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Questions for

The Economics of the Lower Phase of Communism: Ante Andabak and Andrew Kliman in Conversation

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1. First, a methodological question: how can we discuss a post-capitalist economy without running afoul of Marx's well-known stance against utopian thinking?
2. What does it mean for labour to be directly social? Does it mean that one's hour of labour will be equal to everyone else's, regardless of the work being done?
3. Do you think that there exists a legitimate method for assessing the intensity of various jobs? And if you don't, do you think that one can be created?
4. Marx says in the "Critique of the Gotha Programme" that, in communism, workers won't receive the "undiminished proceeds" of their labour, because there will be "deductions." What are these deductions?
5. What about the sphere of exchange in the lower phase of communism? Does it exist?
6. Are you saying that labour notes/certificates won't be a medium of exchange?
7. We can therefore distinguish between three different moments in the process of distributing consumption goods and services in the lower phase of communist society – (1) exchange between the individual and society through directly social labour; (2) a method to verify that a person who requests some consumption goods or services is entitled to receive them; and (3) bookkeeping to keep track of the quantity of goods and services that an individual is entitled to, how much they have already received, and how much remains (for example, if I obtain coffee and a coffee machine, their cost is subtracted from my share of the "social consumption fund").
8. How specific should we be about labour notes as a method for verifying the exchange?
9. We've gone through two moments – an exchange between the individual and society, and a method of verification of the exchange; we go to the third moment now, exercise and accounting of consumption rights. How would that work?
10. Can there be a difference between means of subsistence that are consumed every day and other means of consumption, such that the former can be obtained without having to order them in advance, while the latter would have to be ordered in advance?

11. How will the cost of a product be determined? Would it be alright for the difference between the costs of regular coffee and speciality coffee to be reflected in a "shadow price"? Such a price reflects how many labour notes a person would give up when paying a shadow price.

12. What about the introduction of new goods and services, and new methods of production and provision, in communist society? Would it be compatible with communist society to have such things introduced through entrepreneurial activity, in other words, on the initiative of an individual rather than the whole society or some collective body within it? For example, what if you want to open your own coffee shop? I imagine you would have to get a permit, which would be decided in an administratively efficient and non-corrupt way by some advisory body (democratically elected, etc.). You would get the permit, open up the shop and get other willing people to work there with you (not for you). Would that be in the spirit of communist society? Also, if it turns out that not enough people want to drink coffee there, would it be in the spirit of the lower phase of communism to say that the labor performed in the coffee shop can't continue to count as social labour, and that the involved in the coffee shop have to find other jobs?