

**100 years  
for socialism**

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# Socialist Standard

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## From social forum to social revolution

**Seattle: 5 years after  
World hunger**

**US presidential elections  
Dyke damns Blair**

The antidote to the capitalist media

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## Fifty years ago

### McCARTHYISM

Our comrades of the World Socialist Party of the United States received an inquiry from a group of Liberals in London about McCarthyism. The following is an extract from the reply which will be of interest to readers of the S.S. . . .

The proceedings before Senate investigating committees are properly called “star chamber proceedings.” The individuals can do nothing but answer questions, and be confronted by witnesses whom they cannot question in rebuttal. As soon as the accused individual attempts to read a statement the Senators do not like, he is evicted from the hearing, and if the individual is foolish enough to persist in his freedom of speech, then he is charged with contempt of court, which can result in six months in prison for each contempt. Phillip Wylie, an outstanding American writer and by no means a Socialist, recently stated the matter correctly when he said that intellectual freedom has been destroyed in the United States, and that the only freedom which remains is political, that is, the right to vote.

Even this is being taken away *tout de suite*, as a bill is now in Congress to deprive the Communist Party of legal status, so that anyone will not be able to vote for the Communist Party candidates, even if he foolishly wished to do so. It goes faster. To get on the ballot here in Michigan, for example, the party must receive a certain percentage of the vote. Failure to do so requires this party to take up petitions and to obtain a specific number of names of registered voters before it can be placed on the ballot. But here is the rub. The subversive squad of the State Police took these lists circulated by the Communists, Trotskyists, Socialist Labour Party, and have placed every signer of the petitions under suspect, subject to later investigation.

(From an article by Karl Frederick,  
*Socialist Standard*, October 1954)

# The European Social Forum

In the middle of this month several tens of thousands of people will assemble in London for the 3rd European Social Forum (ESF). They will come from all over Europe, and perhaps further afield, to discuss how to make the world a better place and how to achieve "global social justice for all". In a series of workshops and seminars they will talk about a different world and how to bring it about. With the help of hundreds of volunteer translators and interpreters it will be a truly multilingual and multinational gathering. But will it really be a success and will it accomplish what the organisers and participants want?

Previous forums have been held in Florence and Paris, growing out of the World Social Forum held originally in Porto Alegre, Brazil. In 2001 the WSF adopted a Charter of Principles, parts of which are not bad. The first principle, for instance, states that the WSF is for organisations which "are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a global society of fruitful relationships among human beings and between humans and the Earth". Much of the rest, however, is couched in very general terms – a kind of 'all things to all people' approach. The ESF has adopted a similar stand, and describes itself "a giant gathering for everyone opposed to war, racism and corporate power, everyone who wants to see global justice, workers' rights and a sustainable society".

No doubt many, perhaps most, of those who attend the ESF see themselves as coming within this so-called anti-capitalist framework, opposing globalisation, the power of the US and the WTO, and wars whether for oil or other reasons. Of course there is nothing wrong with discussing such issues with people from different countries and varying political backgrounds. But there will also be participants who have a particular party line to sell. As at the WSF, political parties are excluded from participation (as are military organisations). But this will not stop the usual lefty crowd from attending, under the cover of various 'front' groups. Another controversial issue has been the role of the Greater London Authority, which is partially funding the event, and of London mayor Ken Livingstone – some of the left think he has had far too much influence on the arrangements.

Opposition to capitalist oppression and the inequalities and brutalities of the present world set-up is fine, but that it needs to be combined with understanding in two further ways. Firstly, an

appreciation that the root cause is the capitalist system of production and the ownership of the world's resources by a small class of parasites. That is to say, it is not free trade or the neo-liberal Washington consensus or the spread of privatisation or the inequalities among nations that are the underlying problem and that therefore need to be addressed. Rather it is the system within which such nasty manifestations can arise. Linked to this is the second point, that the solution is not a fairer or nicer or less malevolent form of capitalism, and certainly not a state-run form of capitalism, but a revolutionary change to an entirely different social system. One that is not built around money, wages and trade and exchange but relies instead on co-operation, democracy and equality – a society without classes, nations or governments, where production is for use not profit.

Among the broad principles of the ESF are ideas that can be built on in showing that a socialist society is not only possible but is also the answer to the problems people experience under capitalism. The volunteer interpreters are just one small example of how people will undertake work because they feel it makes a useful contribution rather than because they will get paid for it. The general rejection of leadership and the insistence on participatory democracy are in keeping with the idea of a society where humans are in charge of their own lives, and with the view that such a society can only be brought about by the deliberate and conscious action of ordinary people, not by some self-appointed vanguard or elite. Ideas of decentralisation and local production are also important. But without an overreaching concept of a new society, these ideas lead nowhere, since capitalism cannot deliver them. The slogan 'another world is possible' needs to be complemented by some real ideas about this other world if it is to be anything more than an empty catchphrase.

## The Socialist Party of Great Britain

The next Executive Committee meeting will be on Saturday 2nd October at 2pm at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee at:

The Socialist Party,  
52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN  
Tel: 020 7622 3811  
Email: spgb@worldsocialism.org  
Website: www.worldsocialism.org/spgb

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# Seattle – five years on

It is almost five years since unprecedented public protest and a demonstration of some 100,000 people disrupted the meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Seattle. Today, the protest is mainly remembered for the violent exchanges between a minority of protesters and the Seattle police and National Guard that provided the media with exactly the sensational spectacle it was seeking. For a day or so at the end of November 1999 images of the more violent aspects of the protest were flashed across our television screens while the newspapers carried vivid descriptions of the mayhem caused by this major public demonstration. With only minor exceptions the event was resoundingly condemned by the media as irresponsible, while the underlying issues were dismissed without further consideration. Within a day or so the media circus had moved on to find its sensationalism elsewhere and the demonstration was quietly forgotten.

The main purpose of the demonstration was to highlight 'unfairness' in WTO rules, perceived as defending the domination of the industrialised countries over the undeveloped countries. The protesters represented a broad spectrum of opinion however; ranging from human rights and pro-democracy groups to environmental, religious and labour activists each having their own agenda and motives for demonstrating. Some decried the inhuman conditions imposed on undeveloped countries by 'structural adjustment packages', others the composition of the WTO with its unelected officials. Certain groups condemned the savage exploitation of child labour while others opposed the dumping of toxic waste in undeveloped countries. Other sections opposed 'free trade' although interestingly it was claimed the majority of protesters were in favour of international trade but critical of the 'unfairness' of the current model of 'free trade'; believing that free trade is beneficial to all if only it can be made 'fair'. Existing trade agreements, they argued, were seriously skewed because only the 'developed' nations have benefited while poverty and social inequality have grown rapidly in developing countries.

With perhaps the exception of the 'anti-capitalist' group, who supposedly advocated the abolition of the capitalist system altogether – but failed to specify what should replace it and how this change should come about – the protesters seem to have been united by a single common belief. They all broadly believed that international

trade could be reformed to work in the interests of ordinary working people and with 'fairer' trade and a little less exploitation of the undeveloped countries and their people, the world could live in harmony.

## Cause and effect

The Seattle demonstration was bound to fail in exactly the same way as anti-war protests fail to achieve an end to war. It is a question of cause and effect; we can demonstrate against all kinds of things that we consider 'unfair' but unless we recognise and tackle their cause the problem will only remain.



We cannot hope to understand world events unless we view these from a class, rather than national, perspective. We live in a world where the dominant world economic system is capitalism, a system that has organised all people into two opposing classes with conflicting interests. The owning or capitalist class lives on profits by virtue of its ownership of the means of producing and distribution wealth. It is their class interest to depress wages and benefits to increase profits. The working class everywhere has nothing and therefore is forced to sell its labour power for a wage or salary in order to live. But the source of all wealth is the product of labour applied to nature, and the very people who produce this wealth are denied access to it by laws and ultimately the state. Government's function is to protect the capitalist class and its legal 'right' to accumulate the wealth created by ordinary working people. The two classes thus have opposing and conflicting interests.

The central imperative of capitalism is to expand and to seek new ways of extracting more profit from ordinary working people by seeking out raw material and markets and imposing itself on the people of other countries; transforming indigenous self-supporting people into wage and salary workers. People everywhere are compelled to join the ranks of the world's working class to face the same class struggles as their fellow workers in the industrialised countries. We share a common interest.

It cannot be denied that capitalism has entered a particularly pernicious phase in its development – euphemistically called 'globalisation' – in undeveloped countries as large corporations viciously compete globally to secure markets and relentlessly exploit labour in countries where they reputedly earn 75 percent of their profits. But exploitation is not just confined to undeveloped countries. Working people everywhere are on the defensive against the class whose imperative is to

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maximise its profits and perpetuate their mastery over all working people. There can be little doubt that the wages and salaries of the majority of people in industrialised countries have stagnated or declined, working hours and job insecurity have increased and conditions of life have deteriorated. The correlation between economic growth and improving social welfare has been cut as corporations seek to introduce 'Third World' standards into the established industrialised countries. We share a common interest.

The Seattle protesters did not share this view of the world. The real enemy is class society engendering the domination of ordinary working people by the class who live by making profits. Countries don't dominate or exploit other countries; the capitalist class who own the companies and corporations assisted by their respective governments exploit the working class everywhere, regardless of their geographical location. Working people don't benefit from the ruthless exploitation of undeveloped countries; companies and corporations benefit by maximising their profits for their shareholders. Ordinary workers don't import or export commodities; companies and corporations owned by the capitalist class export commodities in order to release the profit generated for them by the world's working class. Ordinary workers don't make trade rules; governments working to further the interests of companies and corporations draft these rules. Ordinary workers don't invest in other countries or claim 'free trade' is an impetus for global prosperity; companies and corporations invest in order to generate 'super-profits' and it is they as a class who prosper, not ordinary working people. Ordinary working people don't live on profits; instead, they struggle on a wage or salary. We have a conflict of interests.

#### Workers don't benefit

When the Seattle protesters demanded less corporate investment and exploitation of undeveloped countries they were intimating that the indigenous population would be better placed if left to its own devices. This is a delusion; less interference from 'foreign' capital would simply allow the indigenous capitalist class or even the state to take over the exploitation of the indigenous

working people. The same is true of struggles against colonialism, demands for national liberation, independence and the right of national self-determination. These movements are no more than the struggles of an indigenous capitalist class, striving to gain the right to exploit ordinary workers in their own country. Worker support for such movements is based on the misapprehension that it is somehow less painful to be exploited by someone born in the same country than by a foreign corporation. Workers have no country, just a place where we struggle to live, work for a wage or salary and make profits for the owning class. We have a common interest; we are all wage slaves.

The demands of the Seattle demonstrators were misguided. Demonstrators can at best hope to alleviate a problem, but the respite is only temporary. The world cannot be made 'fair' by rewriting trade rules, electing WTO officials or even abolishing the WTO altogether. The WTO together with the IMF and the World Bank and all the other institutions exist only to serve the needs of the companies and corporations owned by the world's capitalist class in their pursuit of profit. Their abolition would not alter the underlying conflict of interests between ordinary working people and their capitalist masters.

It is only with the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of socialist society that worker servitude everywhere will end. This is achievable not by demonstrating for reforms to institutions of capitalist society but by a majority of the world's workers understanding the need for socialism and working together to capture political power to abolish capitalism and build a socialist society.

Socialism is a classless society based on common ownership of the means of producing and distributing wealth, where production will be used to overcome needs, not to create profit. It will be a society without money and free from conflicting class interests, democratically controlled by ordinary people for and in the interest of all people everywhere. This is our common interest.

STEVE TROTT

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## A Movement for Real Change?

The anti-globalisation movement is probably the most widely-supported grassroots campaign in the world today. It is not just a matter of thousands attending demonstrations in cities such as Seattle and Genoa, to protest against increased commercialisation and capitalist clubs like the World Trade Organisation, only to be met with the vicious attacks of riot police. Nor is it just the meetings of the World Social Forum, held for instance in Porto Alegre and Mumbai, where people have come together to discuss what is wrong with the world and how

to change it. Rather is it an amorphous grouping which includes movements for land reform in Latin America, independence for West Papua, opposition to the spread of McDonalds and Starbucks, and much more. It includes many who reject the concentration of wealth and power which currently exists, some who want fairly mild reforms of the present world system, and others who see themselves as advocating root and branch change.

As the above suggests, it is a movement that is hard to pin down and impossible to characterise in a few words.

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A common criticism that is made, however, is that it is clearer what it opposes than what it stands for. Expressions such as 'anti-globalisation' and 'anti-capitalist' are all very well, but they clearly prompt the question: pro-what? A recent attempt to confront this issue head-on is Paul Kingsnorth's book *One No, Many Yeses* (published by the Free Press). Kingsnorth spent nine months travelling (to South Africa, Mexico, Brazil, West Papua, United States, Italy), participating in protests and talking to others involved in them, trying to find out the reality of the anti-globalisation movement.

His report on his visit to South Africa will be a revelation to any who thought that the end of apartheid would automatically mean a much better deal for black South Africans. Instead, under the African National Congress government, electricity cut-offs, rent hikes and evictions have all increased, and the poor have been getting poorer. Since 1996, the ANC has adopted a 'neo-liberal' economic policy, involving large-scale privatisation and opening of the doors to the effects of globalisation. Kingsnorth's conclusion is that 'political freedom without economic freedom is meaningless'. It is certainly true that just having the vote and an end to racist laws do not make people free, even if 'meaningless' is an overstatement.

The book's title refers to the idea that there is no single answer to the problems confronting people: 'no one system can integrate the needs of all the different people in the world, who all want different kinds of things.' So a landless person in Brazil wants land, an opponent of corporate power in the US may want to stop the building of yet another Wal-Mart superstore, a West Papuan wants rid of the Indonesian occupation, a Zapatista in Mexico wants power to be devolved as far as possible to ground level. These demands are not incompatible as long as they apply in different places.

As for the view that the anti-globalisation movement is essentially negative, Kingsnorth relates the contribution of Lori Wallach at the 2002 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. Wallach, who has been active in exposing the WTO, claims that they are not an 'anti'-movement, unlike their opponents:

*"We're for democracy, for diversity, for equity, for environmental health. They're holding on to a failed status quo; they're the antis. They are anti-democracy and anti-people. We must go forward as a movement for global justice."*

Yet even this is extraordinarily vague as to what being for democracy and equity and so on really involves, what the concrete aims are and how anyone might organise to achieve them.

The Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico are often viewed as a model of what can be achieved. While they are definitely a departure from the corruption and toadying of establishment Mexican politics, they do not offer a solution that people throughout the world should look to since their aims remain set within a framework of wage labour and government. The forces of globalisation will undermine any efforts to improve things at a national

rather than a world level.

In his final chapter, Kingsnorth reflects on the movement he has been investigating, 'a movement of people who feel cut off'. It is a revolution that is already taking place, he says, one that stands for redistribution and autonomy, one that rejects any model consisting of leaders and followers. Essentially, it is a revolution about power, concerned to wrest it from elites and decentralise it, not hand it over to new rulers. One aspect of this is a very encouraging opposition to leadership, a welcome scepticism towards the 'old left' in general and the SWP in particular.

The principles that Kingsnorth puts forward include: genuine democracy, as opposed to the dictatorship of markets or governments; cultural etc. diversity, as opposed to the bland forced universality of capitalism; decentralisation of decision-making, rather than its concentration; self-determination and autonomy, not passive consumption; access to common land and resources, not private control. This is promising as an initial list; but then come his proposals (not 'half-measures', he claims) for how to bring all this about. Abolish the WTO and IMF; constrain the global financial system; restrict the behaviour of corporations; democratise the United Nations; stop the private monopolisation of public resources such as land and water; start a global conversation about where we want the world to go. It is a time, he says, to be bold, to call for everything we want rather than gather crumbs from the table.

Unfortunately, like the movement he chronicles, he is nowhere near bold or imaginative enough. His thinking is stuck very much within the blinkers of capitalism, since plainly in his vision there will still be companies (which means private ownership of the means of production, and production for profit), banks, shares, countries and all the other paraphernalia of property society. Applying some of Kingsnorth's ideas more consistently, however, would lead to more radical conclusions. Re-think the commons, he says: 'Everything which provides a common good for people as a whole, should be bound in by strict rules guaranteeing public access and preventing private incursion.'

Let's apply this to all the means of production: let them all be owned in common and used for the good of people by means of production for use. There will be no need for rules to guarantee this in a socialist society based on cooperation and democracy, where decisions are made at the most appropriate level. This is not the kind of 'one size fits all' solution that the anti-globalisation movement objects to, since socialism need not be exactly the same everywhere and at all times, though plainly its basic principles will not vary. And when it comes to it, all the various demands made by the movement that Kingsnorth discusses result from a single cause – the existence and spread of global capitalism – so a single solution is to be expected. That solution is socialism, the single 'yes' that counts.

PAUL BENNETT

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# An uninformed dismissal of Marx

Socialism has not failed, it has never been tried – this is a standard response to anyone who claims that socialism might be a nice idea but has not worked in practice. Recently, however, George Monbiot, in his *The Age of Consent* (Harper Perennial 2004), has argued that this reply is not valid, on the grounds that the *Communist Manifesto* “contains, in theoretical form, all the oppressions which were later visited on the people of communist nations”. The politics of Mao and Stalin were, he continues, rigid applications of Karl Marx’s own prescriptions in the *Manifesto*. Marxism, therefore, has indeed been tried, and has been a disaster for those forced to experience it.

The case for Socialism does not depend on every dot and comma of what Marx wrote, but, especially since Monbiot is a writer who enjoys some reputation as a ‘radical’, we feel we should respond to his reasons for dismissing socialist ideas. His discussion in fact contains more mistakes than pages. He refers to dialectical materialism, a phrase never used by Marx, and he wrongly believes that the proletariat consists of just industrial labourers. He thinks Marx was wrong to argue that peasants, shopkeepers, etc. would disappear under capitalism, but surely developments since the *Manifesto* was written have shown that these social groups do indeed dwindle and individuals in them become wage-workers. According to Monbiot, Marx appointed people like himself to look after workers’ interests, but what he actually wrote was that “in the movement of the present, they [Communists] also represent and take care of the future of that movement”, which is not very clear but certainly cannot bear the interpretation he places on it. He also overlooks another statement in the *Manifesto*: “The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority.” The dictatorship of the proletariat (an expression not found in

the *Manifesto* or in any of Marx’s works written for publication) would become the dictatorship of a bureaucracy, he claims. Centralising the means of production in the hands of the state would give the new government unprecedented powers – but these centralising proposals were out of date in Marx’s lifetime and are not advocated by socialists now. With the triumph of the proletariat, supposedly, Marx unrealistically envisaged all conflict coming to an end, but in fact this is in no way implied by the description of “an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all”.

And here is Monbiot’s conclusion:

“his [Marx’s] political programme, as formulated in the *Manifesto*, was a dead end. It stands at odds with everything we in the global justice movement claim to value: human freedom, accountability, diversity.”

Besides misinterpreting what the *Manifesto* says, he ignores the fact that it was written in 1848, before Marx and Engels had been able to learn from the political experiences of the working-class movement. Engels’s preface to the 1888 edition of the *Manifesto* noted that its principles were still applicable even if some of the points made were outdated. Monbiot’s denunciation of Marx is of a piece with the milk-and-water nature of the proposals in his book (democratising the UN, enforcing ‘fair trade’ and so on). He does get one thing right, though:

“The world possesses sufficient resources, if carefully managed and properly distributed, to meet the needs of all its people, possibly for as long as the species persists.”

PB

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## World hunger: why Harry Chapin failed

In the annals of popular music, Harry Chapin’s name is not one that particularly stands out. For starters, a couple of decades have elapsed since his untimely demise and besides, his twelve albums, according to biographer Peter M. Coan, typically gained the ‘anonymity’ of 250,000 sales; no way in the multi-million league of contemporaries Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson and Elton John. Chapin himself could muster a wry smile at his sobriquet, “Harry Who?”

In truth, Chapin’s music was never designed to be ‘popular’ in the first place. Not for him the trite, maudlin, ‘boy-meets-girl’ mush of mainstream pop. His lyrics were literary, emotional, packed with detailed imagery and ironic twists; his melodies haunting and poignant. And furthermore, it’s generally acknowledged that Chapin could never quite capture on vinyl the warmth, empathy and

rapport generated in his live performance. He was a dynamic, ebullient, larger-than-life character, devoutly teetotal and devoutly anti-drugs; virtues somewhat nullified by his being also devoutly promiscuous. He adored his audiences; his audiences adored him.

Chapin’s recordings did nevertheless enjoy some successes. *Cat’s in the Cradle* from his 1974 *Verities and Balderdash* album was a US number one hit single. Several others, *Taxi* and *W.O.L.D* managed to loiter in the Top 40 charts and *What Made America Famous* became the theme for the film *The Great Divide*. Additionally, *All my Life’s a Circle* rode high in the British Top 10 despite the best efforts of the covering group, the unspeakable New Seekers, to render it unlistenable. Briefly, he was amongst the hottest of America’s musical property, earning around \$2 million per

annum.

Born in New York City in 1942, Chapin was a relatively late arrival on the music scene, releasing his first album *Heads and Tails* just prior to his 30th birthday. His earlier career as a film-maker had taken him in 1969 to Ethiopia and it was there that he first encountered the issue of World Hunger. In 1974, a more mature and reflective Chapin again addressed himself to the hunger issue, taking the view that his relative fame and high earnings conferred an obligation to 'do good', to 'improve society', to 'benefit humanity'.

The recent Bob Dylan and George Harrison Bangladeshi hunger concert had raised \$400,000 and Chapin quickly realised not only the total inadequacy of this sum in relation to the scale of the problem in question, but also the futility of such one-off gestures. Henceforth indeed, he would rail against what he called the "event psychosis" of American culture and was openly scathing of celebrities who, with motives clearly more to do with advancement than altruism, would latch themselves on to these affairs. Chapin instead sought to identify the *root* causes of hunger and to this end he affiliated with the Institute for Food and Development Policy, more commonly known as Food First.

### Food first

Food First had been founded with the proclaimed aims of highlighting those selfsame 'root' causes and establishing food as a fundamental human 'right'. As sincere and well-intentioned an organisation as it undoubtedly is, an examination of its website ([www.foodfirst.org](http://www.foodfirst.org)) and in particular its "12 Myths about Hunger", makes frustrating reading. In brief summary, it rightly observes that "abundance not scarcity best describes the World's food supply"; many of the "most hungry" countries are in fact net exporters of food. Nobody need starve.

Similarly, those perennial old chestnuts, Nature and Overpopulation are discounted as significant factors in world hunger. In the former, "human-made" forces such as deprivation of land by the "powerful few", low pay and debt are cited as responsible, whilst in the latter, abundance juxtaposes with hunger even in sparsely populated countries like Nigeria and Brazil. Again, poverty is the governing factor. Those with money eat; those without,

don't.

Foreign 'aid' is exposed for the lie it is, operating directly against the hungry. Official government aid serves to impose advantageous trading arrangements and to arm and reinforce repressive régimes. Humanitarian aid, a mere five percent of the total anyway, helps enrich grain companies in the donor countries, undercuts local food production and frequently fails even to reach its intended recipients.

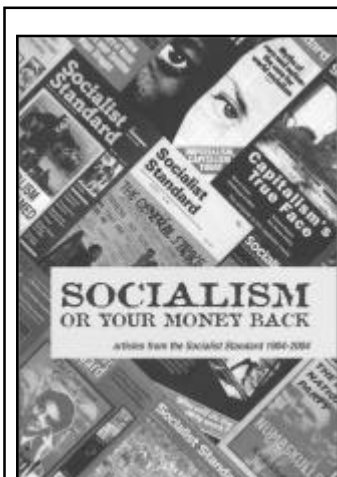
And the culprits in all of this? – the aforementioned "powerful few" – large landowners who "leave fertile land idle", multinational corporations, World Bank, governments who "obstruct progress", the "tightly-concentrated distribution of economic power", a society that places "economic efficiency over compassion".

In all but name they are describing aspects of the insidious, everyday workings of the capitalist system, but do they recognise it as such; do they draw any conclusions? On the contrary, they eulogise the Market's "marvellous efficiencies", arguing that it requires only a wider dispersion of purchasing power to enable it to work towards the elimination of hunger. And how will this dispersion be achieved? Through "genuine tax, credit and land reform", and by (somehow) curtailing the unlimited private accumulation and unbridled use of wealth-producing property. Food First, sadly, presents as an outfit totally imprisoned by capitalism's mind-set.

Having boarded, as it were, this rudderless, leaky vessel, Chapin set off, at full steam, on a voyage of campaigns, fund-raising and lobbying. He founded his own resource organisation, World Hunger Year (WHY), pretty much along the lines of Food First, financing it personally through a series of benefit concerts that would continue for the remaining years of his life.

Aside from the global issue, Chapin was outraged to learn that 25 million of his compatriots suffered malnutrition, that one quarter of all tins of pet food were purchased by impoverished elderly Americans and of an instance where institutionalised youngsters had supplemented their meagre diet with paint peelings, contracting lead poisoning in the process.

To highlight this, he organised a Congressional vegetarian Thanksgiving dinner co-sponsored by Senator Hubert Humphrey and Representative Tom Downey (both



## SOCIALISM OR YOUR MONEY BACK

To mark the centenary of both the Socialist Party of Great Britain (June) and the *Socialist Standard* (September) we have brought out a 300-page book, *Socialism Or Your Money Back*, made up of articles from the *Socialist Standard* from 1904 to this year.

The seventy articles provide a running commentary from a socialist perspective on the key events of the last hundred years as they happened. The two world wars, the Russian Revolution, the General Strike and the rise of Hitler are covered, as well as the civil war in Spain, Hiroshima, the politics of pop, democracy and the silicon chip, and much else.

The book will not just be of interest to socialists but also to those wanting to study the political, economic and social history of the twentieth century.

The price is £9.95. Copies can be ordered (add £2.00 for postage and packing) from: 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN (cheques payable to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain").

doubtless delighted to add a bit of "compassion" to their political CVs), and subsequently berated his motherland in the autobiographical 14-minute epic, *There Only was one Choice*:

Step right up Young Lady,  
Your two hundred birthdays make you old if not senile,  
And we see the symptoms there in your rigor mortis smile,  
With your old folks eating dog food and your children eating paint,  
While the pirates own the flag and sell us sermons on restraint.

Chapin persistently lobbied Congress, making a gruelling series of visits to Washington DC, becoming sufficiently well-known and informed to testify, successfully, before the House Committee on Oilseed and Rice, on a bill to outlaw price-fixing by growers.

Following this, he focused on a bigger prize – a Presidential Commission on Domestic and International Hunger. This was actually set up in February 1978, but thereafter it was all downhill. The Commission's 20 members had initial difficulty even agreeing that hunger and poverty were actually linked and its final report in October 1980 was an assortment of palliatives and platitudes; that token increases in non-military aid be made and encouragement given to "self-reliant growth" and "a more equitable distribution of land . . . etc". Carter's Commission had been, in reality, a sop; a buy-off, much akin to Nixon's previous 1969 effort.

After the election of Reagan, Chapin tried to woo fresh backers in the new Republican-dominated Congress, performing a May 1981 benefit to publicise the legislation and attempt to lobby it into law. The situation was, however, truly forlorn and with his own rather horrendous death, aged 38, a couple of months later in a Jericho, New York road accident it really was the end; the final nail in the coffin, metaphorically – and literally.

### Vainly striving

It would be reprehensible to sneer at Chapin, at Food First, at the myriad worldwide charities and organisations all vainly striving to address and redress the countless oppressions and outrages that abound. Such activity is testimony to the highly social nature of the human species even in that most unpropitious, cut-throat of environments – capitalist society.

In the course of history, various socio-economic systems have, for many centuries at a time, prevailed. Primitive tribalism gave way to classical slave-based society which in turn was superseded by feudalism before it was itself supplanted by capitalism some 300 years ago. Capitalism is, therefore, a relatively recent incursion into human affairs. It features ownership of the means of living – the land, factories, etc. by a tiny parasite minority, the capitalist class – Food First's "powerful few" – and production for profit rather than the fulfilment of need.

As a system, it did serve the vital function of developing society's potential productive capacity to a level at which global need could be satisfied. This role was however

accomplished around a century ago and capitalism, as is manifestly obvious, has since been a constraining influence upon further human advancement. To accept that it is here to stay is to demonstrate not only a slavish mentality but an ignorance of historical reality. Contrary to what "thinkers" like Francis Fukuyama and his ilk would have us believe, history has *not* ended. How could it? Have the clocks ceased to tick?

Food First and the others have yet to grasp that their own activities, however benign, in helping offset the privations that are the inevitable consequence of capitalism, actually serve to prolong the very conditions they seek to alleviate. Capitalism *can* only function in one way – the inexorable pursuit of profit. Large landowners do not wantonly "leave fertile land idle" nor governments gratuitously "obstruct progress". In specific, transitory circumstances where adequate profits cannot be realised, then crops will not be grown (or alternatively, be stockpiled or destroyed), and governments, as the agents of the dominant class, simply help facilitate this process. The plain incontrovertible truth is that there is but *one* root cause of world hunger and that is capitalism.

Thankfully, an altogether grander option is available. Try *this* for size – a truly democratic, classless, moneyless, global society in which the consumption of food would not be a 'right', (which requires both a bestower and a recipient), but an act as spontaneous and natural as the drawing of breath; a society in which access to clothing, housing, transport, leisure, all the requirements for the leading of a full and fruitful life would be freely and instantly available; a society of communal ownership, liberated from exploitation, from alienation, from tyranny both terrestrial and celestial.

And the downside, the catch, the 'small print' to this seemingly fabulous arrangement? Simply that the members of that society contribute their sundry energies and skills to the common pot; or as Karl Marx succinctly put it, "*From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs*". In short, a socialist society.

For this to become reality requires only that the overwhelming bulk of the majority working class recognise both its practicability and its achievability; that as they currently run society from top to bottom in the capitalist minority's interest, then they could equally be running it in *everyone's* interest and take the necessary political action to bring it all about. Humans are, after all, naturally gregarious, industrious and co-operative creatures.

Harry Chapin exemplified this. Heart firmly pinned to his sleeve, he responded in the best and only way he knew to the obscenity that is world hunger. Ever-generous both with his time and his wallet he was, in Coan's words, "almost broke" at the time of his death. It is tragic that he was never able to make that leap of the imagination (or take the short single step through the Looking Glass), to realise that however much the capitalist system is tinkered with, it *cannot* be made to operate for the benefit of humanity at large. Lock, stock and barrel, it has to go.

Chapin will, notwithstanding, be quietly remembered not only for his fine musical legacy but also as a caring, committed and courageous figure. He could have made one helluva Socialist.

ANDREW ARMITAGE

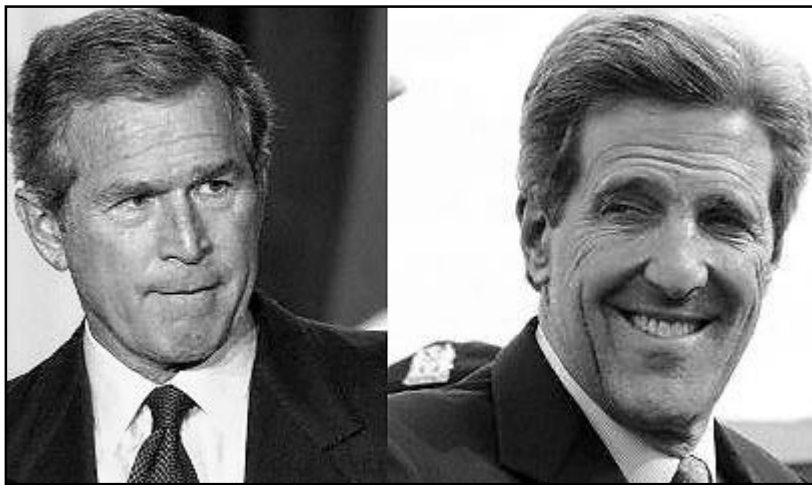
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# The US presidential elections

In November the American people will elect a new President to lead the United States for the next four years. The US Presidency embodies the roles of chief executive, "chief legislator", head of state, commander-in-chief, and party leader. But the Office also embraces two additional roles, seldom discussed in the media or noted in the textbooks. The first is as guardian of US capitalism, a role fulfilled by advancing the wealth and power of giant US corporations and their wealthy investors. The second is that of protector of the wider economic system based on private ownership and profit, a role acquired after the second world war when, as Gerald Haines, former diplomat and senior historian of the CIA put it, the United States "assumed, out of self-interest, responsibility for the welfare of the world capitalist system".

So what difference will the victory of one candidate over another in the presidential election really make to the ordinary American? The short answer must be very little. In practice the election is little more than a public relations exercise where American people are given their 'sixty seconds of democracy' to select an emissary of



*Meet the family Tweedle . . .*

the owning class to safeguard and, if possible, to expand its class interests over the next four years. Since the function will be to represent the owning class, the victor and his government will have to pursue policies that 'stimulate' profit regardless of the hardships this may cause the wider population. At the same time they must *appear* to represent the interest and welfare that wider population. This profit imperative is not because the election is being held in America but because the world's dominant economic system is the profit system (capitalism) and any election to government in society as presently constituted involves choosing one of the political parties that embrace the ideology of capitalism.

In present-day society government has a class nature. Government is not the even-handed arbiter between business and ordinary working people, as many would wish us to believe, but the champion of the owning class with its overarching legal right to exploit ordinary working people. The function of government is to defend the property rights of this owning class and to perpetuate their mastery over society. As far back as 1776 Adam Smith, a great advocate and defender of capitalism, was frank about this: "The necessity of civil government grows up with the acquisition of valuable property . . . Till there be property there can be no government, the very end of

which is to secure wealth, and to defend the rich from the poor."

The capitalist class, by virtue of its monopolistic ownership of society's means of production and distribution, dominates society politically and has shaped all institutions, customs and social behaviour to give expression to its own interests and safeguard its continuing mastery over the world and its people. Under these conditions the meaning of 'democracy' has mutated from a process commonly understood to mean the 'rule of the people' into a device that does no more than elect a 'safe pair of hands' to protect private property and control social and political life to perpetuate this class domination. It functions through the pretence that

g o v e r n m e n t represents ordinary working people while actually following an agenda diametrically opposed to their interests. We have the right of consent, but nothing more.

In the quest to preserve this pretence, control of public opinion is crucial. So the media functions to peddle distortions and

untruths that blur this reality, to keep public opinion placid and render ordinary working people isolated and ineffective, so leaving the interests of the ruling class unchallenged and supreme. The US media add credence to the myth that the Presidential election carries real choice by eagerly analysing every minute perceived difference between the candidates, bombarding the electorate with patriotic rhetoric and fine sounding 'promises' while enthusiastically expounding the lie that the candidates share a common interest with ordinary working people. Their propaganda is heavily loaded with corporate and business ideology and praise for the virtues of the 'free-market system,' designed to perpetuate the fallacy that capitalism and democracy are inextricably linked, indeed synonymous. Whether the American electorate will choose George W. Bush or John Kerry is at this stage difficult to determine. What is incontestable is that the outcome will not be of benefit to the America's (or the world's) wage and salary earning class over the next four years.

In the US, in fact, all the signs are that things will get worse. In the first 18 months of George W. Bush's presidential term, unemployment increased by 33 percent and the US median income for families returned to where it was in 1989, which is below what it was in the 1970s. In addition 1.5 million more Americans were added to

those already without health insurance, bringing the total to 41 million. After the forthcoming elections, what is likely, whoever takes power, is a further dismantling of welfare mechanisms for the poorest, a weakening of organised labour and healthcare provisions and a loosening of regulations to control pollution. American business interests will certainly demand the elimination of everything that interferes with capitalism's domination of US society and its ruthless pursuit of profit. This will inevitably lead to increased labour 'flexibility' (i.e. worker insecurity), a lessening of already minimal employment rights, an abolition of all remaining 'not-for-profit' services and a rise in poverty levels triggering a further widening in social and economic inequality. When profitable corporations will continue to export their operations to other countries where they will ruthlessly exploit cheap labour to reduce costs. David Roderick, then still president of US Steel, neatly underscored the truth that profit has no allegiance to people or country, when he declared in 1984: "Our primary objective is not to make steel but to make steel profitably" (interview in film *Business of America*).

In foreign policy the President will defend the overseas investments and interests of US corporations and the 'world global order' of capital accumulation. Where corporations see a further opportunity to expand their profit base into another country, US government influence will be exerted to transform that country's economy, culture and political life in order to integrate its productive structures into the international system of capital accumulation. If the indigenous people cannot be peacefully persuaded to open up their country to outside exploitation, pretexts will be found for military intervention – something that has occurred time and time again since the second world war.

Meanwhile, ordinary working people in the United States will be subjected to a campaign designed to induce fear over 'terrorism' or any other conveniently intimidating bogeyman. The US is well practised in this method of social control. As early as 1957 none other than General Douglas MacArthur had warned against this propaganda. "Our government," he said, "keeps us in a perpetual state of fear – keeps us in a continuous stampede of patriotic fervour – with the cry of grave national emergency. Always there has been some terrible evil . . . to gobble us up if we did not blindly rally behind it by furnishing the exorbitant funds demanded. Yet, in retrospect, these disasters seem never to have happened, seem never to have been quite real."

So the outcome of the US Presidential election is essentially irrelevant to American working people. Indeed, every election is irrelevant to working people when the electorate is confronted with the conventional political parties whose policies do no more than perpetuate the mastery of the capitalist class.

But while these elections may be irrelevant, that is not to say that ordinary working people in America, or elsewhere, should turn their back on the electoral system as such. Once the world's working people demand

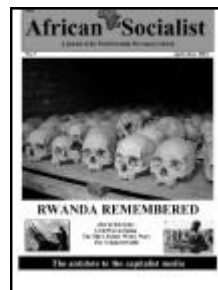
socialism, the electoral system can be utilised to effect the revolutionary act of abolishing capitalism by signalling that a majority of ordinary people fully understand and want to effect that change. So we should not be fooled by the myth that there is no alternative to capitalism, that it will always be with us. It will not, it is true, simply collapse. But its structure rests primarily on the effective control of public thought aimed at persuading people that the society that exists is 'good' and works in their interest. Yet, ultimately, force is always on the side of those who are governed and when ordinary people decided to end the misery and change society the numerical superiority of ordinary working people will make their demands unstoppable.

It is only in socialism, a classless society without privilege or distinction, where the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth are commonly owned and controlled by a genuine democracy of ordinary people that we will foster real social harmony and nurture individual self-fulfilment. Production, no longer tied to profit, will have but one objective: to satisfy people's needs, and since exchange will be replaced by free access to the necessities of life, money and wage slavery will become obsolete in a world that can sustain an abundance. Free from servitude, insecurity and the corrosive influence of material interests, men and women will finally embrace real liberty to develop their limitless creativity and exercise equal participation in society's welfare.

A socialist society will have no place for leaders or government. The periodic election of Presidents, Prime Ministers and other representatives to governments, whose function is to protect class interest of wealth and privilege and perpetuate our servitude will disappear. The socialist message to the American people is that they should think long and hard about what their new President will represent before casting their vote.

STEVE TROTT

## African Socialist



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# American nightmare

The much heralded 'American Dream', whereby everybody can start off poor, but by hard work and application rise to the top is often summed up in a political way as "Log Cabin to White House". We are usually offered the example of Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president, as an example of this transformation. Lincoln's career from shopkeeper to surveyor to lawyer to politician is indeed remarkable, but hardly typical of the 19th century in America and certainly nothing like the America of today; where the vast accumulated wealth of the capitalist class is mostly inherited.

Another aspect of this dream that we are supposed to swallow is that the humblest of Americans can topple the government if they so desire. That anyone can run for office and attack the bastions of wealth and privilege is one of the cornerstones of this American delusion. The reality is somewhat different, as recent figures for the financing of the electoral efforts for the November elections of the Democratic and Republican Parties show.

An organisation called the Center for Responsive Politics showed how the recent Federal Election Commission's laws enacted to stop the lavishing of funds on political parties are being circumvented. Here are some examples how the capitalist class get around such legislation. New campaign funding laws outlawing unregulated contributions to political parties are avoided by individual executives of corporations donating and for the firms to donate lavishly to fund convention events.

That such gifts are huge is shown by the example quoted in the *Observer* (1 August):

"The biggest corporate donors in this years American presidential election are executives of Goldman Sachs, the investment bank. For the first time, the Wall Street firm has become the US's top corporate funder, contributing a total of nearly \$4 million to both George W. Bush's and John Kerry's campaigns . . . Steven Weiss of the Centre for Responsive Politics said: 'Goldman Sachs is involved in the political process and knows how to play the game. Money plays a huge role in politics. It sends a message that you will get access and influence. If you don't contribute, you're on the sidelines'"

An example of how important it is to US corporations to donate large amounts of cash to political parties is given in another article in the same issue of that newspaper:

"What's more interesting is the way Microsoft has made the transition from a company which essentially ignored politics to one which has become adept at channelling its money through political conduits to further its corporate interests. In 1995, the budget for Microsoft's Political Action Committee (PAC) was a paltry \$16,000. By 2000 it was \$1.6 million. And total donations by Microsoft and its employees to political

parties, candidates and PACs in the 2000 election cycle came to more than \$6.1m, according to Edward Roeder, a long-time observer of corporate political donations."

What brought about this change of policy at Microsoft? Microsoft's ruthless destruction of Netscape in the mid-1990s and its contravention of the US anti-trust laws led to a series of anti-trust prosecutions that threatened their dominant position. The corporation realised it needed friends in the administration and set about reversing its previous politically aloof position.

The reality behind the American Dream is the sordid money-grubbing, back-stabbing rat race of capitalism; where politicians are merely the message boys of the rich and powerful and where the poor and exploited are left behind. The American Dream is a horrendous nightmare.

As socialists we are not pessimistic about the future. We believe that the class that produces all the wealth of the world will wake from this capitalist nightmare and bring about a society based on production solely for use. After all, as old Abe once said, "You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time."

RD

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# Greasy Pole

**G**reg Dyke, ex-Director General of the BBC, has changed his mind. About Tony Blair, that is – although in the circumstances in which he was winkled out of a job which was supposed to make him one of the most powerful men in Britain, he has probably had second thoughts on quite a lot of other issues. Dyke first met Blair sometime around 1980 when Blair was a fresh faced, posh speaking young barrister who nevertheless wanted to ‘serve his country’ by being a Labour MP. “The Labour Party,” Dyke advised him, “needs another barrister like it needs a hole in the head” – which did not prevent Dyke helping Labour get another hole in the head by donating £5000 to Blair’s campaign for the party leadership.

That was then; this is now, when Dyke thinks Blair, in spite of his promise to introduce a new sort of politics, is really “just another politician and in some ways worse than those before him. He was either incompetent and took Britain to war on a misunderstanding or he lied when he told the House of Commons that he didn’t know what the 45 minute claim meant”. Regular readers of the Letters column in the *Guardian*, which seems to operate as a kind of counsellor’s couch for disappointed Labour voters, will know there are many who agree with Dyke. These are people who also supported Blair under the impression that Labour meant a different type of politics; instead they have got something which in many important respects is indistinguishable from the Tories. And Blair seems intent on supplying plenty of evidence to support the case against him.

## 1960s

For example on 19 July he made a speech grandly titled a Five Year Strategy for Crime, which purported to look back on the consequences of the 1960s and what the Blair government plans to do to repair the damage caused by that supposed time of “a huge breakthrough in terms of freedom of expression, of life style, of the individual’s right to live their own personal life in the way they chose”. Blair argued that law and order policy then focussed on the offender’s rights, protected the innocent and understood the social causes of criminality. But now:

“Today, people have had enough of this part of the 1960s consensus . . . they do want rules, order and proper behaviour . . .

They want a society of responsibility. They want a community where the decent law-abiding majority are in charge, where those that play by the rules do well; and those that don’t, get punished.”

# Farmyard politics

That speech might have been made by John Major back in 1993 when, conveniently overlooking his affair with Edwina Currie, Major audaciously decided to lecture the rest of us on the need to get Back to Basics. He called for a revival of “the instinctive values of neighbourliness, decency and consideration for others”. He wanted the criminal justice system to “blame a little more and understand a little less”. Blair’s speech might also have been made by Michael Howard who, shortly after Blair shared his thoughts on crime and society with us, informed us that:

“Conservatives will stand up for the silent, law-abiding majority who play by the rules and pay their dues. We will put their rights first.”

Among all this competition for votes Blair ignored the fact that during much of the alleged wild days of the 1960s when, he now thinks, the foundations of a seriously irresponsible society were being laid, his party were in power. They achieved that position not by respecting human decencies and behaving responsibly but by misleading the voters. Labour’s 1964 election appeal was based on the assurance that prosperity would come through an increase in productivity arising from technological development. The Tories had apparently overlooked this but Labour were led by the ravishingly clever Harold Wilson, who had graduated in economics at Oxford. After harnessing the technological revolution Wilson would put George Brown in charge of the economy at the Department of Economic Affairs and the rest was easy. The problem was that capitalism is not susceptible to being managed in that way. Wilson’s facile assurances were exposed and his government descended into chaos and crisis. One of Wilson’s senior ministers said “The trouble with Harold is one hasn’t the faintest idea whether the bastard means what he says even at the moment he speaks it”. Another agreed: “The tragedy of Wilson was that you couldn’t believe a word he said”. It was not a shining example of a government driven by a desire to play by the rules – unless it was those governing the methods used by political parties to get power over capitalism – and behave responsibly about their electoral promises.

## Fettes

Meanwhile, how was the young Tony Blair surviving in those times of moral peril? From 1966 to 1971 he was a pupil at Fettes school, said to be the Eton of Scotland. It was the kind of educational establishment to have a strong appeal to the Blair of 2004 for the headmaster, a Dr. Iain McIntosh, was a disciplinarian and an ardent opponent of the “liberalising” influence

of the 1960s. Fettes had a system of fagging, under which the younger boys had to be servants of the seniors. (Blair resented this but was praised by his senior for making "particularly good toast.") Flogging by masters and senior boys was in force, with Blair the occasional victim (once at the unusually advanced age of 17). It must have been a proud moment for the headmaster when, after a game of hockey against a nearby borstal, the Fettes boys and the young prisoners compared their respective regimes; the borstal boys were sure they had the easier time.

Blair did not willingly submit to the Fettes regime as a valuable lesson in morality, which would stand him in good stead when he was later lecturing the rest of us from the eminence of Number Ten. He was in fact something of a disruptive influence in the school, persistently questioning and opposing the rules and procedures there. His housemaster assessed him as "the most difficult boy I ever had to deal with". A fellow pupil remembered that "Masters were very worried about sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll and Blair looked like all three". When he was 14 he ran away – simply walked off the train his parents had put him on to go back to school and made his way onto a plane at the airport – he said to fly "to somewhere like the Bahamas" – but the plan came to nothing because he did not have a boarding pass.

There were masters at Fettes who enjoyed Blair's nagging and questioning as stimulating. Well there have been many others who have been bemused by his charm into accepting his flexible "principles". Some of these people are ministers in his government. Others are just ordinarily deluded voters. This was the kind of tolerance – if that is the word – which helped him be accepted into Derry Irvine's chambers when he was looking to become a barrister, a favour which has been repaid since. It slid him up the greasy pole, at first as a by-election candidate in the hopelessly Tory stronghold of Beaconsfield and then into the safe

Labour seat at Sedgefield. It was not an obstacle to his climb that he joined CND, after he had been advised that the "more badges" he accumulated the better his chances of getting on in the Labour Party – advice he accepted with alacrity. It has seen him into Number Ten and keeps him there, in spite of the exposure of his deceits and the fact that in all important respects – in his policies, his speeches, his phraseology – he more and more resembles the Conservatives who are supposed to be his opponents.

### Animal Farm

If it is impossible to discern any significant differences between the Labour Party and the Tories, that is because there aren't any. On the basic issue of how to run the capitalist system they are thoroughly agreed that this must be done in the interests of the ruling class, which means that both of them in government must impose policies which are against the interests of the majority, while assuring us that they are doing something else. They must both define the problems of capitalism in terms of ruling class interests and offer "solutions" which at best are little other than palliatives. It is not a matter of chance that as they try to deceive the working class the party leaders use the same words, the same phrases. It is rather like the final passage in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, when the animals outside the farmhouse observe the pigs who have taken control of the farm inside, enjoying a raucous get-together with neighbouring farmers. As the evening wears on "the creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which". That is what Greg Dyke and all those disgruntled Labour supporters are witnessing now; will they cling to Labour or will they consider the alternative to the cynical mess of capitalism's politics?

IVAN

## Socialist Party

Autumn Delegate Meeting

Saturday 16th Oct 10:30 – 6:30

Sunday 17th Oct 11:00 – 5:30

Venue: Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN  
Nearest tube: Clapham North

All Welcome

## Edinburgh

**Edinburgh Branch meet the 1st Thursday of the month at a new venue.**

Check website for venue updates subject to change:

[www.geocities.com/edinburghbranch](http://www.geocities.com/edinburghbranch)

**The Forest Cafe, 3 Bristo Place, Edinburgh**

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Bilston, Roslin, Lothian EH25 9SD  
tel: 0131 440 0995  
email: [JIMMY@jmoir29.freemove.co.uk](mailto:JIMMY@jmoir29.freemove.co.uk)

## West Lothian

**Edinburgh Branch's West Lothian Socialist Discussion Group**

**The Lanthorn, Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge, Livingston  
2nd and 4th Wednesdays each month**

These discussion meetings are lively, short intros with plenty of feedback from visitors and members alike.

All welcome – admission free.

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# Socialist activities in Australia



Dear Editors,

In the centenary year of the founding of the SPGB, it is appropriate that the *Socialist Standard* should publish material on the spread of socialist ideas outside the UK and on the development and role of the companion parties in that process. In this context, Peter E Newell's article (August *Socialist Standard*) on the various manifestations of "socialism" in Australia is welcome. However, there are a number of errors in his account.

The party he refers to as being formed in Melbourne in 1906 was not the "self-proclaimed Socialist Party of Australia", but the Victorian Socialist Party which was the largest and most influential party of its type at the time. Because it was based only in Victoria it is not surprising that almost all its members resided in Melbourne. In 1907, the Victorian party, plus another six "socialist" groups of various names and persuasions, came together in a loose federal organisation calling itself the Socialist Federation of Australia. Tom Mann was a major figure of influence in the formation of both the Victorian Party and the new Federation. In 1910, the same year Mann returned to England, the Federation changed its name to the Australian Socialist Party. During the First World War, along with all other "socialist" groups and most of the Labor Party, the ASP was active in the major political struggle of the time – the anti-conscription campaigns. It is misleading to say that the ASP "faded away" by 1920. What happened was that the majority of its branches reconstituted themselves as branches of the newly formed Communist Party of Australia in 1920 (similar to the dissolution of the British Socialist Party into the CPGB in the same year).

As Peter Newell indicates, it was largely through the efforts of seamen who were members or sympathisers of the SPGB that the Socialist Party of Australia was founded in 1924. The history of the Party in the 1920s and 30s was directly shaped by the power struggles of the Seamen's Union of Australia. Jacob Johnson was the union's

national secretary and he and the branch secretaries in Melbourne and Brisbane were all members of the SPA. In 1935 Johnson opposed a general stoppage led by militant rank and file members and was later replaced as national secretary and eventually expelled from membership in 1937. The strength and influence of the SPA declined thereafter.

Peter Newell makes only brief passing reference to the SPA in the 1940s, but says nothing about the 1950s even though this period saw a significant revival and growth of the Party's activities in Sydney. This followed the arrival in 1955 of members of the SPGB who had left the UK for New Zealand (where they were active in the SPNZ) and later moved to Sydney. Regular and well-attended meetings were held in the Sydney Domain and eventually the Sydney Branch of the SPA was formally reconstituted in 1957. The only other Branch in Australia, in Melbourne, had been moribund for years. Amongst Sydney Branch members in the late 1950s were two of the leading figures in the Seamen's Union and in the SPA of the 1920s and 30s, both mentioned by Peter Newell: Jacob Johnson and W J "Bill" Clarke. The SPA in Sydney held indoor and outdoor meetings, ran study classes, debated with other (mainly "left wing") groups in various forums, and regularly sold copies of the *Socialist Standard* and all SPGB pamphlets. It was a very active Branch, known to many of the comrades in the SPGB Head Office in Clapham High Street at the time. By 1961 the Branch went into a decline, though individual members remained active in a variety of ways.

Peter Newell says that in 1962 the name "Socialist Party of Australia" was adopted by a group who left the Communist Party of Australia over the Sino-Soviet split. This is wrong. A pro-Peking group left the CPA in 1963 and a year later founded the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist). The split in the CPA which led to the formation of a pro-Moscow group calling itself the "Socialist Party of Australia" occurred in 1971 and followed from

CPA opposition to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the Party's subsequent embrace of "Eurocommunism". It is an irony of history that one of the principal founders of this so-called Socialist Party of Australia played a central role in the events leading to the expulsion of Jacob Johnson from the Seamen's Union in 1936-37 and later went on to become the Union's general secretary from 1941 to 1978.

The Eurocommunist CPA did not survive the collapse of communism in the early 1990s and it eventually dissolved itself. This left the way open for the so-called SPA to reclaim the name of the Communist Party of Australia and to re-badge itself accordingly. This it did in 1996. In 2003, the name "Socialist Party Australia", being at that time unattached, was picked up by a Trotskyist conventicle describing itself as the "Australian Section of the Committee for a Workers' International".

PETER BRYANT and JIM THORBURN,  
Sydney, Australia

Reply: We are happy to publish this correction and complement of information. We take this opportunity to correct the last line of the article which should have read: "At the moment there are only individual socialists *in the WSPA* active in different parts of Australia". The words in italics somehow got lost in between us and the printers. Readers in Australia who want to contact the WSPA should write to: 8 Graelee Ct, Kingston, Tasmania 7050. – Editors.

Lenin's not elitist?

Dear Editors,

The article 'Lenin: a socialist analysis' (January *Socialist Standard*) quotes from *The Myth of Lenin's Concept of the Party* by Hal Draper, to support the assertion that Lenin was an elitist.

A reading of the full Draper essay reveals something completely different. Draper argues that Lenin did not hold to the view that only intellectuals forming a cadre of professional revolutionaries

should make up a revolutionary organisation.

Lenin did indeed pick up the idea from *Neue Zeit*, dropped it into *What is To be Done?* and promptly neglected it unless the notion was resurrected by his political enemies when Lenin would "... consistently and firmly repudiate it".

What Lenin meant by professional revolutionary is described by Draper as "a party activist who devoted most (preferably all) of his spare time to revolutionary work... He must work to earn a living, of course, but this is not his life". Any member of the working class could fit into this description. It is not elitist at all.

It should even, dare I say it, describe the average member of the Socialist Party!

ARMITAGE BULSTRODE,  
Birmingham

Reply: The purpose of quoting from Draper's *The Myth of Lenin's Concept of the Party* was to show that Lenin's concept of the party was essentially the same as Kautsky's and the Second

International generally (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/draper/works/1990/myth/myth.htm>).

According to Lenin's more famous interpretation, the working class was incapable of self-emancipation. Some workers may join the ranks of the professional revolutionaries in the vanguard party, in Lenin's view, but this does not affect his belief that emancipation had to be brought to the working class by a political organisation. Although Lenin went on to change some aspects of his concept of the party, this elitist position never changed and had catastrophic consequences when implemented in the Bolshevik revolution.

When the Socialist Party was formed in 1904 it repudiated leadership in any form. The Socialist Party's history is a practical refutation of the role of leadership. Leninists often deceive themselves that they believe it, but the Socialist Party really does insist that the emancipation of the working class has to be the work of the working class itself.—Editors.

## World Socialism Needs You!

*Without your support and understanding Socialism cannot be achieved. If you want to join the Socialist movement, to help to bring capitalism to a rapid end, go along to your nearest Branch or send for a membership application form.*

*Please send me an application form and membership details (without obligation).*

NAME: .....

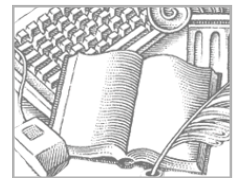
ADDRESS: .....

POSTCODE .....

*And send to: The Socialist Party  
52 Clapham High Street  
London SW4 7UN*

## How anti-capitalist?

## Book reviews



John Carter and Dave Morland  
(eds): *Anti-Capitalist Britain*.  
New Clarion Press £12.95.

This is a collection of articles on the anti-capitalist/anti-globalisation movement as it exists in Britain. The quality and relevance vary, and one paper in particular (on the consequences of 9/11 for British Muslims) belongs in a different book.

Two main themes can be picked out. One is that the anti-capitalist movement (ACM) did not grow out of thin air but represents a continuation of earlier activities, such as 1970s free festivals, road protest camps and various environmental groups. All these movements supposedly share a propensity for direct action and a general hostility to leadership. Linked with this is the second theme, that of the predominant role of anarchism

within the ACM. There are definitely positive aspects to this, including opposition to the tactics of vanguard groups like the SWP and rejection of leadership. The particular variant of anarchism that is singled out in a chapter by the editors is saddled with the name 'post-structuralist anarchism', a viewpoint which they do not explain at all clearly (but see, for instance, <http://perspectives.anarchist-studies.org/8may.htm>). This claims that power and oppression are not confined to just the state and the workings of capitalism but can be found elsewhere too (as in misogyny or anti-gay prejudice). But it downplays the crucial role of capitalism as the underlying cause of oppression.

The anarchist influence is seen as partly a reflection of the decline of the traditional Bolshevik left. As Carter and Moreland say, "The death of the old

authoritarian Soviet anti-capitalism has cleared the way for more radical and vibrant ways of fighting money and all of its works." This perspective is partly balanced by Derek Wall's chapter, which refers to the Social Democratic Federation and William Morris, and notes that at the end of the 19th century, "Marxism looked pretty green".

But along with the anarchism are some 'fair trade' and 'deep green' ideas which are hardly radical at all. For instance, one chapter advocates, as the opposite of globalisation, localisation, which means a country should produce as much as possible of what it needs within its own borders. Now, it is quite likely that in socialism there will be far less transport of goods from their place of production to place of consumption, as there will be no need to seek out the cheapest and most profitable place to make things. But national borders, which

won't exist in socialism, are an irrelevance here, and the argument assumes the continuance of trade (and hence of money, wages, etc.).

A chapter by Green Party member Molly Scott Cato argues that greens are anti-capitalist, even if many deny this. Rather than a revolution, she advocates a gradual green undermining of capitalism, by means of Local Exchange Trading Schemes (LETS) and co-operatives. Her ways to challenge capitalism include such gems as 'Switch all your bank accounts to the Nationwide or another mutual building society.'

Actually it would be unfair to let trivia like this condemn the volume as a whole. It certainly offers a different perspective on aspects of the ACM. And if the book lacks a clear single view of the movement or of what should replace capitalism, then it merely reflects the anti-capitalist movement, after all.

PB

## The role of the state

**Consensus or Coercion? The State, the People and Social Cohesion in Post-War Britain.**  
New Clarion Press. £12.95.

This is a collection of studies of various aspects of social and political life in Britain from 1945 to the end of the 1970s, covering such fields as television, immigration, housing policy, even the role of the defunct Communist Party.

But what is the state? To most people it will be the centralised administrative machine controlled by the government, which provides various services (health, education, social security, defence) for "the nation". To Marxists, the modern state is indeed a centralised administrative machine controlled by the government, but one which is used to manage the common affairs of the national ruling class (today, the capitalist owners of the means of wealth production), including the provision of education, health care, etc for the subject class (the majority class of wage and salary workers), and whose ultimate weapon is force, coercion; hence Engels's definition of the state as in the final analysis a body of armed

men.

For the Oxford sociologist, Ross McGibbon, who has provided a foreword to this book, the state "represents the governing elites, both political and bureaucratic, but is distinguishable from (say) the ruling party and has an interest which, although influenced by party-political competition, stands above such competition". To which the anonymous author of the introduction adds, its role is to ensure the social cohesion of the population of the "administratively defined community" that is the "nation-state", ideally by consensus but otherwise by coercion.

Although Marxists see, even define, the state as a coercive institution at the service of a class, this does not mean that they are committed to the view that the ruling class rules only by coercion. That would be an absurd view since no "nationally administered political community" could survive if it was held together by coercion alone. A degree, in fact a fairly high degree, of consent is required: the subject class has to agree to being ruled by the class that controls the state. So, one of the important functions of the state is to actively promote such agreement. Obviously this wouldn't work if the state tried to openly persuade people to be ruled by a ruling class; it has to be more subtle and is done by promoting the idea that all the subjects of a particular state form a national community and are in fact "citizens" rather than subjects. The state is then seen as the management committee, not of the ruling class which owns and controls the means of production, but of all the citizens, who elect the government.

Surprisingly in view of the book's title, only two of the studies address this question directly, dealing with the question of immigration from the Caribbean and the problem this has presented the state in terms of integrating such and other "non-white" (to use the old Apartheid classification) immigrants into the British "national community", given the previous definition of this community as being made up of "white" English-speakers. After passing racist legislation in the 1960s to stop "non-white" immigration, the British state opted for extending

the definition of "British" to include "non-whites". It appears to be working, but now their problem is the reaction of a signification minority of "white" people who don't agree and who may well have to be coerced into accepting it.

A third essay, on the Labour Party's attitude to Europe in the period 1945-50, does, it is true, touch on another such problem: how the British state is to get its subjects to agree to its policy – in the interest of its ruling class – of European integration. After having successfully inculcated the idea of a "British nation" this is now proving a barrier.

The other essays, even though off-subject, are still interesting in their own right, especially the one on the Labour Party's opposition in the 1950s to the introduction of commercial television. Everything that was said would happen if this was introduced – dumbing down, commercialisation, the "idiot box" dominating the home – has come to pass, and worse. But it was always going to be a losing battle since, in a capitalist society, the capitalists are always going to get their way in the end.

Conspicuously lacking from the book are studies of how promotion of support for "national" sports teams and the teaching of history and civics in schools work towards sustaining the myth that all who live within the administrative boundaries of a particular state constitute a community with a common interest, whereas in fact in all states there are two classes: an owning, ruling class and the rest of us.

ALB

## Correction

Unfortunately two errors crept into the article in the September issue on "Democracy as a way of life". In the first column, "a charming, tough, frequently highly opinionated manner" should have read: "a charming, though frequently opinionated way". And in the second column, "to describe it as authoritative is the logic of the absurd" should have read: "to describe it as authoritarian is the logic of the absurd". Our apologies.  
– Editors.

## The Socialist Party of Great Britain

### Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

### Declaration of Principles

#### The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways etc.) by the capitalist or master-class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. THE SOCIALIST PARTY of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action, determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

*(This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the Party in 1904, its original language has been retained.)*

## United Kingdom

### London

**Central London branch.** Corres: Richard Botterill, 21, Ashwell Park, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 5SG. Tel: 01582-764929.

e-mail: richardbotterill@hotmail.com

2nd Weds 8pm, Penderel's Oak,  
286-288 High Holborn. WC1V 7HG

**Enfield and Haringey branch.** Tues 8pm.

Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18.

Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL.

Email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk.

**Pimlico:** C. Trinder, 24 Greenwood Ct, 155 Cambridge St, SW1 4VQ. Tel: 020 7834 6186.

**South London branch.** 1st Mon. 7.45pm.

Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN. Tel: 020 7622 3811.

**West London branch.** 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm,  
Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace  
(Corner Sutton Court Rd), W4.

Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY.

### Midlands

**Birmingham branch.** Thurs. 8pm, The Square  
Peg, Corporation Street.

Tel: Ron Cook on 0121 553 1712

### Northeast

#### Northeast branch.

Corres: John Bissett, 10 Scarborough Parade,  
Hebburn, NE31 2AL. Tel: 0191 422 6915.

### Northwest

**Bolton:** Tel: H. McLaughlan, 01204 844589.

**Cumbria:** Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St,  
Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG.

**Lancaster branch.** P. Shannon, 71 Coniston  
Road, Lancaster LA1 3NW.

Email: lorna@kaibosh.freemove.co.uk

**Manchester branch.** Two Mons a month.

Corres: P. Bennett, 6 Burleigh Mews, Hardy  
Lane, M21 7LB Tel: 0161 860 7189.

**Rochdale:** R. Chadwick, 01706 522365.

**Southeast Manchester:** Enquiries: Blanche  
Preston, 68 Fountains Road, M32 9PH.

### Northern Ireland

**Belfast.** R. Montague, 151 Cavehill Road  
BT15 1BL. Tel: 02890 586799.

### Scotland

**Ayrshire:** D Trainer, 21 Manse Street,  
Saltcoats, KA21 5AA. Tel: 01294 469994.

Email: derricktrainer@freeuk.com.

**Dundee:** Ian Ratcliffe, 16 Birkhall Ave, Wormit,  
Newport-on-Tay DD6 8PX. Tel: 01382 541 643.

**Edinburgh branch.** See meetings page 14 for  
update.

**Glasgow branch.** 1st & 3rd Wed, 8pm.

Community Central Hall, 304 Maryhill Rd.  
Corres: Richard Donnelly, 112 Napiershall  
Street, Glasgow G20 6HT. Tel: 0141 579

4109. Email:

richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com.

**Lanarkshire:** William Dunn, 39 Burn Terrace,  
Eastfield, Cambuslang, Glasgow G72 7DN.

Email: spgblanarkshire@yahoo.com

**West Lothian:** 2nd & 4th Weds in month,  
7:30-9:30pm. Lanthorn Community Centre,  
Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge, Livingston.

Corres: Matt Culbert, 53 Falcon Brae,  
Ladywell, Livingston, West Lothian EH5 6UW.

Tel: 01506 462 359

### South/Southeast/Southwest

#### Bournemouth and East Dorset:

Paul Hannam, 12 Kestrel Close, Upton, Poole  
BH16 5RP. Tel: 01202 632769

**Brighton:** Corres: c/o 52 Clapham High  
Street, London. SW4 7UN.

**Bristol:** Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol

BS5 6DN. Tel: 0117 951 1199.

**Cambridge:** Andrew Westley, 10 Marksby  
Close, Duxford, Cambridge CB2 4RS. Tel:  
01223 570292.

**Canterbury:** Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal  
Kent. CT14 6AB.

**Luton:** Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive LU2 7LP.

**Portsmouth:** Dan Read, tel 07880803673 or  
email mgoo\_oloiol@hotmail.com

**Redruth:** Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas,  
Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 10B.

Tel: 01209 219287.

### Wales

**Cardiff and district** John James. 67 Romilly Park  
Road, Barry, CF62 6RR. Tel: 01446 405 636.

**Swansea branch** 2nd Mon, 7.30pm, Unitarian  
Church, High St (next to Argos).

Corres: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well St,  
Wauan Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB.

Tel: 01792 643 624.

### Yorkshire

**Doncaster:** F Edwards. Tel: 01302 530 454.

**Huddersfield:** Richard Rainferd, 28 Armitage  
Rd, Armitage Bridge, Huddersfield, W Yorks.  
HD4 7PD

**Hull:** Keith Scholey. Tel: 01482 444651.

**Skipton:** R Cooper, 1 Caxton Garth,  
Threshfield, Skipton BD23 5EZ. Tel: 01756  
752621.

## World Socialist Movement

### WSM Companion Parties

#### World Socialist Party of Australia

c/o 8 Graelee Ct., Kingston,  
Tasmania 7050, Australia

#### World Socialist Party (New Zealand):

PO Box 1929, Auckland N 1. New Zealand

#### World Socialist Party of the United States:

PO Box 440247, Boston MA 02144. USA  
Email: wspboston@mindspring.com

#### Socialist Party of Canada/ Parti Socialiste du Canada:

PO Box 4280, Victoria BC V8X 3X8. Canada  
Email: SPC@iname.com

### International Contacts:

#### AFRICA

**Gambia:** World of Free Access, c/o 21  
Dobson St, Banjul.

**Kenya:** Patrick Ndege, PO Box 56428,  
Nairobi.

**Namibia:** Anthony Amugongo, PO Box 1502,  
Oshakati.

**Swaziland:** Mandla Ntshakala, PO Box 981,  
Manzini

**Uganda:** Socialist Club, PO Box 217, Kabale.

#### EUROPE

**Denmark:** Graham C. Taylor, Spobjergvej 24,  
DK-8220 Brabrand.

Email: grahamt@sol.dk.

**Germany:** Norbert. Email: weltsozialismus@gmx.net

**Netherlands:** David Steele, 27 Meidoorn-  
straat, 2225 SJ, Katwyk ZH.

**Norway:** Robert Stafford.

Email: hallblithe@yahoo.com

# Meetings

All our meetings are free  
and open to everyone

## Glasgow Branch

Discussion Group Programme

October 2004 – March 2005

Following the success of our recent discussion group meetings, we are delighted to bring you details of our meetings for October and November 2004. Please note that there will be no meetings in December and January.

The emphasis is very much on informality and a lively discussion can be expected.

All meetings take place in:

**Maryhill Community Central Halls,  
304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow.**

We hope this programme will be of interest to you and that you will be able to attend. Admission is free and all are welcome.

*"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, the point however, is to change it."*

*Karl Marx*

## West London

**Tuesday 19 October, 8pm**

### **DO WE NEED THE DIALECTIC?**

**Discussion opened by Simon Wigley  
Committee Room (upstairs), Chiswick  
Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W4  
(nearest tube: Chiswick Park).**

## Central London

### **"Radical London"**

Guest speaker Terry Liddle

Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street,  
London SW4 7UN

Contact Richard Botterill, 21, Ashwell Park,  
Harpenden, Herts, AL5 5SG. Tel: 01582-764929.  
e-mail: richardbotterill@hotmail.com

## Glasgow Branch

**October 20 at 8.00pm**

### **WORK AND LABOUR IN CAPITALISM & SOCIALISM**

Immense changes are being made world wide in how people work. Is technology reducing the need for physical labour? Are the numbers of workers increasing globally? Are they working longer hours?

Brian Gardner starts of a discussion on how recent changes technically and globally have affected the labour process. How efficiently does capitalism use labour? How much work inside capitalism will be of any use to a socialist society?

Let's hear your views on this fascinating topic. We don't claim to have all the answers but we have got a lot of ideas.

**November 17 at 8.00pm**

### **BANKING: A SOCIALIST ANALYSIS**

Are banks all-powerful? Many people believe that they are and can even hold the rest of society to ransom, but is banking essentially different from any of capitalism's other industries?

Vic Vanni takes a look at the origins of banking, what roles the different types of banks play, and the changes taking place in the banking industry today.

## Manchester

**Monday 25 Oct, 8pm**

### **Discussion on terrorism**

**Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City  
Centre  
All welcome.**

More meetings on p. 14

# Voice from the back

## A young worker speaks

"To Prime Minister Tony Blair, My name is Maxine Gentle and I am 14 years old. I am the sister of Fusilier Gordon Gentle who died in the war in Iraq on the 28th June 2004. I want my thoughts and feelings to be heard and known. My feelings are that I think you are rubbish at your job. You don't care about the British public, armed forces or anybody in fact. My big brother died at the age of 19 and what for? A war over oil and money, that's what I think the war is all about . . . It is okay for you sitting there with all your money and power, ruining people's lives by the decisions YOU make . . . All you and your new best friend care about is Iraq's oil . . ." (*Independent*, 20 August). Maxine is a young worker who has seen through a lot of capitalism's propaganda, but she is wrong about Tony Blair. He is not rubbish at his job, he is very good at it. His job is to support capitalism and to convince wage slaves that it is in their interests to support it too. Gordon and his family are victims of this deception.

## The dignity of labour (1)

The recent British Airways industrial dispute about sick leave highlighted how some firms interviewed staff who had been on sick leave to discover if they were genuine or not. The worst example

of this degrading practice we have come across was reported in the City Diary column in the *Times* (25 August). "A reader tells me that Sainsbury's has put his 60 year old mother-in-law through a return-to-work interview three times in the past year, after her absence for a hip replacement, cancer tests and the removal of part of a breast. The lady in question is understandably perturbed, especially as she has worked at the checkout for 20 years with an unblemished record." This could be your mother, are you happy with this set up?

## The dignity of labour (2)

The journalist Sarah Ryle reports on another charming practice that our master's have dreamed up for us. "Lidl, the German discount retailer with UK stores, ordered its Czech female workers to wear arm bands during menstruation (there's no nice way of putting that). According to an August edition of German trade retail magazine *Lebensmittelzeitung*, local managers decided it was the only way to be sure that women were not taking unnecessary loo breaks. Women with arm bands could go as often as they liked, instead of waiting for the official breaks . . ." (*Observer*, 5 September). The capitalist class, who rule our lives, now

want to regulate our bladders. Wake up, fellow workers.

## Back in the USA

There is no doubt that the USA is the most developed capitalist country in the world today, but that doesn't stop many of its citizens living miserable, poverty stricken lives, as the following figures from official US government sources show. "The Census Bureau announced that the number of people living in poverty – individuals earning \$9,573 or families of four living on \$18,660 or less – had risen to 35.8 million, or 12.5 percent, up from 34.5 million or 12.1 percent in 2002" (*Times*, 27 August).

## Water scandal

It says much for the insanity of capitalism that at the same time as a bottle of water in a St. Tropez club can sell for £16 a bottle (see August *Socialist Standard*) a charity called WaterAID can launch a TV ad appealing for £2 a month to deal with the problem of children dying from lack of clean water. According to them: "Every 15 seconds a child dies from lack of clean water . . . by the time this ad is over another 6 children will have died" (ITV Advertisement, 3 September). Inside world socialism such obscenities will be impossible.

**Meetings** All our meetings are free and open to the public. See page 19

## Free lunch

by Rigg

