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I was the city planning director for Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada for three years and had the benefits of the wonderful Canadian socialized health system. But all you hear from the for-profit US medical establishment and the insurance crooks is how terrible it is. In Canada, everybody was covered!! It was paid for by a universal deduction for universal coverage. This is similar to the socialized Fargo Fire Department, paid for by all, and protecting all.

Now I see where the US government is bailing out

failing or failed banks, insurance companies, and may buy the auto industry. Isn't that nationalization, a form of socialism? US citizens will be partners, and when the automakers get back on their feet, we will share in the profit. Maybe the US becomes socialist by buying out industry, financial corporations, etc. bit by bit.

At one time, over 80 countries had the word socialist

in their name. That doesn't mean that they were, in fact, socialist. But religion was downplayed in all of them. In time, new forms will have to be developed to meet the challenges of human survival and progress on the globe. Religion will gradually fade away as the backward ones die off.

The road to the future is not paved. We pave it as

The road to the future is not paved. We pave it as we travel.

<http://www.redriverfreethinkers.org>

The mission of the Red River Freethinkers is to advocate for a skeptical view of the role of religion in society and to promote critical examination of religious authority and dogma.

Articles in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the ideas or opinions of the Red River Freethinkers organization.

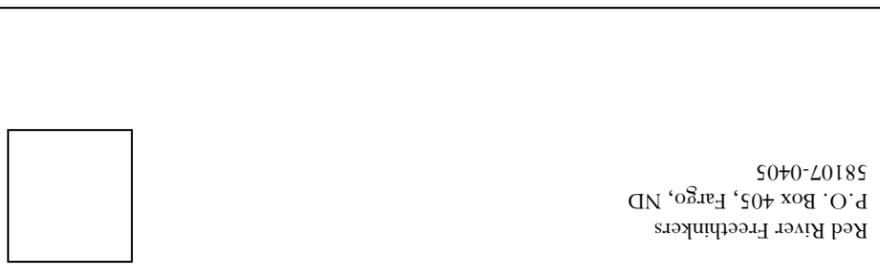
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RED RIVER FREETHINKERS

President Jon Lindgren
701-232-7868
jon.lindgren@ndsu.edu

Treasurer Carol Sawicki
701-232-5676
csawicki@corpcomm.net

Secretary Lilie Schoenack
701-306-0630
lilieann@msn.com

Interim Program Coordinator
Lew Lubka
701-232-2164
lubka@fargocity.com

Webmaster Eric Ashton
605-306-0815
webmaster@redriverfreethinkers.org

Interim Publicity Director
Mary Cochran
701-293-7188
olliesmaga@msn.com

Newsletter Jason Schoenack
701-306-0815
jschoena@hotmail.com

we travel. No one knows the future path of the United States. By electing Obama and getting rid of the gangsters who were in the driver's seat for eight long years, we have taken a major step toward a better tomorrow.

I invite comment on this "think piece". I love our Freethinkers group because we are open to ideas which challenge the status quo.

**Lew Lubka
Fargo, ND**

RED RIVER FREETHINKERS
THE RED RIVER RATIONALIST

ISSUE 118 DECEMBER 2008

ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION, CAPITALISM AND BEYOND

There were recently several postings on the Red River Freethinkers email group about the development of religion. I posted a short piece on the subject. Jason Schoenack, our Red River Freethinkers newsletter editor, asked if he could print my post in the forthcoming issue. This is an extended version of that post.

Religion was part of the development of civilization. Like many institutions, it had a progressive root; it was an organizing force that brought people together. It attempted to find answers to questions, some of which were answerable (what is lightning?) and some that were philosophical, like, what is the purpose of life? The philosophical ones are still up in the air, as we saw at our last meeting at Atomic Coffee in Fargo. There always will be questions, room for discussion, without bringing mythology or supernaturalism into the argument.

Capitalism began as a positive force which overthrew feudalism, which fettered the development of the productive forces of society. Feudalism, in turn, overthrew slavery (the slavery of Rome, not the modern slav-

ery of the southern US). Capitalism spanned the globe with rail, telephone, wireless, steamships; it fostered the industrial and agricultural revolutions. But in its rapacity for profit, in its insatiable greed, it exploited and plundered anything that it could, including human beings, the earth, the waters, the air, forests - in short, whatever was profitable. And it developed the doomsday weapon, the atomic bomb. The religious right would use it to bring on the Rapture.

In its voracious greed and lust for MORE, capitalism took and refined every mind-boggling and mind-destroying idea that was used over the ages. It duped the people with superstition and religion - aren't they all first cousins? It also perpetuated old thinking such as racism, discrimination, sexism, ageism, militarism and whatever else would confuse and divide people and encourage them to hate. The diversity of the human race, one of the most beautiful

aspects of our lives, is converted into reasons for hatred. Different ethnicities, languages, and cultures should be cherished. The modern mass media, a vital part of the system, is owned by capitalists and it uses all of these methods.

Our backward system needs to be replaced by some sort of beloved community, where humans help one another, work for peace, for the environment, for harmonious relations with all people and nations. If we don't do something drastic, human life may not prevail on planet Earth.

Darwin discovered the inner workings of evolution, such as natural selection. Marx exposed the inner workings of capitalism, including surplus value and the inevitable fall in the rate of profit. He said capitalism would create its own gravediggers, the working class. But he

Capitalism began as a positive force which overthrew feudalism

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POINTS OF INTEREST

- The December RRF meeting will be a potluck and celebration of this year's Winter solstice. It will be held from 1-3pm on Sunday December 21st at Lew Lubka's home at 1723 6th St. S. Fargo, ND. Phone 701-232-2164.
- The Winter solstice occurs on December 21st at 12:04pm this year.
- MSUM's Campus Free-thought Alliance (CFA) meets on the 1st and 3rd Thursday each month at 7pm.
- The December Grand Forks Atheists meeting will be a potluck featuring a speaker with Q&A afterwards on Saturday Dec 27 from 3-5pm at the East Grand Forks Campbell library.

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TODAY'S MYTH: TEN COMMANDMENTS ARE DISPLAYED AT THE SUPREME COURT

Yes, we've all heard this, "If the Ten Commandments are displayed at the Supreme Court, they sure as heck can be on the City Mall in Fargo." In the Federal Hearing that five of us were involved in a few years ago, there was discussion of the Ten Commandments at the Supreme Court.

It turns out they are not displayed at the Supreme Court. Some attorneys know this and refer to a "depiction",

not a display of the 10C. So, what is it that has been incorrectly called a display or posting, of the 10C at the Supreme Court in DC? It is a frieze of Moses holding a tablet. On the tablet is some Hebrew writing. The direct translation to English is Thou Shall Murder, Thou Shall Steal and Thou Shall Commit Adultery.

The "Not" is just not there. Why not?

Well, that is THE mystery. An Orthodox Jew who writes me often says the artist was anti-Semitic and wrote the Hebrew to cast Jewish people in a bad light. Others say the "Not" would be there, but the Moses beard is there instead. Or, maybe, the artist made a mistake. In any event, ya can't fool me --they ain't no 10C.

**Jon Lindgren
Fargo, ND**

EXCERPTS FROM "BEACH RED"

Included here are some excerpts from Peter Bowman's book entitled "Beach Red" (1945). The book is written in first person and begins with landing on a Japanese-occupied island in the Pacific. Written in free verse, the book describes the author's first-hand experiences there, from the landing in Japan to the concluding episode during which the author is part of a patrol and is killed. Thank you to Chuck Crane for the following excerpts.

"Living is an empty pot and thinking is a can-opener hanging from a pantry shelf and all the ingredients that you mix into your life are taken from classified tins with printed directions. You cannot improvise a recipe or escape from the formula or deviate from accepted preparations. And it is only when circumstance has swept the cupboard bare that you learn the pudding's proof is not how a man has spent his life but how he has ended it."

"Surely you know how to die. Your father did it and his father did it and so did his and his. There must be something inside of you that will tell you what procedure to follow, what last gesture you must make, what music of the muscles, design of nerve and movement and reflex. Listen for a cue. It will come. And your whole face will light up with knowledge. Yes, you will know how it is done, and you will do it directly and unhesitatingly, just as it was done before you."

"After all, what is your body to you? You fed it, you clothed it, you washed it, you cared for it and you told it that it was you. But when its walled passageway narrows down and miles become yards and yards feet and feet inches, you find to your amazement how little you set by it. It's trivial. Unimportant. Birth seems to have been goodbye to some inanimate entity and only the logical end of living is hello again."

GRAND FORKS ATHEISTS UPDATE

Grand Forks Atheists monthly meetings are moving to Saturdays. Meetings will be held from 3-5pm at the Cambell Library meeting room in East Grand Forks, MN. The meeting room is large with a big-screen TV and meetings will typically feature a speaker or a movie followed by discussion.

The December meeting will be a potluck Winter solstice

meeting held on Saturday December 27th with a speaker to be announced. These are the dates for the five following meetings:

Saturday Jan 24
Saturday Feb 28
Saturday Mar 28
Saturday Apr 18
Saturday May 23

"Grand Forks Atheists strive to create a community for atheist, agnostic, humanist, and other freethinking individuals. We strongly promote separation of church and state. Meetings are open to the public and attendance is encouraged amongst students and the community".

For more information:
gforksatheists@aol.com.



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did not lay out any blueprint to replace capitalism. Various attempts have been made. The Paris Commune lasted for two months in 1871. It was the first attempt at a worker's state.

After its demise, the guillotine got very busy. Lenin's analysis of the Commune showed that it failed because the workers seized and tried to operate society

using the capitalist form of government. He said a worker's state would function only if new tools were created. He invented the soviet, a governmental form in which the executive, legislative and judicial functions were combined. He reasoned that, since all the functions were to enhance the worker's state, checks and balances would be clumsy and inefficient. Things were working reasonably well, considering that the soviet state had been in a war situation for many years. The kulaks and others of the ruling group fought from the inside, and the major powers invaded to throttle the new state. Even the US sent expeditionary troops, but they fraternized with the revolutionaries and were quickly withdrawn.

The basis of religion was destroyed by the soviet government when it confiscated the private holdings of the church. While Lenin lay dying, Stalin

was scheming to take over. By murdering many stalwart Bolsheviks, and by all sorts of trickery, he was able to take over. To his credit, he led the nation to victory over the

Nazis. Lenin said that there could be no socialism without democracy. But the country became increasing absolutist, and when it all came crashing down, the people stood by and watched.

They never had socialism but instead, Stalinism, a caricature. Now they have homelessness, poverty and all the wonderful trappings of capitalism. Religion is creeping back, but will never have the power it once had.

So what about the US? I think the election of Obama is a powerful straw in the wind for not only our country but the world. His election offers a progressive possibility. There is still a great deal to overcome, but the struggle for a better world is raised to a higher level. Can we even imagine McCain having won? Let's not forget the millions of women, minorities, and workers who voted for Obama. They will be part of the struggle that must take place. Obama is a THINKING person. Right now he is in a learning and transition period. I'm not overly happy with everyone

on his team, but I'm sure he will reshape this group as the action unfolds. It took Roosevelt three years to sort out many of the problems of the New Deal which went a long way to restore the economy. But the system did not recover until World War II. I think Obama will find that he needs to go much further than the New Deal.

Whither humanity? China and Vietnam have what they call Market Socialism. They call this an experiment in moving from a mostly capitalist economy toward a socialist one. They claim that this is a more rapid way to build up the industrial capacity and infrastructure. The market is an institu-

tion created to facilitate the exchange of goods and services, not a place to make superprofits. We shall see what Market Socialism can produce for the people.

Venezuela is trying something different, with workers taking over individual factories and plantations here and there. In the meantime, Chavez nationalized the oil resource, so instead of the profits going outside the country to the

oil cartel, they are being used to alleviate the plight of the poor. Wherever Venezuela goes, it will never again be run by Wall Street. In fact, most of South and Central America is on a new, revolutionary Bolivarian tack. And the Monroe Doctrine is a dead duck.

In my opinion, Cuba is the closest existing government to a socialist state. I was there twice before the ban on travel was strongly enforced. I found it to be a well-run society which is, of course, still evolving. Castro stepped down and did not

have to be ousted. And the vast majority of the people seem to be firmly behind their government. Propaganda from the corrupt US media tells us how terrible

it is there. The Bay of Pigs was a dismal defeat for the CIA and imperialism. The US won't let our own citizens visit. The illegal US blockade has been going on for well over 40 years, has cost Cuba billions, and has hurt businesses in the US. It is condemned by almost all the nations of the world. I expect for this blockade to be lifted.

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