

Capitalism's democratic dictatorship

Maurice Saatchi and Peter Gummer have both been given a part in the machinery of government of the United Kingdom for the rest of their lives. How did these men achieve their permanent incorporation into the vital organ of British “democracy”, the House of Lords, without the endorsement of the electorate? They got there because they are captains of a lie factory that performs a service for the political party that currently oversees British capitalism. That is to say, they employ numbers of “educated” and “artistic” people to blend truth and lies in whatever proportion they calculate is most effective in misleading the public.

Just before they achieved their political stardom, Saatchi and Gummer offered for public display a sample of the qualities that make such men great: they – doubtless after many serious meetings, and assisted by numerous specialists in the advertising art – placed a pair of “demonic” eyes across the ubiquitously-smiling gob of the Right Honourable Tony Blair MP.

Of course there was uproar among the Blair career-support team and the great Labour machine that hones those aspects of truth that best suits Labour's purpose was quick to cry “foul” and accuse the defilers of the Blair innocence of an abuse of democracy.

Socialists have no illusions about the democratic credentials of the politicians of the Left, the Right or the Centre. What the capitalist class, and the political parties that serve that class, call democracy is a contrived form of consensus in which the political parties conspire to ensure that the maximum number of people accept a system of law which guarantees a minority class in society the legal right to own and control the means of life of the great majority. To achieve and maintain that system of Law – and the Order that ensures the right of that minority to exploit and impoverish the majority – capitalism must have political control of the state machine.

A vital part of the process that maintains the illusion of democratic choice is the power to confine political knowledge – and, thus, political options – to those parties whose policies are firmly rooted in an acceptance of capitalism.

Human Nature

>From a tender age the child is nurtured in the belief that the way we live under capitalism is as natural as the seasons and that the ongoing problems of poverty, unemployment, insecurity, crime and wars are as inevitable as the vagaries of climate. It is not unreasonable for people to believe that life could not be otherwise since these problems, while they are sometimes less acute, are always part of life irrespective of the political party holding the reins of government.

Another great instrument of social conditioning is religion and its contention that humans suffer from basic defects in our nature. “Human Nature”, therefore, according to religion, is inimical to the patterns of social co-operation which a rational alternative to capitalism would require. Capitalism expresses its gratitude by granting a privileged position in

education and in the media to those churches that establish a “moral” basis for its heinous system of organised plunder.

The control of education and the moral blandishments of a property-based religious morality have proved vital in creating the illusion of freedom and democracy while limiting choice to those parties that put forward various formula – for running capitalism. The opportunity of participating in the election of a new government is extended to the citizen about a dozen times during an average lifetime. All the parties which currently have the financial ability to field enough candidates to form a government are wholly agreed about one thing: they all intend to retain capitalism and they will have a monopoly of space in the press and time on the electronic media to promote their support of that system.

Effectively, the air time on radio and television that is devoted to the political, economic and social problems of society, not only during, but between elections, is given only to parties that support capitalism. Not only the traditional party political broadcasts but news, magazine and discussion programmes, give exposure to politicians, many of whom become instantly recognisable figures. Some even become media clowns or participants as celebrities in quiz shows. The whole political conspiracy is wrapped in a package of infamous “guidelines” which the broadcasters use to deny discussion or promotion of alternative ways of organising the way we live.

When it comes to elections, choice is governed by information and knowledge and, since the allegedly democratic parties have ensured that the public have information about, and knowledge of, the present system and the politicians offering themselves to run this system capitalism goes unchallenged. Like Henry Ford's Model T, which was available in any colour providing it was black, current “democratic” practice is to allow us the widest possible choice as long as it is capitalism.

Media-created celebrities

Of course capitalist politicians and the people to whom capitalism entrusts the control of news and information will hotly dispute this. Quite rightly, they will point out that any political party that wishes to field a minimum of fifty candidates in a general election will be allowed the minimum of air time in order to make a party election broadcast and, of course, the amount of broadcasting time will increase in accordance with the number of candidates above that figure. This is an arrangement agreed between the major parties and the various broadcasters over the years – no hint of an, even, nominal independent body to formulate and oversee it. In fact, if an organisation can deposit about – 260,000 it will, get the same number of party election broadcasts as do the major political parties.

Additional to this latter sum of money, if the organisation putting up the maximum number of candidates was to offer a serious election challenge it would need many millions of pounds to spend on advertising, promotion, wages, transport and the like, much of which the major parties get free of charge from the media and, even then, it would have no guarantee that its message would get exposure on the numerous other programmes which pay fees to those politicians who are invited to offer the views of their party.

So the truth is that the democratic machinery is available to all shades of opinion – if they can afford it. Even then, a party stating a case for an alternative way of running society would be disadvantaged, for capitalist politics, its parties and its media, are not based on rational examination of ideas but on the performance of media celebrities.

Generating lies

Perhaps the greatest impediment to the rational discussion of ideas is the lies, misinformation and confusion which the media generates on an almost daily basis about possible alternatives to capitalism. We could fill this journal with examples of misrepresentation by newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations. The big networks, like the BBC, lay down certain fundamental areas of misrepresentation to which newscasters and political correspondents must adhere.

An examples of this emerged in 1989 when this writer challenged BBC Northern Ireland concerning its West African correspondent's reference to “the Marxist government of Angola”. To anyone with the remotest knowledge of Marxism this was pure nonsense: not only is “Marxist government” a contradiction-in-terms but to suggest that the government of Angola was interested in establishing a government that could in any way reflect the socialist vision of Marx is either monumental ignorance or deliberate fabrication.

After several letters and a number of telephone calls, a Mr Paul Robinson replied for the BBC:

“Your letter has been passed to me for reply. After checking with the World Service at Bush House in London I can confirm that it is BBC policy to use the terminology “the Marxist government of Angola” and as such we must adhere to that policy”.

This, then, is the much-vaunted “democracy” that capitalism offers:

- Ideas that are not backed by vast sums of money are barred to consideration.
- Choice is effectively limited to that of politicians within the dictatorship of capital.
- The media deliberately distorts facts in such a way as to make difficult the presentation of a case for an alternative form of social organisation.

Looking at the dictatorship of capital over democracy emphasises the difficulties that confront us in the struggle for a sane world. But there is one heartening thought: unlike the parties of capitalism whose purpose is a permanent struggle, to gain power and, when power has been lost, struggle to regain it, our purpose is to make that initial breakthrough which will finally overcome the ability of capitalism's political agents to lie, confuse and misinform.

Unlike Members of Parliament elected to service capitalism, socialist delegates will not be observing parliament's meaningless rituals. When there is a majority of socialist

delegates there will be no Queen's Speech, no White Papers nor any of the other shams that pass for democracy today. Just the historic announcement that capitalism has been abolished and that, henceforth, real participative democracy in the administration of social affairs, at local, regional and world levels, will obtain.

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