

# Moving Train Book Club

June 9, 2010

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Some suggestions for tonight's discussion:

Introductions, followed by short personal opinion of **"The Magna Carta Manifesto"**

**1. Discusses history as contest between commoning & commodities: founded on incompatible predicates:**

*"The 'counterfeit countenance' was inherent in the commodity form, which established 'material relations between persons and social relations between things.' The Bastard's soliloquy proceeds with a long introduction of a personified commodity."*

*"The corporation, personified as a legal person, became the principle epiphenomenon of the capitalist class. Actual persons avoided liability while the fictive or corporate person gained privileges."*

*"So common rights differ from human rights. First, common rights are embedded in a particular ecology with its local husbandry. ... Second, commoning is embedded in a labor process... Third, commoning is collective. Fourth, being independent of the state, commoning is independent also of the temporality of the law and state. Magna Carta does not list rights, it grants perpetuities. It goes deep into human history (and nature)."*

**2. Contemporary relevance/cases:**

*friction where commodity cultures meet commons: South America? Palestine? current practice of businesses "externalizing" liabilities, e.g. oil in the Gulf of Mexico, Global Warming. That is, 'commons' only recognized for risk & divesting costs.*

*Social Security replaces subsistence once provided by commons (e.g. estovers)*

*Is commoning possible in modern society with the modern mind?*

**3. Its interesting that drift away from commoning is coeval with emergence of money:**

*Why? money / commodity requires abstraction of value – its no longer personal or tied to a place; its possible to live at a distance from and ignorant of the effects and consequences of how subsistence is produced.*

**4. The US, product of commerce, got off on the wrong foot from the start.**

*"The last paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, with its appeal to the supreme judge, with its authority from the good people, soberly describes the operation of the "Free and Independent States." It mentions levying war, concluding peace, contracting alliances, establishing commerce. The relation that Paine anticipates is the relation of commerce. But the commerce in question is unlike that in the Charter of the Forest ... The purpose of the declaration is to justify the powers of state that relate to war, peace, alliances, and commerce. The purpose of Magna Carta is to curtail the powers of the sovereign. Magna Carta put an end to a war; the Declaration of Independence intended to win allies and stiffen the resolve of soldiers to fight."*