

ILJA SEIFERT

Being somewhat imperfect –
Deliberations on the image of Man

Recent developments in bio-technology – lately demonstrated by the achievements in the Human Genome Project – tend to alter our traditional image of Man as a somewhat imperfect being. The improvement of human genetic codes appears not only as a possibility but a desirability. As this perspective progressively enters the realm of possibility, it simultaneously challenges democratic social movements whose objectives are to establish a socialist society. Which image of the human being should they sustain under the impression created by the present results of »successful« bio-genetic engineering in natural sciences? The author – who is himself a handicapped person– strongly pleads for a firm rejection of all delusions that try to make us believe that every possible innovation perceived as being within reach, must be accomplished. Rather than submit to so-called »technological imperatives« – in most cases simply »efficiency driven«, the most important goal should be to make all spheres of social life accessible to all human beings, each, in his on way, being somewhat imperfect.

BIRGIT ROMMELSPACHER

PDS and Feminist Policy – is there a Contradiction?

Analysing recently presented contributions to the ongoing programmatic debate, the author points out a considerable discrepancy between theory and praxis, in regards to the prevailing concepts of feminist policies. She points specifically to an apparent lack in analyses of social power structures and systems of rule. The social position of women and the specific forms of exploiting their labour are structurally rooted both in how they are involved in the material production and in their cultural-symbolic status in private life: The author admits the existence of considerable differences between East and West Germany. Another discrepancy – that will definitely be accentuated with globalization – exists between native and migrant women. Therefore, the author pleads for »critical feminism« that looks not only forward – to from whom women should emancipate themselves – but also takes a retrospective look – to at whose expense will women emancipate themselves.

HANS-GERT GRÄBE

Rethinking socialism today – the »open source project«

Current deliberations about socialism as a particular social formation should – according to the conviction of this author, who works as an expert in information technology – go back to the famous quote of Karl Marx, that the »germ of the new social structure will develop within the old capitalist society«. One of the most astonishing developments in this regard can be witnessed inside the field of computer software where the monopolistic giant Microsoft now is seriously challenged by the competition of the Linux-community.

While Microsoft is strongly a ›copyright‹ orientated corporation, that tries to maximise profits, not least, through its commercial licence policy, Linux is a ›copyleft‹ project in which the expertise of thousands of software specialists all over the world is consolidated to develop both a low-priced and stable performing disc-operating-system and programmes for all sorts of users. The driving forces behind Linux are two aims: First, this project is regarded as a means of democratising technological progress because it makes access to high tech independent of the financial status of the user. And second, the global community of software experts wants to show that (besides any profit incentive) they are capable of offering more intelligent solutions than a transnational corporation with nearly unlimited financial resources. In light of the debate about socialism, the existence of (and probably the growing success of) Linux can be viewed as evidence that within a capitalist environment there are always islands of solidarity and efficient resistance against the purely profit orientated strategies.

HORST GROSCHOFF

What consequences do the »end of the weltanschauung [ideological] party« concept have?

The failure of state socialism has also shaken the concept of »scientific socialism« down to its roots. In the opinion of the author, the issue of an ethical justification for socialism (originally raised by Bernstein) must be re-appraised, particularly because of the indispensability of ideological tolerance in the current general functioning and developing framework of left parties and movements. This is a basic question for the PDS, still faced with its heritage of the monolithic ›weltanschauung‹ of the GDR past. In light of the party's ongoing programmatic discussion, this finally raises a number of supplementary questions particularly views on culture and religion.

MICHAEL WOLF

From »Concerted Action« to »Alliance for Jobs«

In his article, Michael Wolf discusses the structure of the so-called bargaining systems as a typically German instrument for organizing industrial relations. These systems are designed to resolve conflicts or problems by seeking compromise between the interest groups involved or their representatives through bargaining. The article focuses on the »Alliance for Employment«, its background, and the endogenous and exogenous conditions and scenarios affecting its success or failure. It begins with a brief analysis of an analogue historical campaign called »Concerted Action« but goes on to describe the first initiative for an »Alliance« which ended in failure. This is followed by a close look at the origins, objectives and organizational framework of the current – second – »Alliance« campaign and a comparison between »Concerted Action« and »Alliance«. The article concludes with a few reflections on conditions and scenarios affecting the »Alliance's« success or failure.

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