


make up your own mind 

Red River Radical

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redriverradical@live.com

redriverradical.wordpress.com

About Red River Radical

This is a zine. You know, like a miniature magazine.

Its about radical politics in the Red River valley area. You know, Fargo and Moorhead and the other places you live. Its not liberal or conservative — its radical! That means its not about finding happy mediums or short fixes for society's problems. Its about getting down to the root of the problem (hey that's what radical means in Latin!) and seeing what is really going on. Radicals have gone by many names: communists, socialists, anarchists, Marxists, feminists, antiracists, Third World nationalists, anti-imperialists, anti-capitalists and numberless other names. Radicals live everywhere including the Red River valley. This zine is about making radical ideas and actions familiar to the general public. Maybe you are a radical and don't even know it.

Want to contribute? disagree? Gushing praise? email Red River Radical at redriverradical@live.com

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produced in universities situated within capitalism. If knowledge is produced by social activity the nature of such knowledge will reflect the circumstances it is created in. Claims that knowledge is somehow autonomous from institutional circumstances is as obfuscating as the Dragon Core's efforts to be progressive by including such "discrete units" as "Critical Thinking," "Human Diversity," "Global Perspective," and "sustainability." Such ends can only be achieved by active participation in political struggles – not by meeting a checklist for approved syllabi.

The issues purported to be addressed by Dragon Core are as Mohanty says, "very real, day-to-day practices in which we engage. They are not reducible to mere curricular or policy decisions – that is, to management practices." The only way in which to get past the logic of neoliberalism, to end the commodification of education, to not make students passive victims of the capitalist marketplace and to protect the working conditions of university faculty is to "actively rethink the purpose of liberal education in antiracist, anticapitalist, feminist ways." That middle word, anticapitalism, it's a scary one. It raises all sorts of questions: is anything else possible? Is that too radical? But any course worth its DC 2 rating ought to be able to handle it.

tionally broad mission of Liberal Arts education's mission to create well rounded and informed citizens to passive consumers of commodities.

Students as consumers is taken for granted under neoliberalism, although not all students around the country have gotten the idea. Particularly in California, March saw many militant direct actions by students protesting funding cuts, rising tuition, and commoditized syllabi and pedagogies with occupations of administration buildings, strikes, and riots.

The fate of professors under the neoliberal regime is not much better. Dragon Core is a perfect example of Mohanty's observation of "administrators not professors driving the curriculum" so that "[t]he role of teachers has shifted radically in this process from being educators with control over [their] own labor and the products of [their] labor to commodity producers and deliverers." Finally the social space between professors and students narrows as university faculty begins to resemble the low wage service workers their students are destined to become.

MSUM faculty were and continued to be disgruntled about Dragon Core but have done too little too late to defend their working conditions and generally have little clue as to the true effects neoliberal education models have on their students. This lack of understanding of the issue at hand shows a major problem in the former Liberal Arts model of education. Liberal Arts is based in Enlightenment era liberalism and has several biases about the nature of knowledge and individuals relationship to institutions such as the State and market: individuals must interact with the State as citizens (mostly dealing with voting and rights in courts), the market is autonomous from the State and citizenship has no place in property relations and the market, and knowledge is as autonomous from the social relations as the State is from the market.

It is easy to see how neoliberalism could naturally arise out of classical liberalism – the autonomy of the market is one step away from the supremacy of the market. A mutual respect and fascination for private property and commodities in liberalism and neoliberalism is tied very directly to the globalization of capitalism and the discourses

C is for communism

Communism is perhaps the simultaneously the most misunderstood and important concept of the revolutionary Left throughout history. That's communism with a lowercase c, unless it's at the beginning of the sentence. Communism does not mean the government owns everything, or that you share a toothbrush, or that you cannot choose where to work. In fact, every government controlled by a Communist Party in history has had next to no relationship to the idea of communism. These are all things you should not be thinking about as you read this.

Marx, in the *Communist Manifesto* defines communism as an economic principle in which "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." In other words, communism as an economic and social principle in which *each participant contributes according to ability and takes according to need.*

"That's nice, but people are too greedy." Smirks the self satisfied political moderate. Marx did not pull the idea of a communist social order out of thin air. He based it on ethnographic evidence. Obviously this ethnographic evidence is dated, but not irrelevant. Marx identified a "primitive communism" stage of human evolution. Nearly no social scientist will claim this to be true anymore, but Marx was not wrong. His evolutionary ideas are mostly problematic in ideas of modes of production, but primitive communism is surprisingly common (and contemporary) throughout human history. Nearly all hunting and gathering and horticultural people in the world would be classified as conducting economics on the principle of "generalized reciprocity" by anthropologists. Under the rules of generalized reciprocity, accounting for objects traded is not keep, beyond an acknowledgement that exchange is more or less equal between individuals and groups. People with economies such as this find it rude to show gratitude for gifts – a gift economy is another common term for such interactions – because it is taken for granted that sharing is the natural means of association.

Marx was not the only radical of his time to theorize the past precedents and future potentials of communism. Peter Kropotkin, a Russian noble turned revolutionary, provided crucial understanding of

reciprocity and cooperation as a factor of evolution in his book *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution*. Kropotkin viewed human beings as fundamentally social animals that relied on cooperation for success. In fact human capacity for morality has an evolutionary basis: a species may be more successful overall when individuals have less regard for their own well being as for other individuals or the group. This is the evolutionary basis of altruism. Kropotkin did not ignore that human life was full of suffering and evil nor did he subordinate the moral conscience of individuals or minorities to majorities. Rather Kropotkin viewed communism as providing the material basis of true individual liberty. Kropotkin's views became known as anarchist communism or anarcho-communism.

Unfortunately, the 20th Century would see the cooptation of the term communism in the name of Communist Parties and "Socialist Republics" around the world. It is well known now that states such as the USSR and the People's Republic of China had/have next to no respect for individual liberty. Naming the governing parties of these authoritarian states Communist Parties had the benefit of claiming the moral authority of the diverse (and often bitterly divided) social movements of workers, peasants, and students that dreamed of a better world.

With the supposed triumph of capitalism in the Cold War, communism is now taking on its original ethical definition once again. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt argue in their book *Commonwealth* that globalization, while usually understood as the global expansion of capitalism, provides examples of numerous autonomous projects (any organization or activity outside the regulation of the market or State) operating on the basis of the logic of communism. They argue that at this point of history it is just as plausible for the future of humanity to be based on the commons as it is public or private property. The only requirement for this optimistic future is to cultivate the seeds of this new society in the shell of the old.

One need not look far to find these examples of a future commonwealth. Communism takes place everyday in our lives. Families sharing a meal (assuming an equitable sharing of housework based on gender), friends helping another move to new apartments, helping a classmate with homework. Open source computer programs, Food Not Bombs, Really Really Free Markets (like a

rummage sale sans the sale) – any activity in which immediate reward is not expected, in which the ends are simply to do something for others because that is the type of world you wish to live in – this is communism.

Far from an outdated 19th Century political ideology, communism is an integral part of all human history. Communism has been the end goal of numberless religious millenarian and secular revolutionary workers' movements. It was the basis of all human societies prior to 5,000 years ago when the State was invented. Contrary to popular conceptions of communism as contrary to human nature it is a vital part of our identity as ethical and moral beings. Any future of humanity with a basis in sustainability and social justice will necessarily be a communist future. It is not only time to reclaim the word; it is time to start living the ideal.

Neoliberalism at MSUM

Neoliberalism is an economic philosophy that can be boiled down to the statement that everything that exists can be sold as a commodity on a single market that spans the entire planet. It happens to be the predominant economic philosophy of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the U.S. government. In as far as neoliberalism is discussed critically in college courses it is as instances of "structural adjustment" (privatizing to multinational corporations commonly owned or state owned industries and public services and utilities) in Africa or Latin America. What are never discussed are the effects of neoliberalism on universities.

In North America, universities are a primary target for "restructuring" (a favorite neoliberalist term). Minnesota State University Moorhead is an excellent example with its recent change from Liberal Arts education to the "Dragon Core." The Dragon Core follows the standard neoliberal logic as outlined by Chandra Talpade Mohanty in her book *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* as "shifting attention from educators to the projects of education that can now be sold in discrete units." This is experienced at MSUM as the change from the tradi-