

class. It is nothing surprising, and if it is morally reprehensible that is hardly relevant politically, to see the working class divided along a whole series of inter-sectional divisions. The way the regime of capital accumulation and political legitimation took the characteristics they did in Britain under the Industrial Revolution and British Empire should illuminate present day labour movement problems. If unity across regions, genders, ages, religions, skill levels, and employment relationships cannot be taken as a given then its ongoing political construction becomes a priority. In that sense this book sets an optimistic tone (or at least one not mired in deep pessimism) because it demonstrates how labour movements develop, struggle and that solidarity can sometimes be achieved.

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Allan Engler. *Economic Democracy: The Working Class Alternative to Capitalism*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2010. 112pp. & Gregory Elliot. *Ends in Sight: Marx /Fukuyama /Hobsbawm /Anderson*. Toronto: Pluto Press, 2008. 160pp.

Economic Democracy by Allan Engler and *Ends in Sight* by Gregory Elliott are small paperback books written in the first decade of the 21st century, each offering assessments of capitalism and the potential for its ending. While both arguments are framed by Marxist theory, the different approaches taken by the authors lead them to different conclusions and produce works that complement one another.

Engler's *Economic Democracy* presents a critique of capitalism and a vision of economic democracy as the alternative best suited to the working class. The book is written in accessible language with few citations, more the style of a popular manifesto than academic essay. It is divided into three major sections: Capitalism: Socialized Labour; Economic Democracy: Ending Minority Rule; and Opposing and Ending Capitalism: Reforms to End Capitalism. Each of these is divided into brief subsections, all listed in the contents thereby reinforcing the feel of the book as practical and accessible. Engler writes from the perspective of a longstanding social activist and unionist in Canada. He is also the author of *Apostles of Greed, Capitalism and the Myth of the Individual in the Market* (Pluto Press and Fernwood, 1995).

Economic Democracy offers an assessment of capitalism as a system of socialized labour based on private corporate ownership by wealth-holding minorities and governed by master-slave relations. Engler asserts that economic democracy is a way to end capitalism and minority entitlement without ‘turning the world upside down’ (p.46). Like the transition from feudalism to capitalism, he does not foresee the shift from capitalism to economic democracy as resulting from any specific uprising or event, but rather through a gradual process of change. He insists that armed revolution is “incompatible with working class interests” (p.93) and has resulted time and again in confirming and reinforcing minority rule rather than unseating it. Only through a measured process of “gains and reforms” (p.82) to the current system, the author argues, will minority wealth-holder entitlement decrease and “human entitlement” increase, private ownership be replaced with social ownership and ‘dictatorial workplaces’ give way to workplace democracy. This process will be enacted through unions and workplace organizing, community mobilization, and democratic political action (i.e. majority vote).

Gregory Elliott’s *Ends in Sight* is written in a slightly more theoretical style than *Economic Democracy*, with several notes and citations supporting each chapter and drawing on a more extensive and diverse bibliography. Elliott, a UK-based scholar, uses somewhat more academic language than Engler, however the book remains accessible and easy to follow, examining the notion of the end of capitalism, or the ‘end of history’ as it has been taken up in writings by Francis Fukuyama, Eric Hobsbawm, and Perry Anderson, in relation to Marx’s idea of communism as the ‘end of pre-history’. Each chapter offers an opposing standpoint (“one neoconservative and three variously socialist”) presented in a different form (“political manifesto, philosophy of history, account of the twentieth century, inaugural editorial”) (p.viii). Elliott uses Fukuyama, Hobsbawm and Anderson’s visions of capitalism’s finale to ultimately argue that in fact it is Marxism as a movement that has ended, and that for the first time since the nineteenth century capitalism is not “haunted by its shadow: the spectre of socialism” (p.x).

Engler’s *Economic Democracy* relies on a definition of ‘working class’ that includes everyone (popularly heralded these days as “the 99%”) who depends on their own labour to support themselves. However, this grouping includes such an extensive range of positions that it is difficult to conceive of as a cohesive category.

Engler offers a host of claims about the concerns, needs and interests of this enormous working class, making little distinction between its members and the power they hold within the context of the current global system; he asserts “it is the heterogeneity, the universality of the working class that makes economic democracy practical” (p.97).

For Engler, most distinctions among members of the working class are themselves the product of capitalism and consequently will be eliminated through a transition to economic democracy. Indeed he attributes the longevity of capitalism in part to a focus by social activists on these intra-class differences and single issue campaigns that have failed to recognize that “the capitalist drive to maximize profits is behind the racialization of minorities, gender discrimination in workplaces, widening disparities, wage discrimination, repression, wars, campaigns against public services and the externalizing of environmental costs” (p.102).

While it may indeed be the case that capitalism is responsible for all he attributes to it, Engler’s argument relies heavily on a direct cause and effect relationship between capitalism and oppression that suggests the possibility of simply undoing the negative global impact of capitalism and bringing into balance a diverse range of social, economic, and political international policies and practices. He makes several somewhat dubious, however desirable, claims reflecting this vision. For example, he states “As inequalities are ended, immigration and emigration are likely to move toward balance everywhere. Gated neighbourhoods will pass into history” (p.51), and “Once capitalist entitlement has been replaced with the right of people everywhere to democratically direct their means of livelihood, coveting others’ resources, surpluses or markets will be pointless. The pretexts for foreign occupations, war, militarism, and repression will evaporate” (p.62). Economic democracy will be heavily determined by the benevolence of “communities” organizing in a shared vision of their collective best interest, in harmony with all other communities as well as the environments in which we live.

Engler’s argument, based largely on the political theorizing of European (male) thinkers, is un-self-consciously culture bound, allowing him to assert for example, that once given the rights to pursue the careers of their choosing and the freedom to “control their own bodies, most women will have one or two children; some will have three or more; some will be childless. Populations will remain stable or gradually decline” (p.81). Despite describing the impact of capitalism on parts of the global south and acknowledging

that “movements for economic democracy must be international” (p.103), Engler ultimately adheres to an analysis that assumes the authority of Western Marxists to determine “what poor countries need” (p.22) and indeed what’s ideal for the whole world.

In sum, Engler’s vision is consistent with the historicism, economism, and utopianism that Elliott describes as the “three cornerstones of historical Marxism [that have been] the articles of faith of nothing less than a secularized and sociologized ‘religion of the subaltern’ as Gramsci put it” (p.33). Elliott, on the other hand, is interested in the mobilizing power of this ‘faith’ while at the same time resigned to neoliberalism as proof that “the mere ability to table a task does not ensure its resolution” (p.24). Both are concerned with imagining an end to capitalism and grapple with Marx’s underestimation of its resilience. Engler avoids the historical stains on communism and socialism by choosing to call his alternative “economic democracy” while remaining bound to Marx’s assumption that capitalism creates the conditions for its alternative “on account of the intrinsically contradictory, and finally self-destructive, dynamics of its own development” (Elliott, p.10). Elliott, instead, takes a ‘can’t live with him, can’t live without him’ approach to Marx (p.ix) and draws on the historical developments in both Marxism and capitalism to try and identify an ‘end in sight’. He ultimately sees no end to capitalism however; only to socialism, given that “the argument from dystopia—socialism equals Stalinism, the worst of all possible worlds—is reinforced by the argument from utopia—socialism equals an impracticable ideal, an impossible best of all possible worlds” (p.24).

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Bill Freund and Harald Witt. (Eds.). *Development Dilemmas in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Review*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010. 424pp.

Development Dilemmas effectively spells out the challenges to South Africa’s post apartheid development across a range of spheres: the minerals-energy complex, state implementation, land, and gender. It is promising to see a volume that brings social and environmental issues together on equal footing, and hopefully this