieved rapidly and fairly only by a highly integrated social effort that demands central organisation on a very large scale, ultimately a world scale. As these necessary changes have been accomplished the grip of the centre will be relaxed in favour of more and more autonomy for local units. Democratic pressures will ensure a constant tendency to prefer local autonomy to central direction wherever it is consistent with the objectives of meeting the needs of all efficiently.

Communists, by contrast, argue that setting up such a highly centralised structure necessarily involves setting up a bureaucracy which is increasingly remote from individuals and small groups and increasingly unresponsive to them in proportion to the range and complexity of the matters under its jurisdiction. Centralised planning for needs, however democratically controlled, must rest on highly standardised
conceptions of needs. Centrally organised production tends to a standardisation of means of production and administrative units are answerable more directly to local needs than they are to the needs of the national economy. Problems will be a much more effective and flexible way of meeting those problems than global coordination. Even if it is true that democratic centralism can in the short run produce a more rapid transformation and redistribution of resources, it will soon slow down and ultimately ossify. Communalism, by contrast, may be slower initially to recognise and deal with the more global and pervasive problems, but it will produce a wealth of diverse and specifically appropriate ways of doing so once those problems are clearly identified.

Democratic centralism and communalism are not 'pure' types, and a whole range of compromises between them are possible. The exact mix between the two that an immediately post-revolutionary society might find appropriate would depend on such things as the scale of the existing institutions that have to be restructured, the urgency of bringing about rapid change in various areas of production and administration, and the political situation itself. In some circumstances even the most ardent communalists might be forced to concede that military, political and economic factors made a period of highly centralised administration the only chance of laying a secure basis for communalism. On the other hand, in other circumstances, even those who were convinced that certain global problems could be dealt with only by centralism might have to concede that in a given situation only a limited communalism would be feasible, for political or economic reasons. Nevertheless there are two tendencies that would lead to orientations leading to conflicting proposals on a large range of concrete issues. There would be well-grounded fears on both sides. The centralists rightly fear that the wealthier and more sophisticated communes would tend to treat their resources as their property, take inadequate account of the needs of those in a weaker position or even exploit them in various ways. The communalists rightly fear that the centralists would create power structures that incorporate institutional interests and rigidities that could only be dissolved with the greatest difficulty.

In general it is to be expected that at the national level in the circumstances of advanced capitalist societies realism will tend to favour centralism because it will be a matter of dealing with a completely interdependent economic structure organised under a national bureaucracy. The shape and scale of the given productive forces will tend to determine the shape and scope of the structures needed to control it. On the other hand, in reaction against the capitalist state it is most probable that the ideological and emotional forces behind a revolution will be committed to communalism. The deep flaws in the socialist states that have embraced democratic centralism will reinforce this tendency. The problem of resolving democratically the specific issues over which these sides will come into political conflict is a particularly threatening one. Any constitutional decision procedure that is devised must already constitute a certain resolution of them in the way that it distributes authority to various bodies, determines the relevant electorates and institutionalises lines of autonomy and subordination between them. Consequently its legitimacy will be precarious and there will always be the danger of civil war of one sort or another between centralists and communalists or of a dictatorship of one or the other, ostensibly justified as a dictatorship of the proletariat, but in fact arising out of conflicts within it, as well as from particularist and centralist interests of remnants of the old 'upper classes'.

2 The Shared Presuppositions of Centralism and Communalism

Both democratic centralism and communalism presuppose that: (1) At some level in any society, at least for a long time to come, there must be bodies exercising something like the plenary sovereignty exercised by modern states over a territory and its population, and (2) The only way in which this sovereignty can be controlled by those subject to it is by making all positions of power in it subject to election. I want to deny both of these assumptions, attempt to show how they are interconnected and argue for alternatives to them. I do not deny that in an immediately post-revolutionary situation it will be necessary to have a certain dictatorship of the proletariat using at least some of the existing institutions of state power to maintain production, defend the revolution and arrange transfer of administration to new bodies. The crucial problem is what is to be set up to replace institutions designed to work in and for the old modes of production. To the extent that there is clear, well-grounded, practical agreement among revolutionaries about that the process of transformation and the winding up of the dictatorship can proceed so much more rapidly and effectively. Moreover, the agreement in question must be practical in the everyday sense of the word. It must relate to procedures and institutions that can be set up rapidly in effectively operating form without waiting for other changes such as the restructuring of the productive forces themselves. These institutions and procedures must be not just 'transitional' but relatively permanent and have a clear basis of legitimacy.

It seems reasonable to assume that in any foreseeable proletarian revolution the following major requirements on the legitimacy of systems of control of production and distribution will be paramount: (1) The system will provide a secure and dignified basis on which everybody will be assured of the necessities of a decent life, food,
housing, education, opportunities for cultural and leisure activities etc. (2) The burdens of unpleasant, boring work will be shared as equally as possible and minimised by improvements in technology and organisation. (3) Production will not be confined to necessities, but opportunities will exist for those who want them to acquire better goods and services provided they contribute an equivalent amount of labour and the community receives some compensation for the use of natural resources involved. (4) The system will incorporate adequate means for change to meet changing environmental, demographic, technological and cultural changes. (5) There will be ample opportunity for everybody to take an active part in trying out new techniques, methods of organisation, forms of interpersonal relationships, and so on. In situations where the productive forces are poorly developed, the overwhelming emphasis tends to go providing basic necessities. Consequently, the task of socialist organisation is conceived as one of planning. Effective planning demands firm, clearly set goals and the mobilisation of all useful resources to them. It is true that they are necessarily strongly centralist in situations of scarcity, inadequate resources. It involves the sub-ordination of all producers to specific functions in the plan, minimises variation, initiative and experiment that would absorb natural or human resources that could be used for the execution of the plan. This short-term rationality, however, results in excessively rigid and inflexible responses to change will be and the community are generally greater than in a smaller unit to change will be and the smaller will be the capacity of the individual or small group to influence its objectives and methods. However, smaller units have other limitations. They may not be able to exploit new technologies on a scale of production that are limited. Diffuse groups of autonomous communities may not generate new ways of doing things because of the tenuous and unsettled character of their means of cooperation. Within a relatively small community the pressures to conform to the standards of the community are generally greater than in a larger one. The perspectives of a highly integrated small community tend to be narrower and shorter than those of larger ones. The individual and the small group may find being big fish in a small pond not a very dynamic or interesting experience.

The dominance of planning as the mode of practical rationality associated with socialism is explained in part by the historical circumstances in which anti-capitalist revolutions have taken place. But there has also been a failure to conceive of other possibilities. We have opted for a very limited and stereotyped order of the working class as an alternative to capitalism except in situations of extreme deprivation or insecurity. It is important to recognise that the limitations of planning as total coordination of production are not wholly a matter of scale. It is true that the larger the whole that is planned the slower its responses to change will be and the smaller will be the capacity of the individual or small group to influence its objectives and methods. However, smaller units have other limitations. They may not be able to exploit new technologies on a scale of production that are limited. Diffuse groups of autonomous communities may not generate new ways of doing things because of the tenuous and unsettled character of their means of cooperation. Within a relatively small community the pressures to conform to the standards of the community are generally greater than in a larger one. The perspectives of a highly integrated small community tend to be narrower and shorter than those of larger ones. The individual and the small group may find being big fish in a small pond not a very dynamic or interesting experience.

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ly by agents who have as clear an understand-
ing as possible of what they are doing, likely pitfalls in execution and the effects of interfering factors. And (3) the ques-
tions posed ought to relate to wider questions about the significance or general-
isability of the results obtained and the possibilities they foreclose or open up.

More generally, an experimental society would, in generating such self-knowledge, be engaging not just in 'applied science', attempting to use existing knowledge to achieve pre-set goals by planning, but rather in 'pure' science, attempting to explore the possibilities of new procedures of social action, not by random trial and error, but on the basis of thorough critical analysis of the specific problem of the society and thorough, realistic inquiry into ways of overcoming them. I believe that this was essentially what Marx had in mind. Moreover, he envisaged this state of affairs as something that could be achieved by setting free the initiative and direct 'lateral' cooperation of the direct produc-
ers, reducing the centralised functions of the economy to 'routine' accounting. I want to suggest in more specific detail how this might be done.

3 A Socialist 'Free Enterprise' Economy

The principal defects of the capitalist 'free enterprise' economy are:

(a) Monopoly. There are four main forms of monopoly in contemporary capitalism, only one of which is distinctive of capitalism itself, namely the class monopoly of capital in the strict sense, the class control of socially produced means of production, under which workers are forced to sell their labour power to capitalists. Second, there is class monopoly of natural resources, on the basis of which absolute rent is exacted from producers for the use of scarce res-

(b) Misrepresentation of the production process. All monopolies rest ultimately on physical force, but they constantly attempt to find a 'rational' basis for their power by misrepresenting its origins, workings and effects. The result is the systematic mystification of social processes generally, and particularly of production itself, as Marx has shown. In particular, in capital-

(c) Obscuring social costs, particularly the social and environmental costs of production and the ultimate cost of destroying non-renewable resources. The capitalist market prices commodities on costs of production plus the ruling rate of profit. Costs of production reflect the cost of labour to the capitalist, absolute rent for the natural resources used, and the costs of maintaining professional and bureaucratic monopolies. The capitalist market registers the cost of the social, environmental and resource-deflation costs of specific kinds of production and consumption mainly to the extent that these are reflected in scarcity of certain resources and so in high monopoly prices for them. The only other way in which these costs are reflected in prices is by state action to tax, control or compen-
sate for them in various ways, e.g. by special taxes on the use of certain materi-

(d) Bias towards luxuries rather than necessities and towards private rather than communal consumption. These twin biases are a structural result of a mode of production which has only two means of distribution of consumption-goods, sale on the market of commodities to private consumers and sale to state instrumentalities financed by taxation. Most luxury goods are readily marketable in commodity form, and, because of great disparities in income, there is a ready market for them for themselves, but the other three forms of monopoly, at the expense of the workers. The typical response of the work-
ing class as a whole does not, even within the limits of a single state, much less internationally. To the extent that it does have some limited success the result is to imperil the system. Monopolies tend to war, since there is no national means of arbitrating between them. They must be abolised.

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standardised forms by the state for the masses or in luxury form by 'private enterprise' for the rich. Either both producers and consumers are put in a bureaucratic straight-jacket or their supply is constrained by professional monopolies, vested interests and considerations of short-term profitability for capital.

The merits of the capitalist market are mainly that it, even with its predecessors and with centrally planned economies it allows a great deal of decentralised initiative, leads to rapid development of the productive forces, tends to minimise the labour necessary for production and allows a certain degree of consumer sovereignty over what is produced. All of these advantages are present in forms that are limited by the power of monopoly, ignorance, manipulation of consumers and the other factors mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. But an historically viable solution to the problems posed by capitalism must transcend these limited forms rather than deny the significance of the advantages of capitalism. The following few paragraphs sketch some forms of 'market socialism' that is offered as at least of ultimate ideal, nor as an unique or best solution, but as a practical suggestion that might be acceptable and workable in an immediately post-revolutionary situation in advanced capitalist countries. In the following section I shall turn to the problem of democratic control of the various boards and committees that would be responsible for key decisions. The following are the main features of the suggestion.

(a) Trusteeship of the various production resources of society would be vested in boards of control, which would vary enormously in the scope of their responsibilities according to the relationship between the geographical locations of the resources and of the ultimate consumers. In the case of oil they might be as large as the present multinational corporations. In the case of fresh vegetable production they might be quite small. There would not necessarily be only one of them for a given industry within any given territory. These trustee-boards would lease productive facilities to worker cooperatives at prices intended to cover the necessary costs to discipline various boards and committees that would be responsible for ensuring his or her livelihood by making adequate provision for various benefits and obligations.

(b) Workers cooperatives would sell their products at market prices that would cover the cost of resources employed plus their own estimate of the value of their own labour. Innovative and efficient cooperatives might gain considerable market advantages, which would accrue to them as 'money' that could be spent only on consumption goods. Production would be coordinated not by a detailed plan, but by the market. However, consumer credit arrangements would encourage cooperative purchase or leasing of communal facilities rather than individual consumption wherever this seemed socially and economically desirable. Social security arrangements would consist of a system of insurance based on the social value and the unpleasantness of the work a person has done or contracted to do. A person could ensure that he or she had to devote relatively little time to ensuring his or her livelihood by undertaking the most unpleasant and necessary tasks. Where workers cooperatives were in a 'natural monopoly' position their pricing would be subject to arbitration by consumer representatives.

(c) Distribution agencies would allocate resources to service units organised on a fairly local basis, e.g. hospitals, schools, local health centres, and so on. These institutions would, within their budgetary constraints, be entirely free to determine what they would do with their funds and cooperate on large projects. Once again decisions at the various levels would be open to challenge on a 'common law' basis rather than on any explicit statutory responsibility before tribunals of citizens. In other words, these bodies would set their own objectives and criteria, but would have to be prepared to defend them.

(d) Budgeting agencies at various levels would be responsible for ensuring a balanced allocation of resources and imposition of taxes for public purposes. However, their role would be one of arbitrating between conflicting demands on resources rather than on planning in the strict sense. They would, one hopes, recognise a responsibility to allocate special resources to under-developed areas in a cooperative international effort to remedy problems of under-development. Ultimately there might be a world budget. However, these budgeting agencies would not be associated with that monopoly of organised violence that constitutes the state, but would depend on their moral authority and the cooperation of local agencies to enforce their decisions. Their major policy decisions would be put to referendum of all affected by them.

(e) Tribunals, in addition to having the power to discipline various boards and agencies, would also have the power to revise their responsibilities, abolish obsolete ones and set up new ones to meet changing technological, demographic and social structures, pronouncing on proposals put up by other organisations and groups of citizens. In this respect there would be no separation of judicial and legislative
functions. Punishments would consist primarily of economic penalties. Appeals against tribunals would be not to 'higher' bodies but to broader-based popular tribunals.

4 Statistical Democracy versus Electoral Democracy

Clearly such a set of proposals is unlikely to be carried through except in an overwhelmingly popular and determined revolution. Whatever their merits and inevitable vagueness, it is clear that they present enormous difficulties in the demands they make on public decision-making, not just in setting up such structures but in operating them on a stable, coherent and democratic basis. I shall argue that they are most unlikely to be workable on the basis of electoral democracy, but that they might work on the basis of statistical democracy, decision-making by boards chosen as statistically representative of those affected by the decisions in question from a pool of candidates who nominate themselves.

The main defects of electoral democracy in very large and complex societies are:

(a) Agglomeration of issues. In present parliamentary forms the electorate is asked to decide between several parties, giving them a 'mandate' to implement their policies over the whole range of state activities for a period of several years. Among these policies there are usually many that the electorate would reject if asked to pronounce on them singly. They are accepted (or rejected) not on their own merits but because they are seen as secondary to other matters that have become the main 'issues' of the election. This might not be so serious a defect if the set of policies that a party put up had the advantage of being more consistent and practicable than the set that would result from taking the preferences of electors on the discrete items of the package. But this is not usually the case. Many policies are incorporated in party manifestos as sops to elements within the party or the electorate who have to be placated in order to ensure success at the elections. Parties tend to make self-contradictory promises.

'One of the troubles with politicians is that they often break their promises. Another is that they sometimes keep them.' The policies to which parties commit themselves at elections have usually been formulated well in advance in the light of problems that will have changed by the time the party is in office. The electorate is well aware of such problems. For the decisive 'swinging voter' the main basis of decision is consequently not issues of policy as much as the personal characteristics of party leaders, getting rid of incompetent or unpopular administrations and 'simply giving the other lot a go'. Sceptical though one may be of the advertised claims of a new brand of soap powder, one tries it just to see how it turns out. On this sort of basis, however, radical parties are unlikely to get a hearing. The risks and uncertainties of trying out parties that are seeking irreversible and profound changes are too large, amorphous and pervasive.

(b) The professionalisation of politics. In order to be elected a candidate must be known to the electorate, which is in itself a full time job. In practice this means having the support of a party 'machine' which makes the candidate's political orientation identifiable, supplies the resources and organisation needed to reach electors and delivers a substantial vote of party loyalists. The result is to place enormous power in the hands of the party machine, to whose exigencies the candidate must submit. Politics becomes a matter of careerism, manipulated by entrenched bureaucracies, vested interests and contributors to party funds. The result is rule by an entrenched oligarchy of the more skilful power-brokers. The broad merits of particular proposals are a secondary consideration. The primary consideration is how they affect the balance of power among the power-brokers. Very few policies get worked out and tried consistently.

(c) Mystification. Consciously and unconsciously politicians strive to distort the nature of the issues at stake in political decisions. When criticising their opponents they tend to rely on falsehoods, emotive tags, half-truths and personal abuse. In defending their own policies they tend to rely on evading issues, encouraging wishful thinking, hiding the costs and exaggerating the likely benefits of what they propose. The electorate is necessarily very badly informed on the realities of the situation, and the politician has no interest in improving the standard of debate, the depth of analysis of the situation or the amount of information available to the electorate. To do so might involve taking specific stands which many potential supporters would disagree. It is much less risky to attempt to present oneself as 'all things to all men'.

Some of these defects might be overcome in the plethora of elections to the various boards, tribunals and agencies that would be necessary for the running of a socialist free enterprise economy, but others would emerge. The agglomeration of issues would be avoided, since there would be separate elections for various specialised offices, rather than election of an administration with all-embracing powers. But the enormous number of elections would put a very heavy strain on the time and energy people could reasonably be expected to devote to politics. The difficulties of keeping informed about and giving adequate analysis and discussion to the affairs of all the diverse agencies
by which one would be affected would be enormous and burdensome. In practice most people would probably resign themselves to voting for party tickets, as happens in the US where many public officials are directly elected. The patronage of party officials would be increased. Moreover, it would be virtually meaningless for candidates to commit themselves in advance on the precise issues that faced a specialised agency or tribunal. The electorate would have to trust to the candidate's will to represent them and his or her political orientation and judgement.

The device of recall might counter-balance this effect, but it is very dubious if it would work in the case of large, diffuse, specialised electorates. Where a person is representing an electorate that itself meets and deliberates regularly, recalling a representative would be feasible and effective. But in the large, scattered, numerous constituencies envisaged in the system outlined above, it would not be possible for the electorate as a whole effectively to monitor the performance of their representatives on a continuous basis. If the representative were chosen on a party basis the party would indeed monitor the performance of its candidate, but with an eye to intra-party power-brokering rather than the merits of the case. Moreover, the threat of recall would tend to inhibit office-holders from promoting informed discussion, taking adventurous rather than 'safe' decisions and entrenching interests and prejudices.

Again various attempts might be made to limit the perquisites of office and reduce careerism. But already most elective offices are not very well paid by prevailing standards for comparable work, and many of them are not very secure. Politicians in most advanced capitalist societies are motivated by goods such as power, prestige, and fascination with the game much more than by the pursuit of wealth. These goods are much more difficult to control and cannot be eliminated even in the most egalitarian societies. The importance, fascination and prominence of key decision-making positions cannot be eliminated without trivialising the process of decision-making itself, removing the representative from the public eye and according scant recognition to public service. What is dangerous is not these rewards themselves but the frenzied competition for them that leads to a persistent tendency to manipulate the electorate, mystify issues and the performance of politicians and demote public personae to personalitics rather than issues. Nor would it be practical so to limit tenure of public office that a person having held it for a term could not stand again for any office. In an electoral system the main control that the electorate have over elected officials is that of refusing to re-elect them. Moreover, in practice this would make candidates even more dependent on party power structures to have any chance of election. It is very dubious whether there is any way of controlling party organisation that does not compromise radically the freedom of parties as voluntary associations which seems essential to political freedom in an electoral system. Attempts to do so

entrench existing party structures.

I have not touched on the variety of possible voting systems and their respective merits and demerits, but none of them can remedy these fundamental difficulties in electoral politics. Electoral politics can work well for very limited purposes, and it is vastly preferable to its historical rivals, mainly various forms of overt class rule, if the complexity of modern means of production are such that only very complex systems of control can cope with the social organisation they entail, we must rethink radically the concept of democracy. Direct participatory democracy is possible only in very restricted circumstances. Most of the more significant and effective institutions of modern democracies are based on the implicit assent of the electorate and the power to recall a representative would be entirely free. They would be arbitrated by putting it to a sort of referendum. Indeed these boards would be required to put certain kinds of crucial issues to referenda, whether there was disagreement on the board or not. In some cases these referenda need not be a matter of mass votes, especially where the points at issue were
highly technical. Rather, a large sample of the electorate would be chosen, given special opportunities for discussion and investigation of the issues, and then asked to vote on them. However, a main responsibility of boards of control would be to ensure the widest possible access to all the information they amass and provide detailed public discussion of the effects of proposals before they made decisions of policy. The emphasis would be on clear, explicit decisions, consistently implemented rather than on compromise. Progress would be seen to depend not so much on making a decision that pleased everybody as on finding out how certain procedures work in practice with a view to building up a precise delineation of what can and cannot be done under what conditions, with what side-effects and so on. The society would seek in experiment an ever-growing self-knowledge in theory and practice.

The role of political parties in this process would be to organise public scrutiny of proposals, mobilise public support for or opposition to proposals, especially in the context of referenda on crucial issues, and attempt to relate specific proposals to overall movements of social change. Not everybody who was interested in having a say in a specific area of policy might get a chance to serve on an administrative board, but they would have ample opportunity to influence discussion of issues. There would be large reservoirs of people in the community with policy-making, judicial and administrative experience many of whom would, presumably, maintain an active and critical interest in the work of their successors. People could take a very specialised interest in specific areas confident that their interests would be well represented in other areas. Decisions arrived at by these means would enjoy a very high degree of legitimacy and authority. On the one hand, they would be decisions as genuinely representative as possible of the informed opinions of those affected by them. On the other, the decisions would be as open, fully argued and scientifically based as possible. No doubt some minority interests would be frustrated, but remembering for discussion within the framework of social controls, there would be some outlet for them in practice.

5 Conclusion

Statistical democracy is not without its problems. I wish to venture the reader to speculate about them and possible solutions to them. It is not an ideal or an atemporal optimum, but a practical suggestion for a pattern of relations of production that would be appropriate to the objective opportunities and subjective aspirations that seem to be arising out of the development of the contradictions inherent in capitalism. It would require a well-educated and experimentally-minded, politically active community with a strong majority agreement on such things as the value of free enterprise, the importance of ecological and resource problems, the value of explicit scientific self-understanding and a strong commitment to eradicating all traces of class monopolisation of political and economic power.

These requirements seem to me to express some of the social opportunities that are likely to dominate a revolutionary movement in advanced capitalist countries. Moreover, it seems to me, too, that it might be possible to get limited experiments in statistical democracy within modern capitalist states as specific ways of dealing with limited problems. This would be a desirable objective for socialists in that it would provide some concrete exemplification of these procedures and thus make proposals for a post-revolutionary order sound less utopian. At present the jury system is the only element of statistical democracy we have. If others could be squeezed into the interstices of the present system here and there in apparently innocuous ways, it might change people's perceptions of the possibilities of revolutionary change. In particular, the conception of statistical democracy based on flexibly defined electorates, not circumscribed by arbitrary state boundaries or other forms of sovereignty, supplies a positive programme for supplanting the state rather than reinforcing its role and a high degree of democratic control without falling into the particularism of local community sovereignty. It is a form of socialism that might recommend itself to the working class even in the USA. It is, I believe, also the only form of socialism that could operate effectively on a world scale, granted the structure of the ecological, demographic, productive and distributive problems that must be faced in the near future. Finally, statistical democracy is so contrary not only to the interests of capital and of the state apparatuses but to the specific interests of the political order generated by parliamentary politics that it is extremely unlikely that there can be any 'parliamentary road' to it. However, it is possible that elements of statistical democracy may be inserted here and there into the system where it suits politicians to get rid of some especially hot potato. A revolutionary movement that moved rapidly towards setting up a framework of statistical democracy would certainly lessen the 'birth pangs' of the new order and provide a new and undeniable basis of legitimacy. It might even be possible to precipitate a revolutionary situation by setting up a range of 'citizens committees' based on statistical principles which would systematically confront the existing apparatus with clear alternatives that it could neither accept nor successfully represent but to the specific inter-

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