

## Studies in Political Economy: A Socialist Review

*Critical Journal Review by Pablo Ouziel*

Opening up any issue of Studies in Political Economy (SPE), from its inception in 1979 to the present day, one is drawn into the plight of the oppressed, every published line a clarification, or a denunciation of the world's current state of affairs. It is a dangerous piece of literature if read with too much intensity and during a prolonged frame of time, because one risks stepping out of it, with the fumed revolutionary spirit of those seeking serious change.

Hence, the journal is a brilliant reminder of what was once a strong social movement, and today has been reduced to the marginal pages of a dissenting journal, and the thoughtful solidarity of a few courageous comrades publishing their thoughts. In the 80's I have been told, the university setting was one in which a large proportion of students carried the famous *Chomsky Reader* under their arm, today, students congregate in small groups with Ibooks, Iphones and Ipods, while Chomsky, Said, Finkelstein, and the SPE are taking cover in the shelves of the university library, as exemplar parodies of what social change is all about.

As the journal's website clearly states, SPE is a Canadian interdisciplinary journal publishing original work in the various traditions of socialist political economy. Over the years the Journal has built a reputation as a meeting point for people who "identify with the struggles to overcome exploitation, exclusion and oppression in Canada and abroad." [1] The Journal welcomes submissions from writers in all fields of political economy that follow the tradition of socialist scholarship. SPE is very open to publishing articles "which question established paradigms." [2]

The Journal accepts both English and French submissions, which are free of sexist or racist language, and have a maximum of 7500 words of accessible text. Submissions are refereed in an open review process; a manuscript is evaluated "on its scholarly merit, its congruence with SPE editorial policy, its political importance, topicality, breadth of appeal and literary quality/entertainment value." [3] Final approval for publication comes from the editorial committee. The whole process takes from three to six months, and so far, SPE has published twelve out of every fifty manuscripts it has received.

I reviewed a total of nine issues, *Autumn 1979, Autumn 1997, Spring 1999, Autumn 2000, Spring 2001, Spring 2002, Spring 2003, Autumn 2003/Winter 2004, Spring 2005*. They contained 69 articles on a varied number of topics (see Table 1).

The most recurring topic was the *Environment*, with nine articles covering issues such as *Water Privatization, Contemporary Urbanism, and War and Resource Exploitation*. [4] *Globalization, War and Terrorism* shared second place with six articles each. Closely following came *Class Struggle* with five articles.

**Table 1**  
**SPE articles by Topic**

<b>Article topic</b>	<b>Number of articles</b>
Environment	9
Globalization	6
Terrorism	6
War	6
Class Struggle	5
Capitalism	4
Labour	4
Resistance	4
Ideology	3
Democratic Government	3
Agriculture	3
Aboriginal people	2
Media	2
Crisis	2
Foreign Policy	2
Nation State	2
Islamism	2
Monetary Policy	2
Feminism	2
Local culture	1
Technology	1
Migration	1
Public housing	1
Policing	1
Neoliberalism	1
Imperialism	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>76*</b>

\*The total number of article topics (76) exceeds the number of articles reviewed (69), because some articles encompassed more than one topic

The methodology used in the articles, was fairly evenly divided between critical essays (28) and Case Studies (35), there was a limited number of articles using comparative analysis (6), (see Table 2). Reading through SPE one can identify a shift in methodology over the years, from its inception, which was case study heavy, to the current issues, which have a much larger representation of critical essays questioning certain ideologies, policy, or method of analysis.

In the nine issues of SPE, there were 72 contributing authors; the majority of them (58) were professors at University, or PhD students (11). A small minority were people from outside of academia. (See table 3)

Most authors worked in Canadian institutions (53), representation of other countries was limited, clearly reflecting the wish of the journal to be “by, for and about Canadians.”[5] (See Table 4)

**Table 2**  
**Methodology used in the articles**

<b>Methodology used</b>	<b>Number of articles</b>
Case study	35
Essay	28
Comparative analysis	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>

**Table 3**  
**Author Professions**

<b>Author Professions</b>	<b>Number</b>
Professors	58
PhD students	11
Labour Congress Member	1
Trade Union researcher	1
Research Scientist	1
Economist Canadian Auto workers	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>

**Table 4**  
**Home Country of the Institution the Authors are working for**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of authors</b>
Canada	53
USA	5
UK	4
New Zealand	3
Australia	2
Germany	1
India	1
Sweden	1
Holland	1
Hong Kong	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>

The Journal has witnessed a broadening of issues over time, away from the internal politics within the socialist movement and within social issues affecting mainly Canada, towards a more global vision and a more confrontational approach to globalizing capitalism. I think this transition is a reflection of the ongoing battle between different world views in the industrialized world; the “I” culture, ironically well capitalized by Apple computers, and the “We” culture, represented by the marginalized SPE, facing the daunting task of attracting young talent in a highly competitive world, where everyone is at risk of losing their mortgage or not making their rent at the end of the month.

SPE is one of those publications, which speaks to anyone who will listen, without discriminating and making its issues easy to understand. I think the overall intention of the journal today, is reflected by this editorial note in the Autumn 2000 issue, which asks

the following question: “What should be progressive politics in this era of neo-liberal globalization?”

Notes:

- 1-2. Homepage <http://www.carleton.ca/spe/index.html> Website for Studies in Political Economy: A Socialist Review
3. Submissions page <http://www.carleton.ca/spe/submissions.htm> Website for Studies in Political Economy: A Socialist Review
4. Studies in Political Economy: A Socialist Review, Issue 70, Spring 2003, Political Ecology
5. Homepage <http://www.carleton.ca/spe/index.html> Website for Studies in Political Economy: A Socialist Review