

Marx's Ecology or Ecological Marxism?

This is how the present symposium on John B. Foster's Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature happened to come about. Barbara Laurence and I recently discussed CNS's future with Dan Faber, Roger Keil, and Joel Kovel, coordinators of the Boston, Toronto, and New York editorial groups, respectively. Among other things, we agreed that CNS should publish more symposia and debates pertaining to leading concepts and theories in red-green (and related) discourses and also to practical or political problems of ecological/environmental (and other) social movements, South and North. In the first category would be concepts such as "ecological modernization" and theories derived from Henri Levevre's works — two symposia projects now off the ground. In the second category would be topics and issues such as the politics of global warming, the uneven development of the greening of labor, the intersections of the "environmentalism of the poor" in the South and the movement for environmental justice in the North, the criss-crossing of urban movements and urban ecology, new meanings of "community" that signify "women" or "feminism," and other subjects of interest and importance. I confess to a special interest in how red-green perspectives can be developed more systematically within the growing anti-globalization movement.

We would be pleased if readers passed on suggestions for possible topics and names of potential contributors. (And while I'm at it, we're also requesting subscribers and friends to make a little project of asking co-workers and others to subscribe to CNS. Guilford Books, our publisher, is making CNS available on line, which might be an extra inducement to subscribe. Students get CNS at half-price.)

About the same time Barbara and I, et al. were discussing the future of the journal, the New York group began reading and discussing Marx's Ecology. The book stimulated lots of interest and discussion and no less criticism. The group decided to produce three or four short

critical essays based on an agreed-upon division of labor with respect to the book's main themes. As it turned out, three of the following contributions originate in the New York group, which also decided to include a fourth (by CNS editor Alan Rudy), which is an expanded version of a key point in a review of Marx's Ecology that Alan wrote for another publication.

We have invited Foster to reply to any or all of the essays below. Hopefully, his "reply to critics" will appear in the September issue together with any rejoinders the symposiasts wish to make. We also extend an open invite to CNS readers to weigh in with their views. As with future symposia, we'll keep the present one going as long as readers and writers have something new to say about Foster's book and the many issues it raises. — J. O'C

Failed Promise

By Maarten de Kadt and Salvatore Engel-Di Mauro

John Bellamy Foster places the development of Marx's scientific thinking in the context of the science of Marx's own time; thus the achievement of his book is its contribution to the history of ideas. *Marx's Ecology* traces Marx and Engels' role in the development of modern ecological thinking and is informative and entertaining to read.

The book, however, reveals profound weaknesses. First, even though Foster asserts he will not impose modern ecological concepts back into the thinking about nature in the 1800s, he in fact does so. Thinking about nature was then at a relatively early stage, and because of advances in physical, natural and social science, such thinking is qualitatively different now. Such thinking was not able to consider the scale and kinds of interaction between human beings and the rest of nature that characterizes the present. Secondly, Foster ignores major historical developments in the theory and practice of ecology itself and thereby fails to make his work relevant to the development of either ecological or ecological Marxist theory. Lastly, his attempts to critique "Green Theory" fail; Foster never discusses what a unified Green Theory would look like and, instead, he homogenizes a set of diverse frameworks associated with often opposing political perspectives (implicitly conflating, *inter alia*, liberals, feminists of various persuasions, anarcho-communists and social ecologists).