

All yuppies now?

Are you young—upwardly mobile—professional? Are you the sort of person who buys downtown slums and fits them out with designer furniture and hand-painted blinds? Do you drive the sort of car which people who work in car factories can never afford to drive, listen to Suzanne Vega albums on compact discs, and check the share index in both the *FT* and *The Independent* to make sure that your highly ethical investments are looking as healthy as *you* do after you've been for your six-monthly BUPA check-up? If the answer is yes – sorry, yah – to those questions it is probable that you are a member of The Class of '87 – the yuppies.

Under capitalism there are two classes: the capitalists who rob and the workers who are robbed. But of course, as all trendy-minded readers will know, capitalism is not what it used to be. The working class – those cloth-capped fossils who dig coal and drive trains and have dirt under their fingernails and say things like “gawd blimey, mister” and “You can't beat 'er Majesty and 'arold Wilson” – has apparently vanished. The corpse has been buried by a team of sociologists-cum-undertakers who write for *Marxism Today* who have conducted a thorough search of the wine bars of Covent Garden and can find no trace of any horny-handed sons of toil. Even the holy trinity of the new left – Eric Hobsbawm, Ralph Miliband and Jeremy Seabrook – have announced in the columns of that robust proletarian journal, the *Guardian*, that the proletariat (they who work in factories and vote Labour) are missing, feared dead – or, worse still, “up North”.

Both the left and the right wings of capitalism (not to mention the centre, which constitutes the Liberals and the SDP and David Owen who singularly represents the real centre) are sure that capitalism as described by Marx and the Socialist Party is old hat. Now we all live under Thatcherism. No longer are there masters and wage slaves; these are disgusting remnants of the past, entertained only in the deranged minds of people like the present writer who, in revolutionary obstinacy, insists that everyone he ever meets is either one of the bosses or one of the bossed. But if you accept the new line – as propagated by Thatcher and swallowed by her enemies in their own haste to sound indignant about it – we now live in the age of popular capitalism. And under popular capitalism you are all in one of three classes (unless, of course, you are the Queen or one of the other aristocratic parasites, in which case you are where you always were: rich, idle and useless). But the rest of us are either in class A – people who've made it, or class B – people who are making it (yuppies), or class C – people who can't make it because they are too stupid or won't make it because they like living in squalor.

Now the object of this so-called Thatcherism is to “make it”. Needless to say, “making it” bears no relation to making anything. If you go around producing goods and services you'll never get on in the City. “Making it” means making money. You get other people to produce goods and services and you exploit them. If you are a yuppie you are not yet in the exploiting class. (In fact – don't tell the yuppies, now – you never will be). But you act like you are heading in that direction. You do the dirty work for the capitalists. The

so-called yuppie class are simply the errand boys and girls for the capitalists. They are paid extra for taking on themselves the problems of the exploiting class.

According to the Thatcher propaganda, we are all becoming capitalists now. This is a load of old twaddle. Firstly, only 19 percent of the British population owned any shares in the week before the BP share sell-off. So even if you define all shareholders as capitalists (which is a daft definition), that means that over 80 percent of British people are outside this new capitalist class. But it is not the case that workers who buy a few shares are capitalists. The test of whether you are a capitalist is easy: give up selling yourself for a wage or salary and see how long you can live on your share dividends – if you're on the last can of baked beans within a fortnight you have proved that whatever you are you are not a capitalist. The capitalist class are those people who can live without having to work: they invest in the labour of others.

Secondly, if Thatcher's policies meant that we did all become capitalists there would be no wage slaves left to produce our profits for us. If we all became the Queen, who would we have to wave at, who would there be to bring us our dinner on a silver tray? It is a necessity of class society that superiority for some can only logically exist at the expense of inferiority for most. Thirdly, there has in fact been a record number of bankruptcies under the present Conservative government. The capitalist recession is not creating vast numbers of new capitalists, as the government liars state, but squeezing out large numbers of cockroach capitalists who land with a bump into the growing ranks of the wage and salary earning class. The notion that the workers are enjoying greater prosperity than ever and that poverty is an obsolete conception is not only a myth but an unforgivable insult. Go to the Docklands area of East London – the showpiece of resplendent yuppiedom – and you will find thousands of workers without jobs or much money who are being driven out of their area because the gamblers of the City have decided to redevelop it for their own purpose.

It is not only the Tories who preach the virtues of the new yuppie vision. Nor is it confined to the Alliance whose dream of the new Jerusalem is everyone sending their kids to progressive "independent" (exclusive, private, fee-paying) schools and driving Volvos with push-button windows. The silly old Labour Party has decided to fall in love with the yuppies too. Bryan Gould, the genius who masterminded the Labour Party's spectacular defeat earlier this year (next time they're hiring a computer linked up to an opinion poll teleprinter to organise it for them), has decided that Labour needs to speak to a wider constituency. What this means is that Labour needs to work harder at convincing Tories that their shares are safe in Labour's hand. Gould wants Labour to go for the yuppie vote. After all, Ben Elton has made a packet posing as a socialist appealing to just such an audience. As ever, the Labour Party's tactical astuteness bears a strong relationship to a wino negotiating his way to the bus shelter. Just when the Labourites decided that there's nothing wrong with what Thatcher says about workers getting in on the Stock

Exchange, what does the old Stock Exchange do? It crashes. The opportunism of the Labour Party is boundless, as they merrily proceed to urge workers to buy council houses and invest in private medical insurance and shares – as long as they're ethical. (*Marxism*

Today – the theoretical organ of the Lefty Yuppie Party – is now advertising a company which will advise pseudo-Marxists with a conscience which shares they should buy if they don't want to exploit people.)

The yuppie left has become one of the more grotesque eyesores of 1980s politics. In the good old days lefties would waste our time discussing whether Russia was a deformed workers' state or a degenerate workers' state or a workers' state with minor deformities; they would quote (and often misquote) bits from Marx and insist that we Sodalist Party members had failed to study our Trotsky. No longer is such rhetoric prevalent (except in Chesterfield, of course, where the whole population is currently undergoing a Collected Works of Trotsky reading course). These days the yuppie left are into "feeling Green". If you don't know what it is to feel Green and put yourselves in the position of a baby seal you have no right to call yourself a socialist. Coffee-picking in Nicaragua is all the rage now (even Jimmy Carter's at it) and singing South African liberation songs at book stalls displaying pamphlets about the need for armed struggle in the Third World written by Paul Foot who lives in Hampstead. If you are a male you must become what the yuppie left calls a new man, which means that you are extremely patronising to women (who are all your sisters) and must endure the rest of your life on a permanent guilt trip for the crime of being a potential rapist. It is little wonder that most wage slaves prefer the down-to-earth callousness of Norman Tebbit and his fellow gangsters to the phony, self-righteous, condescending, half-baked outlook of the trendy yuppies who constitute the left-wing of capitalist politics.

The Socialist Party is not out to win over the yuppies. We do not appeal to the "middle class" any more than we appeal to the Wizard of Oz or the residents of Albert Square, Walford. We do not seek to trim our message to suit the prejudices of fictitious classes of people. We direct what we have to say at the working class – all workers, be they paid in wages or salaries, whether they wear overalls or carry filofaxes. Socialists do not make the leftist error of imagining that the true workers are these who live in council flats and stand on the terraces at football matches. Nor do we believe that so-called yuppies, most of whom are simply entertaining the self-delusion of privilege, are anything but workers. We have no grudge against workers who are making an extra crust out of capitalism. But they would be fools to be bought off by crusts and crumbs. The yuppies of the right who imagine that they are part of Thatcher's new elite will find out the hard way which class they are in and yuppies of the left who feel guilty for being "privileged" people like teachers and social workers should stop boring the rest of us with the needless guilt.

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