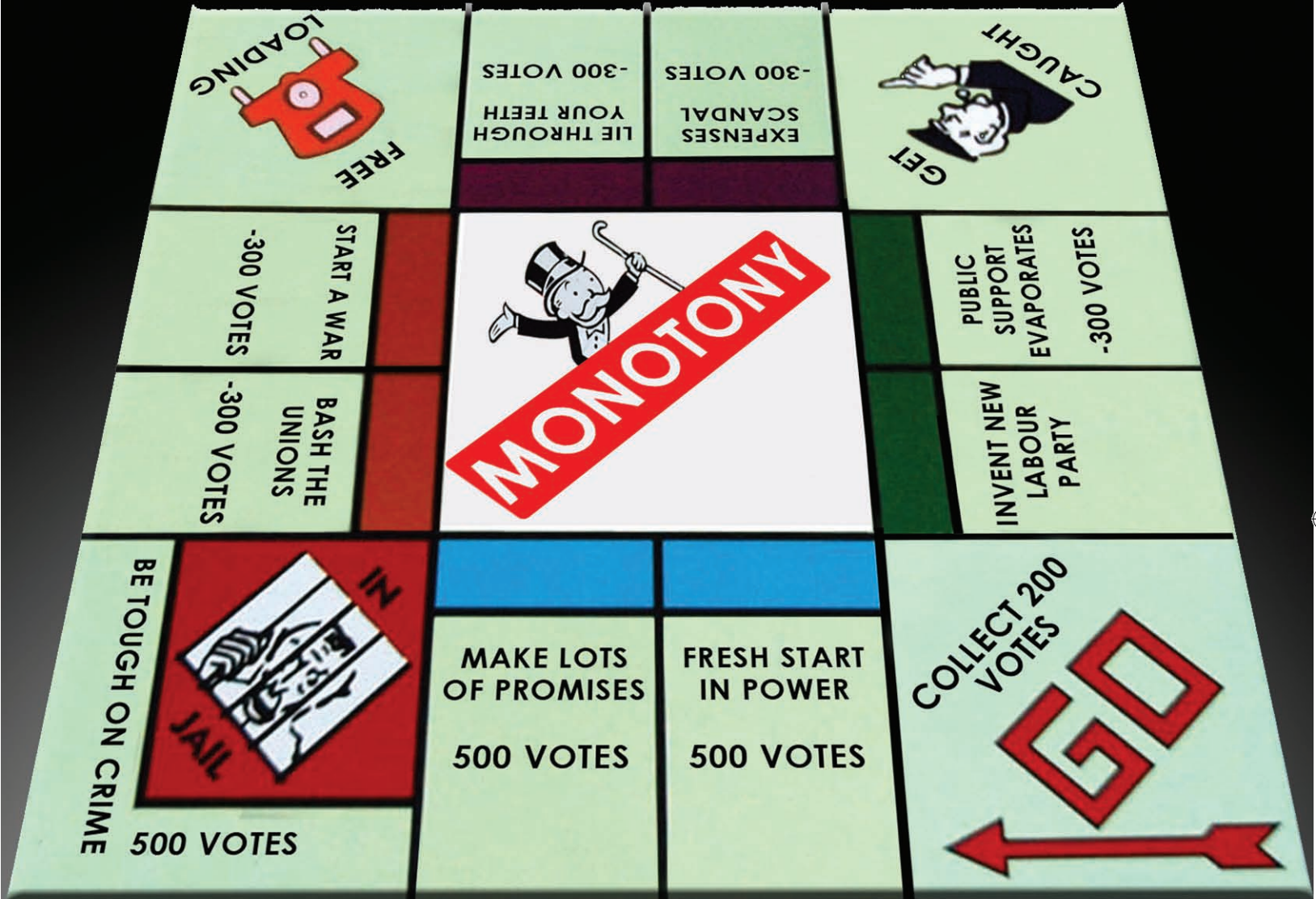


socialist standard



August 2009
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Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement



Bored Games

Why we don't need a new Labour Party



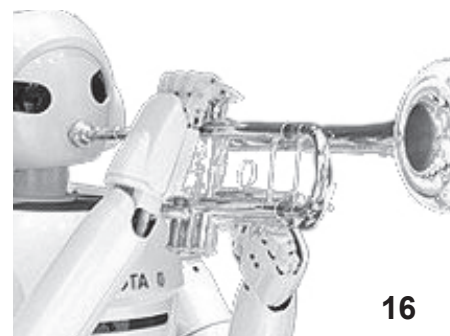
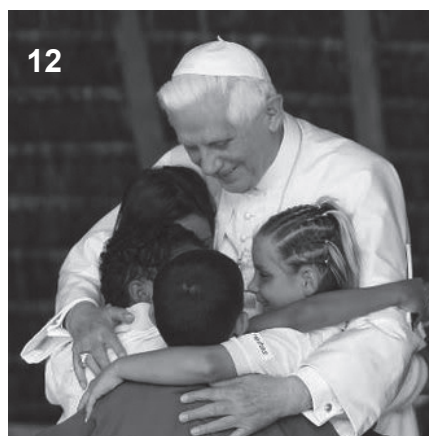
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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 1 August** 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.

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Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

Editorial Counting bodies

Just as the Iraqi oil permits and contracts are starting to get signed off, so the numbers of "coalition" (UK and US) troops stationed there are being scaled down. As authority for the stable management of capitalism is handed back to a new Iraqi authority that can be trusted by the likes of Exxon, BP and Shell, so attention turns to the other theatre in the so-called "war against terror", that of Afghanistan.

Last month the total UK military deaths in Afghanistan to date surpassed those in the Iraq conflict (179). When the UK forces ceremonially handed authority to the Iraq state, the name of every UK soldier killed was solemnly read out. The names of Iraqis killed during the same period were not read out, for obvious reasons: it would take 2-3 weeks to complete. No one is keeping much of a score it would seem however. As US General Tommy Franks indicated: "we don't do body counts".

As attention turns to Afghanistan, and to the coffins driven through silenced town centres, there has been renewed debate about what "we" (the UK state) are actually doing there. The idea that "we" are trying to hunt down bin Laden has been quietly shelved. Instead the line we are given is that the British state is "fighting terrorists there in order to ensure we don't have to fight them over here". Stripping away all the state propaganda, the real issue remains clear: they are fighting over there to prop up a friendly government in a country strategically placed to control oil from the Caspian Region. If the Iraq conflict was about extracting the stuff from the ground, the Afghanistan war is about securing an alternative route to get it to market.

Tempting though it may be, you don't need to select between the false options offered by capitalism. You don't have to choose between, on the one hand, supporting the British state's bloody efforts in Afghanistan, and, on the other hand, supporting those unlikeliest of freedom fighters that make up the Taliban. You don't have to choose between the old-fashioned barbarism of the semi-feudal Taliban tribal leaders and war lords, and the modern barbarism of capitalism. World socialists reject that choice. We support neither side. We denounce as obscene the calls to send more weapons to the UK troops in Afghanistan so they can kill more of the tribesmen they are fighting. More crucially, we express a clear and consistent opposition to war, based not merely on emotion or morals, but on recognition that no working class interests are ever at stake in the battles of our leaders or our employers.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain and the parties of the World Socialist Movement have never taken sides in capitalism's wars. Almost 100 years ago, according to the propaganda, the "coalition forces" (allies) went to war (the First World War) in order to "end war". Nowadays the objective is supposedly much the same: to prosecute a war in order to put an end to "terror". But this is similarly doomed. Wars are just a normal part of the mechanism of capitalism, as a means of resolving disputed ownership rights. It is the global working class who overwhelmingly find themselves in the front line and in the crosshairs. While a majority of this class continue to choose to retain capitalism, then war - and the terror it brings - will continue around the globe, and the coffins will keep coming home.

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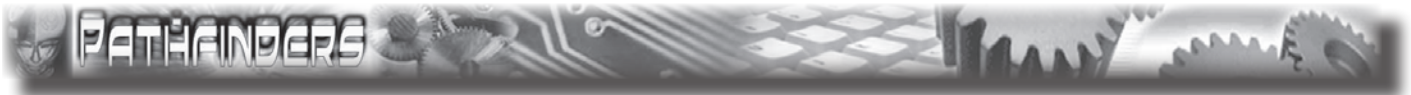
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Trans-Human Socialism

Here's an early notification for the 'Perfect Body Conference', in case you're swinging by Linköping in Sweden between October 9 and 16 and have a consuming interest in 'transhumanism' issues. The blurb describes it thus: 'Enhancement, paraphrased as the improvement of desired characteristics, means to apply a certain focus on abilities, capacities and quality of life. These categories can be viewed and defined from different value-driven perspectives which are based upon certain viewpoints on what constitutes "normality".'

Thinking of giving it a miss? Well, shame, because the transhumanism debate could turn out to be one of socialism's hottest topics, after the grubby internal politics of capitalism has been consigned to the archives. At stake is the question of what 'human' means, now that technology promises the potential of almost unlimited physical and intellectual enhancements, up to and including immortality. At one level, you might think, what is there to debate? Who would wheeze around in an old banger of a body if they could breeze around in a macho Maserati or a female Ferrari? Why be ein dummkopf if you could be Einstein? Why put up with breakdown illnesses and debilitating corrosion if they can be engineered away, leaving you Kwik and Fit? Why die, for heaven's sake?

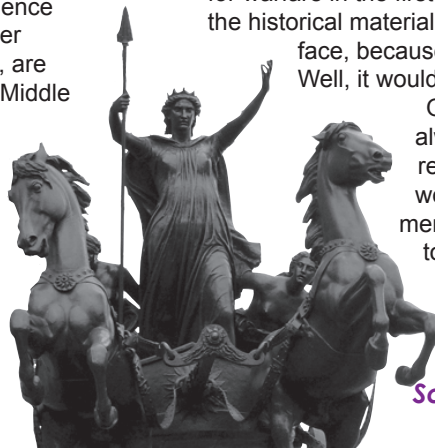
The debate is raging before the technology has even developed, which is no bad thing, and much of it mirrors current consumerist paradigms, with the libertarian 'devil-take-the-hindmost' transhumanists at one extreme and, glaring at them from the liberal pole, the bleeding-hearts who worry (correctly) that any future Smart Toolkit for beauty, brains and longevity will only be sold in Harrods and not in Halfords. But these are only the two most obvious and energy-lite arguments, and neither penetrate far into the complexities of the issue. Others do, however, and Wikipedia provides an invaluable and entertaining list of these, including the Playing God argument, the Gattaca argument, the Frankenstein, the Eugenics Wars and the Terminator arguments. These criticisms all form points on a gradient between outright infeasibility (the Futurehype argument) and downright undesirability (Terminator).

From a socialist perspective, a debate can be said to have real 'legs' if it can be extended beyond the context of capitalism and still have meaning in a socialist society. From this point of view, most of these arguments presuppose capitalist hierarchical principles and would not survive into socialism.

Is War Past its Sell-by Date?

Socialists would be the first to agree that, since war is not in our genes, it is not inevitable, and that it is therefore possible to conceive of a society without it. *New Scientist* thinks so too (4 July). Indeed, they point to the context-specific nature of war among primates and prehistoric human cultures to show that war is simply one behavioural strategy adopted under certain environmental or social conditions. In fact, they argue, "warfare is on the wane worldwide" due to better social conditions, so that most wars now are small-scale insurgencies: 'the remnants of war'. Passing quickly over the question whether 4 million deaths in the Congo, for example, can be described as 'small-scale', we further learn that individual violence also follows the trend. According to Steven Pinker "Homicide rates in modern Europe, for example, are more than 10 times lower than they were in the Middle Ages" (although one wonders how Pinker can confidently assert this, in the absence of comprehensive records from Ye medieval Olde Bille).

And so we are brought to the inevitable Big Question: could capitalism abolish war? At this point *New Scientist* finally reins in the optimism and offers some caveats:



Will the technology fail to serve all humanity and instead reflect and extend today's social divisions and class barriers? Yes, probably. What else would you expect? The smart money is on immortal elites backed up by armies of supersoldiers – another reason to get socialism soon, before our working class descendants have the capability of independent thinking bred right out of them. Meanwhile disabled people, in the face of the transhumanist ideal of 'perfectibility', are looking nervously back over their shoulders at the eugenics movement of the 1930s and its macabre culmination in the Nazi death-camps. For them, as for other groups historically classified as 'Other', 'transhuman' carries an extra chill undertone, like the phrase 'defect-free' or perhaps 'unJewish'.

But that is today's debate, within the context of capitalism. The fear of being marginalised and oppressed by modifications to the definition of 'Normal' could not conceivably be exported into a society which has abolished the class basis of oppression. Nor would people, in a society without systems of social preferment, need to be paranoid about genetically engineered social elites. Where it gets interesting is when transhumanism invites one to ask even more fundamental questions which even socialism would struggle with. What exactly is a human, and what level of enhancement, if any, ought to be considered 'enough'?

Socialist society is inclusive in its nature, which means that people are not to be judged or excluded on the basis of how pretty, young or smart they are. But what if it embraces the technology to make everyone 'perfect', and if so, who decides what 'perfect' is, and what would this say about social and biological diversity? And what of death, that ultimate motivator and engine of evolution? Would the achievement of immortality create a socialist society of incomparable cultural and technical sophistication or, conversely, a dispiriting world of torpid, plastic-faced Barbie dolls who can't see the point of opening a book? Would the quest for perfection ultimately allow humans to conquer the stars, or make us so niche-specific that we became unable to adapt to future environmental upheavals, thus triggering our own extinction? Even given such imponderables, could any species, no matter how intelligent, ever resist the lure of this Pandora's Box? When the time comes to formulate the political agenda of socialist society, transhumanism will surely be right up there, because it calls into question everything that humans think they know about being human.

"Major obstacles to peace include the lack of tolerance inherent in religious fundamentalism, which not only triggers conflicts but often contributes to the suppression of women; global warming, which will produce ecological crises that may spark social unrest and violence; overpopulation, particularly when it produces a surplus of unmarried, unemployed young men, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."

From a socialist perspective, they've left out the biggest obstacle of all, the war-engendering nature of property-owning capitalism itself. This omission seems all the more mysterious given their opening premise: that all the available evidence suggests that agriculture and land-ownership were responsible for warfare in the first place. Could it be that they are shirking the historical materialist conclusion that is staring them in the face, because the implication is too uncomfortable?

Well, it wouldn't be the first time.

Or perhaps it's naïve to expect scientists always to be scientific. One Harvard researcher offers the quaint idea that "since women are less prone to violence than men" their promotion into government ought to reduce the likelihood of future wars. You don't need a Harvard degree to smell the logical rat there.

Globalisation

Dear Editors

"Is globalisation just another word for capitalism? The short answer is yes" (Book Reviews, *Socialist Standard*, July 2009).

Globalisation is not the same as capitalism. It is a process occurring within capitalism. It has predominated in recent decades, but it was not predominant at earlier stages of the development of capitalism. It will not necessarily continue to be predominant.

It is important to distinguish between capitalism and globalisation because many opponents of globalisation advocate not socialism but the restoration of national capitalism.
STEPHEN SHENFIELD (by email)

Reply:

That depends on what is meant by "globalisation". In the middle of the nineteenth century Marx and Engels gave a vivid description that could equally apply to the present day:

"All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations" (*Communist Manifesto*, 1848).

This "golden age" of globalisation was brought to an abrupt end in 1914 with the start of the First World War and the abandonment of the international gold standard. Thereafter globalisation continued with the help of increased state intervention. Capitalism has an inherent tendency towards globalisation, driven by the competitive accumulation of profits. Globalisation is not a particular arrangement of institutions, for example deregulated markets, or a particular ideology such as neo-liberalism. Of course there are many opponents of "globalisation" who want a restoration of national capitalism, and we agree it is important to counter their faulty conception of what constitutes capitalism - *Editors*.

Fascist?

Dear Editors,

I am writing in response to Adam Buick's article about the BNP. Whilst I would whole-heartedly agree that the best way to deal with the BNP is to confront their ideology head-on, and debate with them if necessary in order to expose the paucity of their ideas, I do feel that it is naive to state that "the BNP is not a fascist party." Their constitution may not be overtly fascist, and they may no longer espouse fascism in their public utterances, but it would hardly be a vote-winner if they did! Is it really believable that, if the BNP came to power, they would still guarantee free speech to their opponents, or meekly allow themselves to be voted out again a few years later? Er... Remember that Nick Griffin is on record as stating that "well-aimed boots and fists" will win out over "rational argument"!

Regarding their claims not to be racist, I can only recall an incident from when I lived in east London 15-20 years ago. In those days, the BNP was more of a localised nuisance than a national threat. They used to expound their "policies" by means of small credit-card sized stickers stuck to lamp-posts or other available surfaces. "Hang Black Muggers" is one particular gem that springs to mind. In any case, I recall seeing two of these stickers side-by-side; one read, "Protect British Jobs - Ban Imports." Alongside this (this still being the Apartheid era), was another which read, "Boycott the Boycott - Buy South African!"

Ridiculous they may be, but these people are gradually obtaining positions of influence. It is important to expose them for what they are, but please do not underestimate them.
SHANE ROBERTS, Bristol

Reply:

Irrespective of whether or not the BNP meets the historical criteria for being labelled fascist, their racism and extreme nationalism is bad enough - *Editors*.

Opportunism

Dear Editors,

Before retiring, I was a member of the MSF union. (MSF stood for Manufacturing, Science and Finance). One month the union newsletter carried an article about how membership was being boosted by the recruitment of clergymen. I wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury asking that, as neither

Manufacturing nor Science covered the activities of god's representatives, could I assume their efforts were chiefly concerned with Finance? He didn't reply.

However, God apparently does have to take his finances very seriously. In common with numerous other multi-millionaires, his wealth is not what it was. And as always, it's the workers who suffer when the bosses money isn't rolling in fast enough. As a cost cutting measure, the Church of England is now looking at proposals to shed the jobs of some of my ex-fellow union members bishops and senior clergy.

It is concerned that the value of its investment portfolio last year was only £4.4 billion. (Yes, 4.4 billion). In 2007 it was £5.7 billion. Another proposal under consideration which might save your local bishop from having to sign on, is to encourage congregations to be more generous with their donations. Although they currently provide the C of E with £600 million a year, it has been estimated that if they contributed 5 percent of their income, an extra £300 million a year would be generated.

It has also been suggested, in all seriousness apparently, that priests should preach more about the value of generosity. The Rt Rev John Packer, Bishop of Ripon and Leeds, worried about his job perhaps, is quoted as saying "A time of recession is also a time of opportunity ..."

Now that's what I call opportunism.
NICK WHITE, Luton

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Exploitation in Uzbekistan

UZBEKISTAN HAS been in the news. According the BBC and the *Observer* (24 May) the government has been forcing hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren to pick cotton in the searing heat, and to live in squalid conditions, on “pitiful wages”,

Uzbekistan the world’s third largest exporter of cotton. Uzbek state-owned and controlled cotton has been sold to some of the world’s largest retailers, such as Asda, Marks & Spencer, Tesco and Wal-Mart, earning it more than one billion dollars to date.

The International Labour Organisation, however, has recently got the Uzbek government to sign conventions committing it to stop using child labour in its cotton industry. A number of retailers, including Asda and Tesco, are reported as having pulled out of Uzbekistan. Whether the government will implement the ILO conventions remains to be seen.

During the 19th century the area of Central Asia of which modern Uzbekistan is a part, was known as Turkestan, which was incorporated into the Tsarist Empire in the 1860s. The majority of the population were Moslems.

With the downfall of Tsarism the area broke away from Russia; but, after bloody nationalist uprisings, was finally recaptured by Soviet Russia. Uzbekistan became a Soviet Republic in 1924.

Sovietisation

After the overthrow of the Tsar in 1917, the Bolsheviks gained in influence, and played an increasingly prominent role in the Tashkent soviet, eventually gaining control. They then extended their control to other towns in the area.

In February, 1925, the Communist Party of Uzbekistan held its first congress. It was the only legal party in the country. The second congress, held in November the same year, put through land reforms. Between 1930 and 1934, more than 40,000 peasant “kulak” holdings were forcibly liquidated, and their former owners were either deported or executed. Collectivisation and industrialisation was implemented on a large scale.

The Stalinist purges of 1925 and 1937 were particularly drastic in Uzbekistan. The prime minister, Faizullah Khodzhaev, and the Party first secretary, Ikramov, were accused of organising a nationalist plot, with the assistance of British agents, and were both shot. Previously, the Soviet authorities, in line with developing capitalist industry, persuaded or forced women to abandon the burka and the veil. But hundreds of them were killed by their own husbands and relatives for violating the essential commandments of Islam.

King Cotton

By the beginning of the Second World War, Uzbekistan had become “the most powerful and economically most developed of all the republics of Central Asia” (*Economic Geography of the USSR*, N. Baransky, Moscow, 1956,

p.370); and had become the main cotton producer of the Soviet Union.

Uzbekistan is not particularly large compared with other Central Asian countries (it is 447,400 km² or 172,700 miles²); but it has a population of about 23 million (compared with Kazakhstan’s five million), of whom 70 percent are Uzbeks. The second largest nationality are Russians. It is bordered by Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, with the Aral Sea to the northwest of the country.

From 1930 to 1945 Uzbekistan went through a period of rapid industrialisation. Oil production, and copper and coal mining, were all developed. Hundreds of thousands of former peasants, many of them displaced Russians, became wage slaves. But above all, cotton became King.

Uzbekistan produced cotton decades before the Soviet era. But following Soviet control, the aim consisted of maximising cotton production regardless of the interests of the local Uzbek population. Under Tsarist rule the cotton-growing area of what is now Uzbekistan, was about one million acres by the beginning of 1914. In 1950, it had increased to 2.5 million acres. “Large-scale irrigation work with the aim to extend the area under cotton was carried out in the 1951-1955 period in the central, most desert part of the Ferghana Valley” (Baransky, p.372). The area under cultivation in Uzbekistan is now more than 3 million acres. Numerous cotton-ginning plants and cotton mills have been constructed.

At the same time, however, the Soviet regime diminished the cereal-growing areas from 3.8 million acres in 1913 to 3.5 million acres by 1938. With an increase in population of nearly two million between 1926 and 1939, Uzbekistan became more dependent on food supplies from Russia. During the war, the population of Uzbekistan increased again by another two million. The food situation became critical. All of which, then and later, increased “bourgeois nationalist” discontent in the country.

Post-Soviet Independence

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan emerged as a sovereign state in 1991. It did not become even a limited “bourgeois democracy”. The media is tightly controlled. The United Nations report that torture is systematic. The country has been denied cash from most “international financial” institutions; and unemployment is currently 40 percent.

However, “former US president George W. Bush started funding the uncompromising president, Karimov, after the country allowed US planes to stop there in the run-up to the Afghanistan invasion” (*Observer*, 24 May).

Meanwhile, Uzbek workers, young and old, continue to be exploited, repressed and robbed, creating surplus value and profits for the local, and overseas, capitalists.

PETER E. NEWELL



IRE OF THE IRATE ITINERANT



LET'S CHECK IT OUT.

PEOPLE THINK THAT BUYING INTO CONSPIRACY THEORIES IS A SMART, ENLIGHTENED THING TO DO. IT SHOWS YOU POSSESS AN HEALTHY DOSE OF SCEPTICISM, YOU ARN'T FOOLED BY THE PROPAGANDA OF THE ESTABLISHMENT. HMM. LET'S SEE ...



TROUBLE IS, WASN'T HITLER THE ORIGINAL CONSPIRACY THEORIST? HE BOUGHT INTO 'THE PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION', BIG TIME!

SEEMS LIKE JEWISH FOLK COULDN'T WIN REALLY. THEY WERE EITHER MONEY-CRABBING CAPITALISTS, OR BEHIND THE RISE OF GLOBAL COMMUNISM! RIGHT WING REACTIONARIES HATED MARX, EINSTEIN, FREUD, - THE CREATORS OF THE MODERN WORLD THEY NEVER REALLY GOT. THE LEFT DESPISES THE ISRAELI STATE FOR ITS ABOMINABLE TREATMENT OF THE PALESTINIANS, AND IS SUSPICIOUS OF THE ZIONIST CAUSE ...

NICE IF JEWS, MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS COULD GET ALONG. NICE IF WE LIVED IN A WORLD WHERE PEOPLE DIDN'T DEFINE THEIR IDENTITY BY RELIGION, RACE, NATIONALITY. BUT HEY, NOW I AM DREAMING ...

AH, THE KENNEDY ASSASSINATION... SACRILEGE TO SAY IT, BUT MAYBE OSWALD WAS IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME, THE MARINES RATED HIM AS A SHARP SHOOTER, AND MAYBE THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT. LET'S APPLY OCCAM'S RAZOR ...



LIKELIKE THE DEATH OF DIANA SUPPOSEDLY ORCHESTRATED BY A BRITISH ESTABLISHMENT EMBARRASSED BY HER FLING WITH A MUSLIM PLAYBOY. BUT SURELY SHE EMBARRASSED THEM MORE IN DEATH THAN SHE EVER COULD HAVE IN LIFE?



...THE LUNAR LANDINGS. A MILLION FOLKS WITNESSED THAT GIANT SATURN 5 ROCKET TAKE OFF IN FLORIDA. IT CERTAINLY DID LOOK LIKE IT WOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE GETTING TO THE MOON. AND THE THING IS, - FAKING IT ALL WOULD BE SO DIFFICULT, SO RISKY, IT WOULD HAVE SURELY THEN BEEN EASIER TO HAVE ACTUALLY JUST GONE TO THE MOON ...



MAN YOU'RE SO OBVIOUSLY DUPED. YOU BELIEVE WHAT THE GOVERNMENT WANTS YOU TO BELIEVE, THAT'S ALL!

UFO NEWS
ALIENS SEXUALLY MOLEST REBNECKS. AGAIN.

THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT? THE SAME ONE THAT HAS BEEN COMMUNING WITH EXTRATERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR, OH, 60 YEARS SINCE ROSWELL NOW? CONSIDERING WE'D BE LIKE NEANDERTHAL CAVEMEN NEXT TO GALAXY-HOPPING ALIENS, YOU'D THINK WE, OR OUR GOVERNMENTS, MIGHT HAVE LEARNT A TRICK OR TWO.

AND THAT'S THE TROUBLE. THE POWERS THAT BE SEEM ALMOST COMICALLY INEPT, - LOOK AT THE IRAQ WAR DEBACLE, THE LYING ABOUT WMD, THE TOTAL LACK OF ANY POST WAR PLAN. COULD THESE FOOLS WHO RULE US EVEN BE CAPABLE OF THE INTRICATE PLANNING BEHIND CONSPIRACY THEORIES?..



A WORLD WITHOUT LEADERS

“For about 94,000 of the 100,000 years of human history, people lived and organised themselves as hunter-gatherers without a centralized leadership apparatus. Hunter-gatherers began the transition to early chiefdoms and embryonic states between 3,000 and 6,000 years ago. Only in the previous 100-500 years have there been state-level polities. The earliest human societies were acephalous: they existed without formal rulers or leaders. For this reason, they were also probably without heroes, a pattern which is starkly at odds with what has been claimed of human history generally and which also contrasts with the contemporary leadership field.” Taken from the inaugural lecture on “Leadership: Its genealogy, configuration and trajectory” by Peter Gronn, Professor of Education at the University of Cambridge. (*Independent*, 17 June)

CANCER AND THE PROFIT MOTIVE

“Supplies of vital medicines, including those used in the fight against cancer, are running short because UK pharmacies and drug wholesalers are selling them abroad to maximise profits. ... The shortage is being caused by the falling value of sterling which has meant that UK pharmacies and drug wholesalers can earn greater returns by selling medicines to the continent. ... Last night leading cancer charities expressed alarm at the situation. ‘Cancer Research UK urges the Department of Health to ensure that no patient experiences any delay in getting prescription drugs,’ said Hilary Jackson, the organisation’s policy manager. ‘We are concerned to hear of cases where patients have been delayed access to prescribed medication or have to find an alternative supplier. This causes extra distress at an already difficult time’” (*Observer*, 5 July)

OWNERSHIP AND KNOWLEDGE

“Ten years ago, a piece of software called Napster taught us that scarcity is no longer a law of nature. The physics of our universe would allow everyone with access to a networked computer to enjoy, for free, every song, every film, every book, every piece of research, every computer program, every last thing that could be made out of digital ones and zeros. The question became not, will nature allow it, but will our legal and economic system ever allow it? This is a question about the future of capitalism, the economic system that arose from scarcity. Ours is the era of expanded copyright systems and enormous portfolios of dubious patents, of trade secrecy, the privatisation of the fruits of publicly funded research, and other phenomena that we collectively term ‘intellectual property’. As technology has made a new abundance of knowledge possible, politicians, lawyers, corporations and university administrations have become more and more determined to preserve its scarcity. So will we cling to scarcity just so that we can keep capitalism?” (*New Scientist*, 24 June)

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Central London branch. 2nd Weds. 6.30pm. 2nd Wednesday 6.30pm. Coffee Republic Travelodge, 7-12 City Road, EC1 (nearest Tube and rail stations Old Street and Moorgate).

Enfield and Haringey branch. Thurs 26th. 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18. Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL. email:julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk

South London branch. 1st Tues. 7.00pm. Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, 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

Pimlico. C. Trinder, 24 Greenwood Ct, 155 Cambridge Street, SW1 4VQ. Tel: 020 7834 8186

MIDLANDS

West Midlands branch. Meets every two months on a Sunday afternoon (see meetings page for details). Tel: Tony Gluck 01242 235615

NORTHEAST

Northeast branch. Contact: Brian Barry, 86 Edgmond Ct, Ryhope, Sunderland SR2 0DY. Tel: 0191 521 0690. E-mail: 3491@bbarry.f2s.com

NORTHWEST

Lancaster branch. Meets every Monday 8.30pm. P. Shannon, 10 Green Street, Lancaster LA1 1DZ. Tel: 01524 382380

Manchester branch. Paul Bennett, 6 Burleigh Mews, Hardy Lane, M21 7LB. Tel: 0161 860 7189

Bolton. Tel: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589

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

Carlisle. Robert Whitfield. E-mail: rewcb13@yahoo.co.uk tel: 07906 373975

Rochdale. Tel: R. Chadwick. 01706 522365

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

YORKSHIRE

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

Todmorden. Keith Scholey, 1 Leevieview Ct, Windsor Rd, OL14 5LJ. Tel: 01706 814 149

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

South West branch. Meets every two months on a Saturday afternoon (see meetings page for details). Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol BS5 6DN. Tel: 0117 9511199

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

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

Redruth. Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1PB. Tel: 01209 219293

EAST ANGLIA

East Anglia branch. Meets every two months on a Saturday afternoon (see meetings page for details). David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccles-on-Sea, NR12 0SF. Tel: 01692 582533. Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD. Tel: 01603 814343.

Cambridge. Andrew Westley, 10 Marksby Close, Duxford, Cambridge CB2 4RS. Tel: 07890343044

NORTHERN IRELAND

Newtownabbey: Nigel McCullough. Tel: 028 90852062

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh branch. 1st Thur. 8-9pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh.

J. Moir. Tel: 0131 440 0995 JIMMY@jmoir29.freeserve.co.uk Branch website: <http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>

Glasgow branch. 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Richard Donnelly, 112 Napiershall Street, Glasgow G20 6HT. Tel: 0141 5794109. E-mail: richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com

Ayrshire: D. Trainer, 21 Manse Street, Salcoats, KA21 5AA. Tel: 01294 469994. E-mail: derricktrainer@freeuk.com

Dundee. Ian Ratcliffe, 16 Birkhall Ave, Wormit, Newport-on-Tay, DD6 8PX. Tel: 01328 541643

West Lothian. 2nd and 4th Weds in month, 7.30-9.30. Lanthorn Community Centre, Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge, Livingston. Corres: Matt Culbert, 53 Falcon Brae, Ladywell, Livingston, West Lothian, EH5 6UW. Tel: 01506 462359 E-mail: matt@wsmweb.fsnet.co.uk

WALES

Swansea branch. 2nd Mon, 7.30pm, Unitarian Church, High Street. Corres: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. Tel: 01792 643624

Cardiff and District. John James, 67 Romilly Park Road, Barry CF62 6RR. Tel: 01446 405636

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

AFRICA

Kenya. Patrick Ndege, PO Box 56428, Nairobi.

Swaziland. Mandla Ntshakala, PO Box 981, Manzini.

Zambia. Kephas Mulenga, PO Box 280168, Kitwe.

ASIA

India. World Socialist Group, Vill Gobardhanpur. PO Amral, Dist. Bankura, 722122

Japan. Michael. Email: worldsocialismjapan@hotmail.com.

EUROPE

Denmark. Graham Taylor, Kjaerslund 9, floor 2 (middle), DK-8260 Viby J

Germany. Norbert. E-mail: weltsozialismus@gmx.net

Norway. Robert Stafford. E-mail: hallblithe@yahoo.com

COMPANION PARTIES

OVERSEAS

World Socialist Party of Australia.

P. O. Box 1266 North Richmond 3121, Victoria, Australia.. Email: commonownership@yahoo.com.au

Socialist Party of Canada/Parti

Socialiste du Canada. Box 4280, Victoria B.C. V8X 3X8 Canada. E-mail: SPC@iname.com

World Socialist Party (New Zealand)

P.O. Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New Zealand.

World Socialist Party of the United

States P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 USA. E-mail: wspboston@covad.net

Sharing with Shah

Eddie Shah? Wasn't he the capitalist who in 1982 tried to break the print unions and provoked a bitter industrial dispute that lasted seven months and which he eventually won thanks to invoking Thatcher's newly-introduced anti-union laws? Indeed, he is. He has now found another way to exploit the labour of other people:

"The former newspaper owner Eddie Shah is inviting the public to grow vegetables on his land – but demanding that they hand over 60 per cent of their produce. Mr Shah has offered to give over two acres of his estate to be used by gardeners. Most of their vegetables would then be served in his restaurants" (*Times*, 30 June).

This is not quite a return to feudalism where serfs were obliged to work so many days on the estate of the lord of the manor. It's the same principle though, and corresponds to one way in which in some countries those who worked the land were exploited in the sense of being deprived of a part of the fruits of their labour. "Sharecropping", as it was known, was for instance the system that replaced chattel slavery in the American South after the North won the Civil War. The "free" Negroes were still exploited, but by this new method.

Whereas under the wages system exploitation is hidden, under sharecropping (as well as under serfdom and chattel slavery) it is obvious. The producers directly surrender a part of what they produce to somebody else.

It was the same when Shah was a newspaper owner, but not so obvious, because it was then done through money and not in kind. Shah paid his journalists, printers and other workers a wage for the use of their working skills (what Marx called their "labour power") for an agreed period. The amount of money they received corresponded more or less (probably less as he employed non-union labour) to the monetary value of the working skills they sold him. This appears to be a fair transaction. The workers have something to sell; they sell its use for a contracted period; and get paid its value (what it cost to produce, i.e. the costs of the necessities and minor luxuries needed to reproduce it on a weekly or a monthly basis). And that appears to be it.

But it isn't. The amount of labour-time required to reproduce a worker's labour-power for, say, a month (i.e. to produce what he or she needs to consume in a month) is not the same as the value of what a worker can produce in a month. Not at all. In fact it is considerably less. For instance, it might only take 12 days labour-time to produce a worker's monthly needs. But that doesn't mean that workers can stop after working only 12 days. They will have contracted to work for the whole month and this they must do. So, they have to work a further 18 days, free, for their employer. This unpaid labour is the source of the employer's profits and is in fact why the employer employed the worker in the first place. It is as if the worker only kept 40 percent of what they produced. Just as under Shah's revived sharecropping scheme.

But Shah needs to be careful. Sharecroppers can organise just as wage and salary workers can. In fact they did organise in America in the 1920s and 1930s. And by asking for 60 percent he is already fixing a higher rate of exploitation than the ex-slaveowners did in the post-slavery South. They only took 50 percent.

The Pope and the cardinals of the Vatican help organize tours of Auschwitz for Hezbollah members to teach them how to wipe out Jews, according to a booklet being distributed to Israel Defense Forces soldiers. Officials encouraging the booklet's distribution include senior officers, such as Lt. Col. Tamir Shalom, the commander of the Nahshon Battalion of the Kfir Brigade. The booklet was published by the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, in cooperation with the chief rabbi of Safed, Rabbi Shmuel Eliahu, and has been distributed for the past few months:

<http://tinyurl.com/lx6ubl>

Anwar, 15, can't read or write, but says he's good at tunnel work. He needs a new job as Israeli planes bombed his workplace, one of hundreds of smuggling tunnels on Gaza's border with Egypt:

<http://tinyurl.com/kuh5fq>

London's Conservative Mayor **Boris Johnson** has been labelled "out of touch" with millions of Londoners after he described the £250,000 he is paid for a weekly column in the *as* "chicken feed". He said it was "wholly reasonable" to take the annual fee on top of his £140,000 salary as mayor:

<http://tinyurl.com/kprjlp>

Sheehan's pitch is to free ourselves from our co-dependency with the Robber Class. "...Only buy used, only use cash or bank debit cards, or only buy from local merchants," she recently wrote. They can only steal from us if we enable them." And when the Robber Class steals from us they generally get away with it. Sheehan argues that Bernie Madoff was punished so severely because he stole from the rich:

<http://tinyurl.com/ld6vfr>

Tens of thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses gathered on Friday at Berlin's Olympic Stadium and four other major German cities for an international congress, predicting the demise of the "current global system."

<http://tinyurl.com/nahfzu>

"Yes, I'm fully prepared for this. I have concluded that the wars [in Iraq and Afghanistan] are not going to be ended by politicians or people at the top. They're not responsive to people, they're responsive to corporate America. The only way to make them responsive to the needs of the people is for soldiers to not fight their wars. If soldiers won't fight their wars, the wars won't happen. I hope I'm setting an example for other soldiers."

<http://tinyurl.com/nv923a>

When the Honduran military overthrew the democratically elected government of Manuel Zelaya two weeks ago there might have been a sigh of relief in the corporate board rooms of Chiquita banana. Earlier this year the Cincinnati-based fruit company joined Dole in criticizing the government in Tegucigalpa which had raised the minimum wage by 60%. Chiquita complained that the new regulations would cut into company profits, requiring the firm to spend more on costs than in Costa Rica: 20 cents more to produce a crate of pineapple and ten cents more to produce a crate of bananas to be exact. In all, Chiquita fretted that it would lose millions under Zelaya's labor reforms since the company produced around 8 million crates of pineapple and 22 million crates of bananas per year

<http://tinyurl.com/lbbv8n>

Why we don't need another Labour party



The Labour Party has failed, so let's start a new one. That's what some trade unionists and leftwingers are saying. That would be to repeat a mistake.

The Labour Party was founded by the trade unions, supported by some political groups (Keir Hardie's ILP, the Fabians), to be a group in parliament pressing for legislation favourable to trade unions and their members. Originally called the Labour Representation Committee, it became the Labour Party after the 1906 General Election when enough "Labour" MPs were elected to form a parliamentary group.

That wasn't the only choice before the working class at the time. Socialists within the Marxist-influenced SDF proposed another way: that, instead of aiming at reforms of capitalism to be obtained by a pressure group in parliament, the working class should aim directly at obtaining socialism – the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production – as the only framework within which the problems they faced under capitalism could be effectively and lastingly dealt with. This was the policy advocated by those who broke away from the SDF in 1904 to set up us, the Socialist Party.

That was the choice: Labourism or Socialism? Unfortunately, most working class activists chose Labourism. In 1918 the Labour Party adopted a new constitution changing it from being a pressure group in parliament into a fully-fledged political party, with individual members. The declared aim was to eventually win a parliamentary majority and form a government that would gradually introduce socialism (actually, nationalisation or state capitalism, as set out in Clause IV of the constitution).

Labour in office

In the 1924 general election the Labour Party ended up with the most seats and the Liberal Party allowed a minority Labour government, under Ramsay MacDonald, to come into office. It lasted less than a year, but this was enough to show the ruling class that the Labour Party could be trusted to loyally manage the affairs of the British Empire. A second minority Labour government came into office in 1929 but was overwhelmed by the world slump that followed the Wall Street Crash and left office ignominiously in 1931, unable to stop unemployment growing (and proposing to cut un-

Above: some of the leaders of the early Labour party

employment benefit and civil service wages). Their leader MacDonald even went over to the Tories as Prime Minister in a Tory-dominated "National" government.

In 1945 Labour finally won a parliamentary majority. Clement Attlee took over from Churchill as Prime Minister. This time there were no excuses. The post-war Labour government did carry out a large part of the Labour Party's reformist programme, nationalising coal, gas, electricity, water, rail, air and some road transport, and bringing in a national health service and a national unemployment, sickness and pensions scheme. This wasn't socialism but it was a fairly radical reform of capitalism, even if motivated by the need to reconstruct British capitalism after the war as much as by a desire to improve working class conditions. At the same time the Attlee government presided over the development of the British A-bomb and got involved in war in Malaya and Korea. Despite the nationalisations and the reforms, in 1951 the electors voted Churchill and the Tories back. They stayed till 1964 when the Labour Party, under Harold Wilson, again obtained a parliamentary majority after what they called "thirteen wasted years".

The 1964 Wilson Labour government was a complete failure. Economic circumstances made a mockery of their "national plan" to increase production smoothly and led to successive devaluations of the pound. In the end the government settled down to governing capitalism in the only way it can be: as a profit-making system in the interest of those who live off profits and against the interests of those who live off wages and salaries. Improved state benefits introduced in the first few months of the government were clawed back and "wage restraint", even for a while a "wage freeze", was imposed. A document *In Place of Strife* proposing to restrict trade union activity was drawn up. They didn't have time to push it through but this was a factor in their losing the 1970 election.

Criticism confirmed

We in the Socialist Party pointed out our original criticism of Labourism had now been confirmed beyond doubt. It was not possible either

to reform capitalism into socialism by means of a series of reforms enacted by parliament or to make capitalism work in the interest of the majority class of wage and salary earners. Instead of the Labour Party gradually changing capitalism, the opposite happened. Capitalism gradually changed the Labour Party into an ordinary alternative party taking its turn to manage the affairs of British capitalism.

But Labourist reformism was to have one more go at reforming capitalism. The Heath Tory government elected in 1970 proved a disaster, with double-digit inflation. In preparation for the coming general election, in 1973 the Labour Party adopted a policy document which spoke about a “fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families”. Denis Healey, the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, hinted at squeezing the rich till the pips squeaked. Labour won the 1974 election, but the new Labour government (first under Wilson, then from 1976 under James Callaghan) proved unable, too, to control double-digit inflation. Instead of squeezing the rich, Healey, now the real Chancellor, had to go cap in hand to the IMF to get money just to keep normal government spending going. There were strings attached and it was low-paid public sector workers who were squeezed, leading to the winter of discontent of 1978/9. Labour lost the 1979 election. Margaret Thatcher took over and reversed most of the reforms that the Attlee government had introduced.

The Labour Party took some time to adjust to the new situation, even choosing for a while the leftwing journalist and orator, Michael Foot, as its leader. They lost the 1984, 1989 and 1992 general elections. Then came Blair. He realised that, unless the Labour Party abandoned the original Labourist project of trying to transform society by a series of nationalisations and reforms, it would never get back into office. Clause IV was accordingly abandoned. It worked. Labour – calling itself “New Labour” – won the 1997 election and again in 2001 and 2005.

The Blair Labour governments, however, were not like previous ones. They did not set out to reform capitalism to benefit workers and fail. They set out to simply manage capitalism for the capitalists and succeeded. It was plain for all to see that the Labour Party was no longer a “Labour” party, no longer a party committed to improving conditions for trade unionists and their members, but just another ordinary capitalist party like the Tories and the Liberals.

After a century of failure, Labourism no longer existed. The working class was back where it had been nearly a century previous-



Above: Arthur Scargill, leader of the Socialist Labour Party

ly: faced with the choice between two openly capitalist parties, not the Tories and the Liberals as then, but now the Tories and Labour.

Same choice

The same strategic choice now confronts the working class as it did in 1900. There are those who want to repeat the mistake that was then made and who want to form a new Labour party based on the trade unions. This is what Arthur Scargill tried to do with the “Socialist Labour Party” he set up in 1996. It’s what Militant, after being kicked out of the Labour Party, now propose with their campaign for a “New Workers Party”. It was what the SWP thought could happen with Respect and which George Galloway, who now controls it, perhaps still does. There is even an organisation called, again, the Labour Representation Committee.

But why? Surely one of the two main lessons of the 20th century has been that Labourism is a dead end (the other being that neither is state capitalist dictatorship as in former USSR a way to socialism). It can’t succeed. Not because its leaders are insincere or incompetent or corrupt or not resolute enough. It fails because it sets itself the impossible mission of trying to gradually reform capitalism into socialism. This can’t be done, as experience, not just theoretical understanding, has confirmed.

No doubt Scargill and the new Labour Representation Committee are sincere, though the same cannot be said of Militant or the SWP (they only want another mass party of Labour so they can infiltrate it and fish for members for their respective, and rival, vanguard parties).

But surely what is required is not a new Labour party but a party with socialism as its explicit aim and a policy of doing all it can to bring this into being. Since at the moment a majority still want or acquiesce in capitalism, in the immediate future this will

have to involve campaigning for socialism, winning people over to socialism. Which is what we advocated in 1904 and what, in our small way, we have been doing ever since, despite the Labour road which most of the rest of the working class decided to take.

If the mistakes of the 20th century are not to be repeated this century the last thing that is needed today is a non-socialist, trade-union based “Labour” party. We’ve already been there, and it doesn’t work.

ADAM BUICK

Below: members of the Labour Representation Committee



The power behind the shame

It was the political power that the Catholic Church once exercised in Ireland that allowed it to cover up for so long the child abuse exposed in the recent Ryan Report.

I travelled to Dublin in the early 1950s as a member of a delegation from a Northern Ireland Labour group. Our purpose was to discuss with the leaders of the Irish Labour Party the desirability and feasibility of extending this party into Northern Ireland.

The Irish Labour Party was then part of the coalition government which abandoned the constitutional ties with Great Britain and declared the state of Eire "The Republic of Ireland". Its leader was William Norton who was the Coalition's Deputy Prime Minister (Tanaiste) and Minister of Labour. He was the Leader of the delegation we were meeting on the Sunday morning. The rest of its delegates were Senator Luke Duffy, the Party's General Secretary, James Larkin (son of the courageous Labour Leader of 1912 fame) and Roddy Connolly, (the son of James Connolly, the erstwhile socialist who was executed by the British for his part in the 1916 Easter Rising).

We met in the Tanaiste's office, a very grand location in, if I remember correctly, Merrion Square. Connolly had met our delegation the previous evening and he and three of our delegates were nursing the consequences of the hospitality. Norton sat in grandeur behind a massive desk that would have silenced the impoverished; he looked and sounded unctuous, distracting from his excellent delivery with a continuous 'washing' action of his hands.

I threw a bomb into the pleasantries when I asked him if it was true that he had told journalists during the elections just passed that Labour's policy was not only compatible with Catholic social doctrine but was actually based on *Rerum Novarum*, a Papal Encyclical "on the Condition of the working classes", from the prolific pen of Pope Leo XIII released some 59 years earlier in May 1891.

Norton prefaced his politician's reply with a sloppy compliment to my youth and what he perceived to be the intensity of my idealism. but I had to learn that politics was the art of the possible. Another member

of our delegation, Michael Callaghan - the only one who, like me, was not a Catholic - equated the remark I had attributed to Norton with the comment of a North of Ireland Prime Minister that his was a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people.

Larkin stood by the window, silent, sullen; Connolly, too, despite pledges of the previous evening, when he'd quipped about bishop's with invisible Ministerial portfolios, was silent. On being pressed to answer Norton agreed that he might have made the remark. *Rerum Novarum* was an old document...he couldn't exactly remember the detail of its main thrust - but Russian 'communism' had made things awkward for Labour in a Catholic country.

The rest of our delegation were untroubled by the implications of the suggestion that the Leader of the Irish Labour Party who held the Labour portfolio in the Irish government overtly agreed with the bitterly anti-socialist, anti-democratic Papal bigot whose conception of freedom was naked corporative capitalism under the hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church. They were there to make history and, anyway, we had to show courtesy.

Callaghan and I knew we had been rebuked by serious aspirants to professionalism - and political ambition in a country where the Church was an invisible upper chamber had frightening portents. The reality of these were corruptive of the democratic process in an allegedly democratic country.

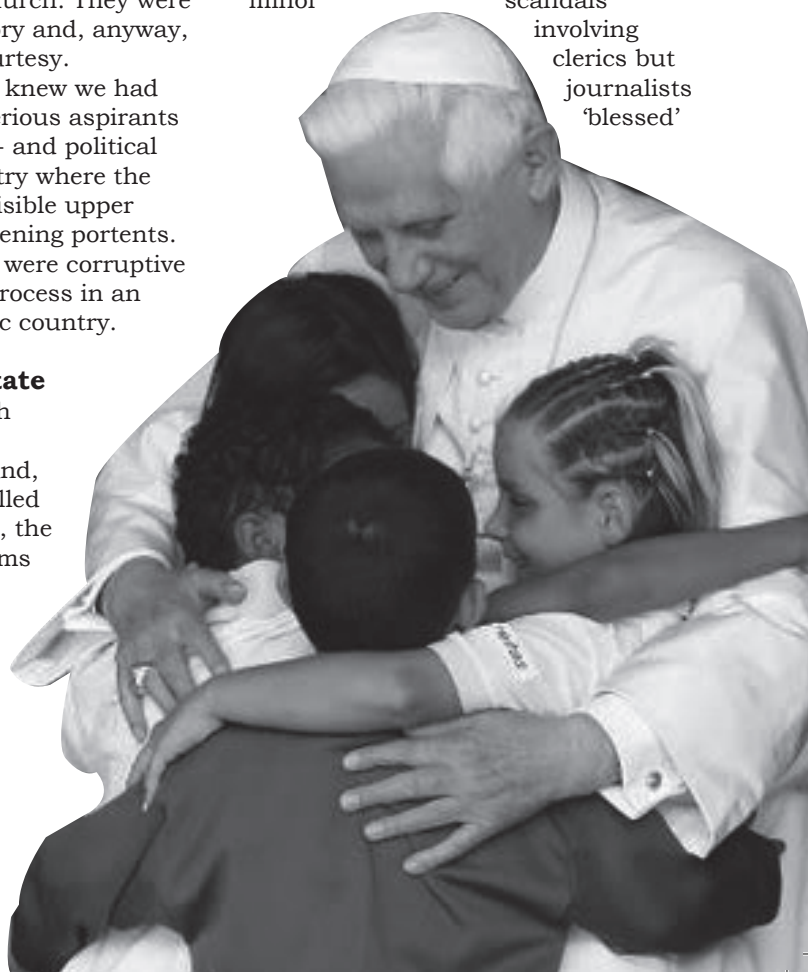
The Unfree State

When the British withdrew from the greater part of Ireland, henceforth to be called the Irish Free State, the IRA split on the terms of the settlement with Britain, and a bloody civil war ensued. Under these warring conditions administrative structures had to be developed. The

war with Britain was for *faith* and fatherland; those who were killing one another in an internecine war over the nature of the fatherland were at least united in *faith* and there was no discernable concern about the Catholic Church becoming almost wholly responsible for the general 'education' of the young, including places of care and security like orphanages and juvenile penal institutions.

The approximately 27 percent of the population of Ireland who were not Catholics and might have acted as a counterweight to the arrogant authoritarianism of the Catholic bishops were now largely concentrated in Northern Ireland. Only some 9 percent of the population of the Free State was non-Catholic, mainly Protestant. These latter had been identified with the enemy during the three years of fierce guerrilla war that preceded the new constitutional arrangements and they were not anxious to be involved in controversy, especially controversy pertaining to the power of the church.

There were from time to time minor scandals involving clerics but journalists 'blessed'





*Facing page: Pope Benedict XVI.
Far left: Eamon De Valera, the main architect of the civil war. Left: Clann na Poblachta leader Sean McBride*

themselves in the presence of a priest and 'housewives' brought out the china cup and saucer for his visit and, of course, everybody knew that the pleasant-looking young ladies that frequently wined or dined with them in the local hotels were their sisters. The State maintained a censor and an Index of banned books on which appeared the titles of any Irish writer who ever wrote an honest word. Nothing of significance happened without the attendance of a priest.

In 1926 the republican rebels who had been defeated in the civil war reformed politically under the aegis of Fianna Fail and achieved control of government in 1932. The new Taoiseach (Prime Minister) was Eamon De Valera, the main architect of the civil war; an austere, well-informed Catholic. In 1937 his government changed the name of the state to Eire and introduced a new constitution in which was mentioned the favoured place of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

The New Republic

In 1948 the political inertia of the years of official neutrality during the second World War to end all wars came to an end with the spawning of yet another incarnation of republicanism in the shape of the Clann na Poblachta. The new Party was led by Sean McBride who had been chief-of-staff of the IRA before the war and had resigned his position when the IRA's Army Council agreed to the planting of bombs in England. McBride was a French-educated lawyer and senior counsel who, incidentally, was later involved in the founding of Amnesty International.

The new Party was optimistic about its chances of winning a majority in the Dail (Irish

Parliament). In the event they won a credible ten seats and went into a coalition with the Irish Labour Party, Fine Gael, National Labour and a Farmers' Party - the latter two now demised - under the leadership of John A Costello. The coalition contained some figures regarded as radical within an Irish context; it made Eire "the Republic of Ireland", it flirted with notions of changes in education and health but it surrendered before the power of the bishops and their priestocracy.

The Coalition's Minister of Health, Dr Noel Browne, was a young medical doctor who was in remission from tuberculosis - a poverty-promoted pulmonary illness rife in Ireland. I had met Browne at an early meeting of the Clann na Poblachta; he claimed he was a socialist but his sole political preoccupation seemed to be a well-intentioned obsession with the need for a system of state-structured health care and it was no surprise when he introduced a Bill to provide free health care for pregnant women and children up to the age of sixteen.

Bishopspeak

Unfortunately, health, like education, was deemed by the bishops to be a vital part of the Church's constituency. Governance over education was clearly prescribed under the Church's *Code of Canon Law cc. 1381, 1382*. Control of the minds of the young was vital to the adult acceptance of the outrageous basis of religious belief while control of the ramshackle health provision was an important instrument of social control and evidence of a 'caring' church.

The threat of even a very limited secularised health service enraged the bishops. They were, of course

entitled, like any other interested party, to offer their opinion but they were not 'any other interested party'. The then Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid issued an *instruction* for Dr Browne to meet him and a coterie of his arrogant colleagues at the Archbishopric at 24 hours' notice. The proposed health service was abandoned and the Minister of Health replaced; the puny mercies of the proposed service would have to wait for another day when material conditions would clear away some of the cobwebs of ignorant and superstition that history had imposed on the people.

Just as electricity had played a major role in banishing the fairies new material conditions in the Republic were putting the myths under strain. Those who knew from their awful experiences - and there were thousands of them - that many of the Church's educational and 'care' institutions were cesspits of sexual, physical and emotional depravity were terrorised into silence but there were whisperings now; the Index, as the banned books listings was called, was no longer tenable and the bishops could not ban the airwaves. Even more pertinently, Ireland was strategically placed on the western flank of an expanding Common Market. New technologies were leading to much greater mobility of capital which, in turn demanded vastly expanded educational and training facility.

All the sexual taboos which Popes railed about, while the Church manoeuvred its clerics around the world to escape child abuse charges, were increasingly unenforceable in the Republic. New living standards needed two incomes and the 'rhythm method', the Church's absurd means of contraception, was not only

emotionally sordid and restrictive but often ineffective. Wits in Ireland were known to question where they would get a ceili band in the middle of the night and when an Irish-American beauty revealed that the father of her teenage son was the stringent Bishop Casey of Galway it was legitimate to ask why he was not using the rhythm method.

The church's dirty washing was becoming public. Early offerings were decent priests who had abandoned the holy pretence to identify with their sexual partners and provide for their children. They were not the 'bad apples' the very devout perceived them to be; the real bad apples, whole orchards of them, priests, nuns and Christian Brothers remained in the fold to torture and rape innocent children whose care they had been charged with all sorts of power-lusting, creative abuse was waiting to be revealed by tens of thousands of victims against a thousand members of religious orders.

Eventually public disquiet became so clamorous that the Irish government, fearful of legal action by victims for dereliction of the State's duty of care had to do something about it. Given the abundance of proven cases not only in Ireland but in other countries throughout the world where paedophile Irish priests had been moved by church authorities in order to escape the opprobrium that their public conviction would bring on the Church, it was reasonable to expect swift and intensive action into sources of information that would help the Authorities to get details of the identity of the criminals and their current location. But the Garda did not bring their battering rams to the doors of Bishopsrics where such information might be found. Not a single officer of the Church who was complicit in withholding information into these utterly heinous crimes appeared in the dock.

Instead the state went into negotiations with the church authorities about setting up a Commission of Enquiry into the disgustingly unsavoury affair and the church authorities - presumably the cardinal and the bishops - agreed to co-operate with the Enquiry on the basis of an undertaking from the State that it (the church authorities) would not have to reveal the identity of its miscreants and that the Church's liability for financial compensation to victims should be capped at some 128 million euro. This latter is currently estimated at 1.3 billion euros which leaves the Irish taxpayer liable for some one billion euros for the crimes of the clergy.

The Ryan Commission heard evidence from literally thousands of victims into rape, buggery and brutality in Catholic institutions where children and young people had been placed by the State for care and protection over a period of some four decades. The Enquiry took ten years and its conclusion was that these utterly depraved practices were 'endemic' in such institutions.

It is hard to imagine the magnitude of suffering inflicted on children of all ages over decades by brutal priests and nuns numerous permeated into a grossly arrogant and sanctimonious church whose maintained code of silence must surely have equalled the evil of its utterly debauched clerics.

There is no suggestion that the church promoted or encouraged this depravity but it must be obvious that the offenders, especially paedophiles, recognised the opportunities the Church with its regime of power and unquestioned obedience offered for the pursuit of their foul practices.

The guilt of the Church was, and is, in the appalling fact that in order to preserve its awesome power over its credulous membership it was prepared to protect those engaged in the most vile practices against children. Those who rape, sodomise, and physically abuse



Businessmen and opera-dancers

The July monthly newsletter of our comrades of the Socialist Party of Canada drew attention to a claim about Adam Smith by *Toronto Star* columnist Thomas Walkom:

"Smith argued that only labour (by which he meant entrepreneurial businessmen) created value and that government and its hangers-on added nothing" (6 June) (www.thestar.com/article/645833).

It is true that Adam Smith did argue that governments and their hangers-on did not create any new value but were maintained out of the value of those who did. It is not true, however, that he thought that only the labour of entrepreneurial businessmen created value.

He deals with this question in Chapter III of Book II of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776):

"There is one sort of labour which adds to the value of the subject upon which it is bestowed: there is another which has no such effect. The former, as it produces a value, may be called productive; the latter, unproductive labour. Thus the labour of a manufacturer adds, generally, to the value of the materials which he works upon, that of his own maintenance, and of his master's profit. The labour of a menial servant, on the contrary, adds to the value of nothing. Though the manufacturer has his wages advanced to him by his master, he, in reality, costs him no expense, the value of those wages being generally restored, together with a profit, in the improved value of the subject upon which his labour is bestowed. But the maintenance of a menial servant never is restored. A man grows rich by employing a multitude of manufacturers: he grows poor by maintaining a multitude of menial servants."

This is clear enough. Only those who manufacture (in the original, literal sense of someone who makes something with their hands, *manus* being the Latin word for hand) something tangible and lasting, that can be exchanged for something with the same labour content, create value. This does not include the "masters". Smith explicitly says that they get rich from the value created by the "manufacturers" they employ.

Smith's concept of productive labour could even be called "workerist" in that it has to be manual labour that produces a tangible, a material, object. Even Marx didn't go that far as he counted the non-manual work of designing and planning manual work as productive.

Smith went on:

"The labour of some of the most respectable orders in the society is, like that of menial servants, unproductive of any value, and does not fix or realize itself in any permanent subject; or vendible commodity, which endures after that labour is past, and for which an equal quantity of labour could afterwards be procured. The sovereign, for example, with all the officers both of justice and war who serve under him, the whole army and navy, are unproductive labourers. They are the servants of the public, and are maintained by a part of the annual produce of the industry of other people. (...) In the same class must be ranked, some both of the gravest and most important, and some of the most frivolous professions: churchmen, lawyers, physicians, men of letters of all kinds; players, buffoons, musicians, opera-singers, opera-dancers, etc."

Smith certainly saw the economic role of "masters" as essential but not because he thought they alone created value while government employees, buffoons and opera-dancers merely consumed it. It was because he thought that private enterprise, *laissez-faire* capitalism was the most natural way to organise the production and distribution of wealth. But it isn't. So entrepreneurial businessmen are not needed.

defenceless children have deep and intractable problems; this writer does not pretend to understand the causes of such behaviour but assumes their mental condition is a factor in their guilt. There is no such subtlety in the behaviour of an organisation that conceals such depravity in order to preserve its power and privilege.

RICHARD MONTAGUE

Capitalism is bad for your health

Today the promotion and maintenance of good health and the treatment and cure of ill people is divided among three sectors: private, public and voluntary. The motivating concept in the private sector is pursuit of profit for the providers. The public sector aims primarily to provide goods and services for the consuming public, usually with state or other subsidy. The voluntary sector is the least money-oriented of the three; it is concerned with helping people to help others and themselves.

To some extent the three sectors compete and even conflict with each other. People in urgent need of a serious operation ponder whether they can afford to “go private” quickly or have to join a lengthy NHS waiting list. Can those with extensive work and domestic responsibilities find the time to volunteer in the same way? (In fact one in six people in Britain do volunteer work of one kind or another.)

The three sectors also work together to form the health part of the capitalist system. Public-private partnerships have grown within the welfare state. Paid organisers and administrative staff help to run part of the “voluntary” sector, in effect employing unpaid labour.

All three sectors are concerned in different ways with the meeting of human need. The private sector uses capital and labour to meet needs that are expressed in economic terms and with the expectation of profit for the providers: “We’ll try to keep you well and treat you if you’re not, but only if you pay the market price for this.” The public sector is more concerned with meeting the needs of the system than of people: “If you can’t pay you can wait for free or cheap treatment because the economy needs fit workers, not unproductive ones.” The voluntary sector focuses on meeting human needs, but it does so to help keep the system going: “You are a good citizen if you volunteer—give free labour—to meet the health needs of others.”

Capitalism puts a price on everything, including human life. The nice (National Institute for Clinical Excellence) people in the NHS reckon that £30,000 is the maximum price to pay for a year’s drug treatment if you’ve got terminal cancer. There is a profitable (to shareholders) insurance industry that has a tariff of payouts for various injuries and health losses.

Capitalism is bad for your health, especially if you are a worker. In employment you are likely to be worried about the consequences of losing it or struggling to find the money to pay all the bills. The use of antidepressants is widespread, particularly among the unemployed. Four in ten people on invalidity benefit are now off work because of mental illness—

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twice as many as in the 1980s. “Presenteeism”—turning up for work ill—is also on the increase.

Cheap fatty food leads to problems of obesity, while ill old people who lack care are undernourished. Addiction to medicines and alcohol is encouraged by the profit-seeking providers, marketing firms re-brand foods rich in antioxidants as “superfoods”, but these may do more harm than good. Wars in which no working-class interest is at stake benefit the élite in the war industry, but kill, maim and cause mental illness to the armed forces and civilians.

Healthier socialism

What can we say about the likely effects on health and illness of future socialist society? It is easier to foresee what won’t happen than what will. The promotion of good health and the care of the injured and sick won’t be restricted by money considerations. There will be no profit to be made out of employing people in dangerous occupations, supplying them with unhealthy substances or encouraging their harmful addictions. No sales-people will advertise items and services that at best have no good effect on health and at worst damage it. Health and injury insurance and the compensation industry won’t be necessary.

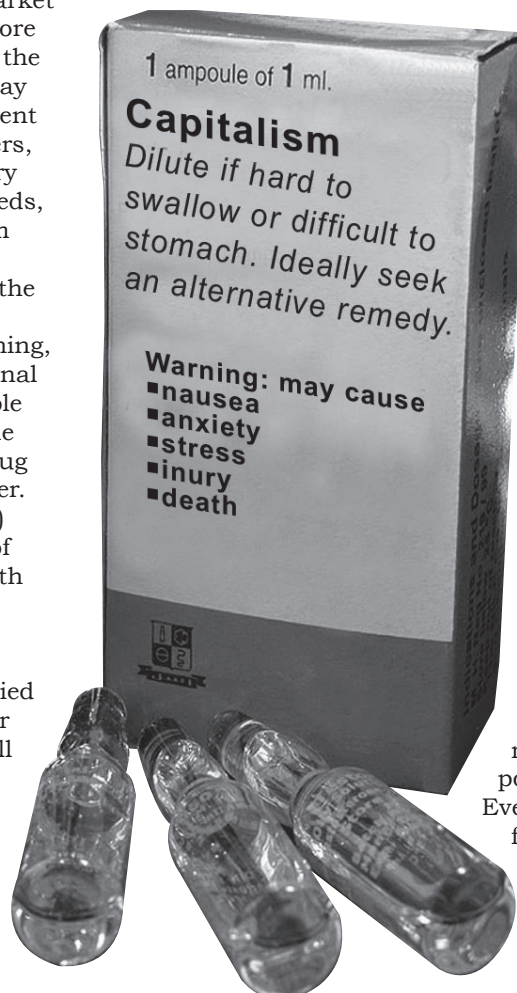
The types and incidence of health problems are likely to differ in the early stage of socialism from later stages when the legacy from the money system will have receded. Also, some parts of the world today have different degrees of economic development, commonly referred to as under-developed, developing and developed. We don’t know the extent to which present

trends, such as urbanisation and environmental degradation, will continue, accelerate or be reversed.

One thing we can say for certain is that socialism will release us from useless and harmful capitalist employment. We shall be free to take up work that will meet the needs of ourselves, others and the community, society and world in which we live. This is not to say that there won’t be problems to overcome. Natural disasters and pandemics won’t end with capitalism, although more effort will doubtless be devoted to avoiding and coping with them.

The recruitment, training and deployment of committed volunteers will take much organising and administration. The emphasis will be on activities and tasks rather than on occupational labels: nursing, brain surgery, portering, scientific research, and so on, rather than nurses, brain surgeons, porters, scientific researchers. Everywhere we shall treat each other as friendly co-operators, not competing commodities.

STAN PARKER



Can we rely on technology to bring down capitalism?

Capital, science fiction and labour



Robots in fiction

Near-future science fiction frequently explores the possibilities of imminent technologies – gadgets that haven't been designed yet, but could be given recent real advances in technology and design. Whilst its track record on such predictions – such as us getting to Mars by 1977 and everyone having rocket cars by 2002 – have been a bit wide of the mark, others have been much closer and in fact actively conservative compared to the real historical record.

Authors such as Charles Stross in his *Halting State* or Ken Macleod in his *Night Sessions* explore a future where mobile phone technology linked up to glasses which display information to the wearer can link up with technology like google Earth and GPS systems to tell them, just by looking, who lives in a house and what criminal records they have and

other known details. They explore the expanding pace of technology, as the machine intelligence of computers begins to exceed that of the living human beings. Iain M. Banks in his *Culture* novels explores the aftereffects of that process, where humans served by loyal robots live in a post-scarcity, anarcho-communist, space-faring society.

A tool enables a human to do a job, while a machine effectively replaces human labour. A robot is a sort of machine. The word itself is Czech, coming from a play about automatons, and it means worker, but with connotations of slavery. The international standards organisation defines a robot as: “an automatically controlled, reprogrammable, multipurpose, manipulator programmable in three or more axes, which may be either fixed in place or mobile for use in industrial automation applications.” In other words, a type of machine.

Robots do not have to be physical, and many expert systems can be described as a robot of sorts. When your word-processor corrects your spelling, that is a type of robot.

Futurists talk of a “singularity”. This represents an “event horizon” in the predictability of human technological development past which present models of the future cease to give reliable or accurate answers, following the creation of strong artificial intelligence or the amplification of human intelligence. Futurists predict that after the Singularity, humans as they exist presently will cease to be the dominating force in scientific and technological progress, replaced with posthumans, strong Artificial Intelligence, or both, and therefore all models of change based on past trends in human behaviour will be obsolete.

The technological singularity refers to a situation in which technological advancement begins to accelerate to the point where new designs are produced, basically, before old ones are implemented: where super-intelligence exists. More prosaically, when the robots begin to be able to do our thinking for us. Proponents of such an eventuality point to growth of computer processing power and the growth of communications and transport technology. They mark how the time taken for products to reach ubiquity and obsolescence is falling – it took 70 years for telephones to become ubiquitous, the iPod has managed it in about 8, for example.

Already 3D printers have been developed that can make models and parts out of silicon and plastic – that will lead to faster development of prototypes. Those 3D printers can also produce 60 percent of their own parts. If they get to 100 percent we'd have multipurpose machines that could reproduce themselves, and maybe even adapt for different tasks.

Drastic effect

Machines making machines. That would have drastic effects on the labour market. Robin Hanson writes in the on-line magazine *IEEE Spectrum*:

“The relative advantages of humans and machines vary from one task to the next. Imagine a chart resembling a topographic cross section, with the tasks that are “most human” forming a human advantage curve on the higher ground. Here you find chores best done by humans, like gourmet cooking or elite hairdressing. Then there is a “shore” consisting of tasks that humans and machines are equally able to perform and, beyond them an “ocean” of tasks best done by machines. When machines get cheaper or smarter or both, the water level rises, as it were, and the shore moves inland.” (“Economics Of The Singularity”, <http://www.spectrum.ieee.org/robotics/robotics-software/economics-of-the-singularity/2>)

Depending on how these contours actually lie, this could mean mass displacement for millions of workers: redundancy on a grand scale. From shop staff to clerks, essentially human posts could be done away with by “simple” intelligences or machine expertise.

Of course, this trend has been continuing since capitalism began. As Hanson notes:

“The (...) proliferation of machine-assembled cars raised the value of related human tasks, such as designing those cars, because the financial stakes were now much higher. Sure enough, automobiles raised the wages of machinists and designers.”

Throughout history, the labour market has had winners and losers, swings as well as roundabouts. New workers have always been recruited to replace those thrown on the scrapheap; but in this scenario, new workers can be designed, trained up and introduced faster through machinery than it would take to breed and train a new generation of humans.



Robots in fact

The suggestion throughout discussion of a technological singularity is that productivity would soar. In essence, it would herald an abundance economy. For some radical “transhumanists” – those who foresee the human body being merged with machines (see p4) – this would mean the end of capitalism.

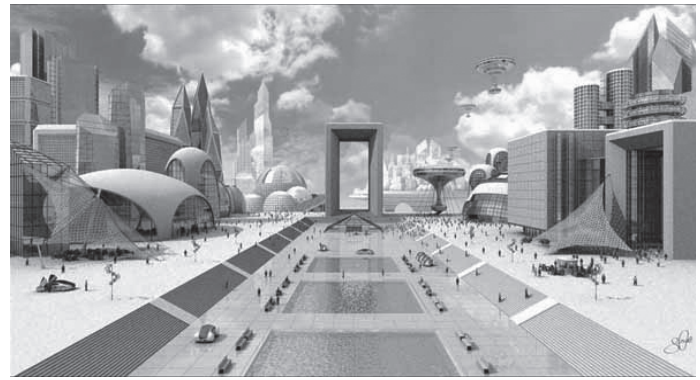
The capitalist mode of production carries with it a strong impulse for this sort of increasing productivity:

“The battle of competition is fought by cheapening of commodities. The cheapness of commodities depends, *caeteris paribus*, on the productiveness of labour, and this again on the scale of production. Therefore, the larger capitals beat the smaller. It will further be remembered that, with the development of the capitalist mode of production, there is an increase in the minimum amount of individual capital necessary to carry on a business under its normal conditions.”

The result of which is the fact that:

“...the growing extent of the means of production, as compared with the labour-power incorporated with them, is an expression of the growing productiveness of labour. The increase of the latter appears, therefore, in the diminution of the mass of labour in proportion to the mass of means of production moved by it, or in the diminution of the subjective factor of the labour-process as compared with the objective factor.

The additional capitals formed in the normal course of accumulation serve particularly as vehicles for the exploitation of new inventions and discoveries, and industrial improvements in general. But in time the old capital also reaches the moment of renewal from top to toe, when it sheds its skin and is reborn like the others in a perfected technical form, in which a smaller quantity of labour will suffice to set in motion a larger quantity of machinery and raw materials.” (Marx, *Capital*, Vol 1, Chapter 25)



at all possible is a key motor of capital accumulation.

This, then, presents us with a bind. Capitalism spares labour, cuts labour and labour costs, while it grows. Further, as we’ve seen above, whilst it accumulates, it cheapens the products of industry. This presents us with a situation in which fewer people are employed in production, and in which the cost of employing productive labour actually falls. The mass of use values they can command may well increase, but the value of their pay declines. We can see this in the recent history of the United States “Since 1975, practically all the gains in household income have gone to the top 20 percent of households” – that’s from the CIA’s 2005 factbook on the US economy.

Emancipating Labour

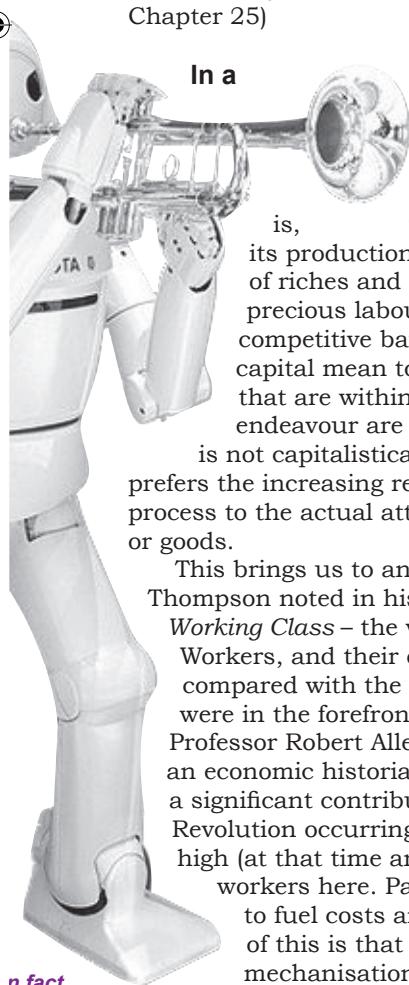
Hanson sees a situation in which we would all have to become capitalists, living off interest, because labour would no longer pay, but if what has been suggested above comes to pass, then we simply wouldn’t have that option, and a form of labour feudalism could emerge.

In response to a questionnaire, when Marx was asked what were his goals, he simply replied “The emancipation of labour.” This brings us to the crux of the matter - technology emancipates us from labour, but so long as a vast swathe of humanity depends on the sale of its ability to work labour will be in the chains of capital. Socialism, the emancipation of labour, would see a situation in which rather than try at all costs to spare labour, we will freely chuck it at problems because we would be working towards definite ends, rather than an ever increasing size of profit.

It would be nice to think that technological progress would simply evolve capitalism away. If we believed that, we could shut up shop and simply become cheerleaders for advancing bleeding-edge technology. The dangers of the alternative, a kind of stagnant capitalism based on cheap superabundant labour unable to fight back, is quite terrifying. We’ve seen how capitalism does have a drive to advance technology, but one that may be undercut by its dependence on waged labour. Waged labour has not been the passive tool of capital, but an active and essential participant in driving capitalism onwards. We as workers cannot sit by and hope that a magic bullet will solve our social problems, and our active organisation remains essential to attaining socialism.

Productive forces encompass more than technological capacity, and include the organisational and mental capacities required for a given form of society. The friction between capital and labour was a source of technological innovation, that friction was a productive force. Socialism will free up labour, irrespective of technological capacity, to use whatever technological powers are available. Socialism is not a by-product of technology but of social consciousness.

PIK SMEET



In a bind

is, while it, on the one hand, sets its production goals as limitless, an infinity of riches and products, it wants to spare the precious labour that gives it an edge in the competitive battle. This is what the shackles of capital mean to labour – that goals and activities that are within the practical bounds of human endeavour are left unsurmounted because it is not capitalistically efficient to do so. Capitalism prefers the increasing refinement of the productive process to the actual attainment of any specific outcomes or goods.

This brings us to an important factor. As E. P. Thompson noted in his *The Making of the English Working Class* – the working class made themselves.

Workers, and their demands for waged labour as compared with the previous forms of bonded labour, were in the forefront of promoting market relations. Professor Robert Allen of Nuffield College, Oxford, an economic historian, goes so far as to suggest that a significant contributing factor to the Industrial Revolution occurring in Britain was the relatively high (at that time and in the world) real wages of the workers here. Particularly, they were high relative to fuel costs and capital costs. The importance of this is that it incentivised innovation and mechanisation. Similar features have been attributed to American industrialisation. The high costs of labour, and capitalism’s drive to spare labour if

n fact

The penny drops

The second part of "Then and Now— how we live and how we used to live" look backs from a future time at the changeover to socialism.

Who would have thought that humanity could organise so quickly to do away with the tangled mess that their money-based world had created? The campaign for a world community of equals became a mass movement in seemingly no time at all. Once the idea of abolishing money and sweeping away the fetters associated with it had caught the collective imagination, all notions that human beings were too selfish or stupid to establish a communal world without political leaders very quickly came to be seen as absurd.

The growing dissatisfaction with leaders who had no answer to the environmental and political problems besetting the planet at last gave rise to a general desire to produce solutions rather than simply protest. Campaigners against the individual problems created by capitalism began to realise that its worst excesses could not be got rid of without sweeping it away in its entirety; corruption in political and economic life came to be seen not as a problem in itself but as an inevitable result of a world dominated by the need to make money for the rich and powerful minority. Even many sceptics admitted that the new world being proposed could not possibly be worse than what they had – so why not give it a try?

It became evident that the capitalist class was fast losing its control of the media. Newspaper articles, television programmes, radio and internet discussion forums became increasingly dominated by campaigns for concerted action to sweep away the world of money and governments. Famous people, and even some of the more enlightened world leaders, began to give their support to the movement, willing to use their skills as delegates and spokesmen although realising that their own positions as revered celebrities or political leaders would soon be redundant.

As the global movement grew,

so the need was addressed for global co-ordination, and mechanisms were put into place for bringing in the new world society and taking control of the state machinery from those in power. Given that most state employees, including members of the police and the military, had by this time more or less come over to the socialist cause anyway, resistance and violence in this process were fortunately minimal.

Institutions such as the United Nations, the International Red Cross and national parliaments were adapted for the broader, more democratic requirements of a free world community. There was of course no power-based agenda, nobody with greater voting force than anyone else, no rival economic interests.

Well before any official declaration was made, people had started to do what was needed to begin creating the new world. It's amazing how easily most things fell into place; local life soon became

"Campaigns to keep money sprang up..."

largely self-administering and wider co-ordination soon ensured that the world's land, factories and natural resources came under full democratic control and started to be utilised as effectively as possible to satisfy needs directly. Local plans were devised to make the best alternative uses of buildings that no longer served their original purpose, such as banks, munitions factories and stately homes.

The first major task was an immediate massive movement of food and other essentials to the areas that needed them, making use of what was left of the old army and police as a core with a not inconsiderable complement of additional helpers. The same was done to ensure that the world's homeless were provided with secure, comfortable housing – a largely logistical exercise, give the abundance of homes that had been kept empty under capitalism. Communities able to grow their own food very quickly became self sufficient: food surpluses were distributed elsewhere to areas of need without any requirement to pass through that asphyxiating intermediary



known as the market.

Some people were convinced that the massive changes taking place all around were God's will and continued harmlessly to attend their church services. Not everybody understood or welcomed the move to a new world, however, and some thought it wouldn't last. I would hear people say, "it's free, get it while you can, they'll start charging again soon". In the short term, others took the absence of political leaders or a coercive police force as an excuse to run riot; many of those who had lived a life of violence and crime continued for a time to exhibit disruptive and antisocial behaviour and had to be restrained, in as humane a way as possible, by their local communities.

Campaigns to keep money sprang up, led mainly by diehard capitalists and their supporters suddenly left with no-one to boss and bully; some people even still used money in their own local groups believing it to be a measure of how hard you've worked and hence how much you deserve – something which had never been true in capitalism.

For a time the old "capitalist" lifestyles and habits continued, but without money in the equation. People still talked of going to work, going on their holidays, getting married...and this is what they did. In some quarters, old habits died hard.

Some people chose not to do anything much at all, as far as I could see...perhaps deeply traumatised by the lives they used to lead, and relieved not to have to "earn a living" any more, they were content to live out their days in a state of near vegetation. Fair enough, I said, leave them alone, it's a more than adequate price for the new society to pay, and surely it won't last.

And what of the capitalists themselves, those individuals who had dominated the world of money for so long? Where there was no need to interfere, they were left alone. For the most part, they had been as much trapped by circumstances as the old working class, and most of them, accepting that their time was over, willingly surrendered their factories and estates to the common good and helped to form the new world. Not that they had much choice.

In many ways, these first years were a transitional phase but not in the way Marx visualised it. Within a generation, attitudes and behaviour would be very different.

ROD SHAW

One brick



at a time



CAPITALIST GOVERNMENTS find it useful to get together in various ways, despite the inevitable rivalry between them. It can be helpful to avoid being at loggerheads too much of the time, whether to benefit from some temporary mutual interest or to club together against some country or bloc that is for the time being an enemy. From the United Nations to G8 to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, many capitalist alliances have proven themselves worthwhile to ruling classes.

One of the most recent such groups to emerge is known as BRIC (for Brazil, Russia, India, China). The idea has been around for a few years, but only in June did the first summit of these countries take place. They are currently behind the United States as the uncontroversial leading power, Japan and the European Union (itself a grouping, not a single country, of course). Yet, together these four states account for forty percent of the world's population, and their political and economic influence is only likely to increase. Even in the current recession, their economic growth outstrips that of the rest of the world.

And what kind of thing do the bosses of BRIC talk about when they get round a table? They talk about areas where their countries may be able to work together, such as energy (including nuclear energy), agriculture and technology. They talk about areas where competition and cooperation are both possible (such as between Brazil and Russia in aircraft construction).

There is a possible division of labour over the next few decades, with Brazil and Russia becoming major players in the provision of raw materials, and China and India supplying manufactured

goods and services. China's economy is based on manufacturing, with cheap labour power offering an advantage for the time being. India's strength is in information technology, with software being developed for many international companies. Russia has enormous reserves of oil and natural gas, but long-term reliance on high energy prices is not considered to be a sensible strategy. Brazil, in contrast, specialises in agricultural exports, together with producing minerals such as iron and aluminium. So there are plenty of opportunities for cooperation, with Russian oil and gas finding their way to India and China, for instance.

In June the leaders also discussed changing the global currency system, with regional reserve currencies being adopted and some transactions being conducted in national currencies. This could well be bad news for the US, with the role of the dollar as the main reserve currency being undermined. Though China, with huge dollar reserves, wishes to see the US currency maintain its current role. Even if little changes in the short term, it is highly likely that over a longer period there will be considerable reshaping of how capitalism's global finances are structured.

It is not clear whether BRIC will remain as a forum, let alone become a more formalised association. But you can bet your bottom dollar (or yuan or rouble) that the world's power-holders will continue to defend their own interests by cooperating or competing with whoever suits them at the time, with no regard for those who actually produce the wealth or for any concept of democracy.

PAUL BENNETT

Green-lite reformism

Fuelling a Food Crisis – The impact of peak oil on food security.

By Caroline Lucas, Andy Jones and Colin Hines. (www.carolinelucasmep.org.uk/2006/12/08/fuelling-a-food-crisis/).



Current methods of food production and distribution are having a negative effect on the environment. The facts of the case are set out in this report by Green Party

MEP Caroline Lucas and the two others, on behalf of the Green Group in the European Parliament, even though the measures they offer are no more than “green-lite” reforms.

They show that the increased industrialisation of farming, particularly following the end of WW2, means that current methods now consume 50 times the energy input of traditional agriculture and in the most extreme cases “100 fold or more.” “Including energy costs for farm machinery, transportation, processing and feedstocks for agricultural chemicals – the modern food system consumes roughly 10 calories of fossil fuel energy for every calorie of food energy produced.”

The UK has developed an increasing dependence on imported food. Figures from the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) show that between 1988 and 2002 imports in tonnes increased by 38 percent and that 50 percent of all vegetables and 95 percent of all fruit consumed in the UK now come from overseas.

How necessary are these imports for the consumers? The ‘New Economics Foundation’, in its *UK Interdependence Report* for 2006, published a list of food imports and exports, showing a two-way process of similar products travelling in opposite directions being both imports and exports simultaneously: in 2004, UK imported 10.2 million kilos of milk and cream from France – and exported 9.9 million kilos of milk and cream to France. The figures traded between UK and Germany for milk and cream were 15.5 million kilos to and 17.2 million kilos from the UK. UK imported 1.5 million kilos of potatoes from Germany and exported 1.5 million kilos of potatoes to Germany. UK

imported 44,000 tonnes of frozen boneless chicken and exported 51,000 tonnes of fresh boneless chicken (countries not specified). These examples are a tiny fraction of the crazy methods of the globalised food trade which have scant regard for either environmental protection or actual consumers.

A report for DEFRA in 2005 on “The Validity of Food Miles as an Indicator of Sustainable Development” concluded:

“Transport of food by air has the highest CO₂ emissions per tonne and is the fastest growing mode. Although air freight of food accounts for only 1 percent of food tonne kilometres and 0.1 percent of vehicle kilometres it produces 11 percent of the food transport CO₂ equivalent emissions.” (<https://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/reports/foodmiles/final.pdf>)

Whilst the UK imports almost twice as much food as it exports vegetable and fruit imports account for over 60 percent of its food air freight. This is the upside-down world where there are, on the one hand, international agreements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while, on the other, trade agreements to exchange foods internationally involving unnecessarily flying foodstuffs around the globe, so increasing the emissions.

Food has to be transported but all transportation is at cost to the environment. How it is transported and how far are not decisions about which the consumer is consulted. Individuals could make a difference by the choices they make using their own moral code – providing they are equipped with all the available information – but, like travel, unrestricted flying, expansion of airports etc., individual actions make little impact. Action groups can and do make differences by boycotting certain food outlets or companies to affect their stance on political, humanitarian or moral issues (apartheid South Africa, Nestlé’s infant food formula sold in countries where customers had no access to clean water for mixing it, Fair Trade products) but these successes, whether small or substantial, don’t address the root problem and there’s always the need for yet another campaign.

Also topsy-turvy are the various goals set for using crops as alternative fuels. The authors quote George Monbiot that “It has been calculated that meeting the EU’s target for 20 percent of transport fuel to come from biodiesel by 2020 would consume almost all of Britain’s

croplands.” Presumably, attempting to achieve this target would imply relying even more heavily on imported food with all the associated extra environmental damage, plus the damage to domestic farmland and the environment from growing a monocrop.

Then there is the environmental impact of modern industrial agriculture’s use of fertilisers:

“The manufacture of synthetic fertilisers is particularly energy intensive and accounts for around one third of the UK’s agricultural energy consumption. It has been estimated that 40 percent of world food protein now relies on synthetic nitrogen fertilisers.” “The fourth most traded bulk commodity in world shipping trade after iron ore, coal and cereals is fertilisers and their raw materials.”

Peak oil and natural gas are not seen as a problem for future manufacturing in the fertiliser industry as there are sufficient coal reserves for 200 or so years at current production levels. “The consequences in terms of climate change, however, would be catastrophic. Additionally, production of ammonia from coal is 70 percent more energy intensive than production from natural gas.” Fertilisers are both big business and big polluters. Damage is caused during production, during distribution and to soil and water post-use, upsetting natural soil balance and leaching into water sources.

The authors conclude:

“The mandatory rules of trade that promote the interests of agribusiness, industrial production and long distance transport, and that force countries to compete to produce each other’s food at the expense of domestic production . . . are a disaster for food security, particularly in poorer countries, as subsistence farmers are increasingly put out of business or forced into export production instead.”

As alternatives to this environmentally destructive madness what do they recommend?

“Relocating our food systems will require a complete change of direction, away from the policies of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy and the rules of the World Trade Organisation . . . Instead, the central aim of trade and food policy should be a just and environmentally sound food security programme, for all nations.”

They go on to list some measures (i.e. reforms) that “would be

instrumental in helping to meet the challenge.” For instance, “Production methods would have to meet key environmental and animal welfare standards, as well as provide healthy food . . . the reduction of fossil fuel use would need to be prioritised across the framework.” Other proposed measures include fair wages and adequate income, national import controls as a prerogative of all countries, reduced profit margins for food processors and supermarkets, restricting the market share of individual supermarkets, promoting self-reliance and ending subsidised dumping, and rewriting the EU Treaty and the rules of the WTO.

The trouble is that each one of these reforms, or something similar, has been promoted, implemented, tried, reworked and discarded in favour of whatever is the latest fad. They are offering palliative treatment when only invasive surgery will do. As for agriculture and the environment, there is plenty of evidence pointing to how to get well and truly onto a sustainable path worldwide. Studies and statistics abound from universities, national and international farming networks, coalitions on food sovereignty, and organic farming which demonstrate that traditional intensive farming methods can out-perform industrial agricultural methods and are more beneficial to the health of both people and the environment. People may desire this change but the economic framework of capitalism won't allow it.

“At a time when water tables are falling, temperatures are rising as a result of climate change and oil supplies will soon be shrinking the need for decisive action could not be more urgent.” Without a doubt. But, whilst the authors set out a wealth of solid information, and display a desire both to improve the lot of worldwide farmers and to ensure enough healthy food for all, their focus throughout their report on the monetary costs of everything – inevitable in a capitalist world – is their downfall for it is this very element that is fuelling both the food and the environmental crises.

JANET SURMAN

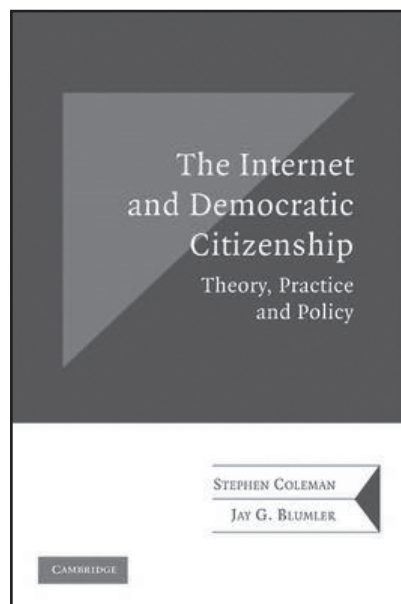


Commonly Civic

The Internet and Democratic Citizenship. By Stephen Coleman and Jay Blumler: Cambridge University Press £14.99.

It is hardly controversial to say that the Internet opens up new possibilities for political discussion and for dissemination of opinions and news. From websites and mailing lists to blogs and videos downloaded from mobile phones, details of events and commentary can be circulated far more quickly and widely than was possible even twenty years ago. In this book, though, former Socialist Party member Steve Coleman and his co-author go much further, arguing that citizens' participation in democracy can be greatly increased by the establishment of what they call a 'civic commons'.

This would not be just a matter of e-voting but of true e-participation. An example of the latter would be the discussion on domestic violence in 2000, whereby a parliamentary committee's sessions were webcast live and an online forum enabled 'the public' to submit evidence. This and similar examples, however, illustrate top-down e-democracy, run by government bodies, which can lead only to a kind of pseudo-participation.



In contrast is e-democracy from below, where people get together to share knowledge and mobilise for action of one kind or another. An example would be netmums, an online group which aims to support mothers locally and provide information, such as the location of toddler groups (see www.netmums.com). The Stop the War coalition is

another instance, with a website as a point of first contact for anyone interested.

Beyond this is the idea of an online civic commons, a democratically-moderated space that is nobody's property (like unenclosed common land in medieval times). A new public agency would gather and coordinate people's views on a range of problems, and public bodies would have to react formally. A hypothetical example is given: a debate on the teaching of reading is initiated by a government minister, and parents, teachers and others contribute via the civic commons, where an online library is established and a series of e-guides produced.

The problem is that there is an unspoken assumption behind all this that capitalism could and should be made more democratic in this way. The authors acknowledge that the Internet is not inherently democratising, but they say far too little about possibilities for democracy under capitalism. The notion of class is entirely missing, and the division into governors and governed is never balanced by anything on owners versus employees. With its vast inequalities of wealth and power, capitalism is inherently undemocratic, and this can at most be only slightly modified by means of a civic commons.

A socialist society might well employ something like a civic commons, and there could still be sites along the lines of netmums. But the Internet has little if any potential for increasing democracy under capitalism.

PB

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Obituary

Paul Hannam

South West Regional Branch regret to have to report that Paul Hannam took his own life at the beginning of July. He was 52. He joined in 1997 and when he worked he was a skilled machinist and member of the AEU. I met first Paul at the National Schizophrenia Fellowship some 15 years ago. He was a generous supporter of both Head Office and more latterly SW Regional Branch, despite being on benefits. Whilst increasing ill health prevented him from attending meetings and he was in and out of St Anne's hospital, his support for socialism never failed. He never threatened to leave the party, remaining steadfast in his quiet support. He leaves his brother, Barry and his girlfriend, Mary. We wish them our deepest condolences.
VC

Meetings

GLASGOW

Wednesday 19 August,
8.30pm
WHY THE SNP MUST FAIL
Speaker: V.Vanni
Community Central
Halls, 304 Maryhill Road

LONDON

at 52 Clapham High St,
SW4
Saturday 29 August,
7.00pm
MARX, MYTH AND MONEY
Speaker: Pat Deutz

Sunday 6 September,
6.00pm
"The free election of

masters does not abolish the masters or the slaves"
Speaker: Jim Lawrie

Wednesday 16
September, at 7.30pm
"CAPITALISM OR SOCIALISM?
Debate against Dr. Eamonn Butler of the Adam Smith Institute

Sunday 20th September
at 6.00pm
OUR OWN WORST ENEMY? - HUMAN NATURE AND SOCIALISM
Speaker: Dick Field

WEST LONDON

Tuesday 18 August
Discussion on WORLD WAR TWO
Opener: Syd Wilcox
Committee Room,
Chiswick Town Hall,
Heathfield Terrace, W4
(nearest tube: Chiswick Park)

MANCHESTER

Saturday 12 September,
One-day School
1pm - 5pm
"Capitalism and the Crisis"
Friends' Meeting House
Mount Street
City Centre (next to Central Library and Manchester Town Hall)

Mr. Cousins' Damp Squib



The Labour Party is in a turmoil—and the General Election is near. Mr. Cousins of the Transport and General Workers Union has thrown a spanner into the works. He has been making quite a stir in the news by his opposition to the official attitude of the Labour Party on the H-Bomb and nationalisation.

Mr. Bevan has now become quite respectable as an official spokesman. Mr. Cousins has replaced him as the Labour Party rebel—the "leftist." It is only farce that is played out every now and then with only a change in the personnel. Is there really any fundamental difference between Mr. Cousins and the leaders of the Labour Party?

He objects to the H-Bomb but supports the Labour Party, which is pledged to a defence programme. Millions were killed in the last war without the H-Bomb being used, but he does not support the only policy that will end war. He believes Mr. Gaitskell is sincere but that his policy on the H-Bomb will not be effective.

At the Transport and General Workers Conference in the Isle of Man Mr. Cousins dropped his bombshell. He is also reported as follows: "I have never believed that the most important thing in our lives is to elect a

Labour Government. The most important thing is to elect a Labour Government that is determined to carry out Socialist policies." (*Daily Express*, 10th July, 1959.)

Now what does he mean by "to carry out Socialist policies"? To him it means nationalisation—state capitalism. He objects to the official line on nationalisation— buying shares instead of the state taking over the industries. But to him, just as to them, state ownership is equivalent to Socialism. In other words, in spite of the long experience of state capitalism, he blindly accepts it as the fundamental aim, despite the disillusion and unrest in state owned or state controlled concerns and the labour struggles in them for better conditions.

Thus what Mr. Cousins is after will leave the workers just as they are, the wage slave victims of capitalist conditions and subject to the threat of terrible wars, with or without the H-Bomb.

(from front page article by Gilmac, *Socialist Standard*, August 1959)

Declaration of Principles

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.

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 organize 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.



Jack Straw – getting to know you

You know Jack Straw. The one who always sits on Gordon Brown's right at Prime Ministers Questions. Composed, dapper. Careful hair, expressionless eyes. Unmoved by the rowdy disorder around him. Alone among the servile front benchers working on his papers, jotting down a note or ticking a box. The very image of a Minister of the Crown exuding confidence that after the next election he will be back on that bench – perhaps even the one responding to brickbats from the opposition. It was not always so. Old photographs tell of a different someone – a young student experimenting with a variety of clothes and hair styles, whose eyes swivelled behind thick-framed glasses. Before he apparently took advice from an image consultant to help him up the greasy pole Straw was a student activist to satisfy the most expectant lefty. His 1966 elevation into the chair of the Labour Society at Leeds University was with the support of the Communist Society there. Abruptly he was rewarded by a Foreign Office denunciation as a "... chief troublemaker acting with malice aforethought" for disrupting a student trip to Chile. A couple of years later, by now President of the Student Union, he spear-headed a four day occupation of the university in reprisal for alleged security checks on the students. And again when a passionate speech of his on a conference resolution was apologetically interrupted by the – bewildered – chair reminding him that he was supposed to be speaking for the other side. Which, without so much as a tremor of embarrassment or apology, he did. Yes – you know Jack Straw.

Parliament

You might not know (although you should have had your suspicions) that from his teens Straw nurtured an ambition to be a successful politician, using the name Jack rather than John in salute to the 14th. Century peasant leader. In 1974, after a spell as President of the National Union of Students, he began to work for Social Security Minister Barbara Castle -whose plans to restrict the unions, set out in the infamous *In Place Of Strife*, virtually finished her chances to be Labour's first female leader. Straw was well placed to succeed her in 1979 as MP for the safe seat of Blackburn. Conforming to the principle, popular among Labour MPs, that support for the local football team is essential to maintain a healthy majority, Straw had to wear a scarf and wave a rattle for Blackburn Rovers. Whatever this did for him on the terraces of Eward Park the impression he made in Parliament was uneven; the infinitely nasty Tory MP Alan Clark sneered "I remember 'slapping him down' when I was a junior employment minister and he was a backbench socialist 'trying' to find his way".

But Westminster is no place to be sensitive about such slights. After a string of Shadow posts Straw's place in a future Labour government looked safe when Blair gave him the job he had relinquished when he became party leader – spokesman on Home Office affairs. The plan was that he would carry on where Blair had left off, expunging the impression that a Labour Home Secretary would be soft on crime. Quickly justifying his leader's confidence in him, Straw set about doing what had been assumed to be impossible – promoting the impression that there could be a Home Secretary more authoritarian

and punitive than the detested Tory Michael Howard. To this end, at one time or another, Straw has bellowed out tabloid-attractive policies such as locking up people who have not committed any crime but who may do so because they are classified as suffering from a "personality disorder"; or curfew orders designed to keep under-16 year-olds off the streets; or drives to suppress "aggressive beggars, winos and squeegee merchants". Unsurprisingly, Margaret Thatcher was numbered among his fans: "I trust Jack Straw. He is a very fair man" was how she put it while many others agreed with lawyer Louis Bloom Cooper that he was "...the most reactionary Home Secretary we have had".

Biggs

Ever anxious to still any doubts about him going soft on crime, Straw recently grabbed the headlines by overturning a Parole Board recommendation to release Ronnie Biggs, the last of the Great Train Robbers. The usual reason for such a decision is



that the person concerned is likely to be a danger to the public by committing further serious offences. But Biggs is said to be frail and sick, unable to walk or talk or feed himself, which is done through a tube into his stomach. So Straw had to come up with some other justification – that Biggs is "wholly unrepentant" and "outrageously courted the media" about his escape to Brazil.

Well, if we are looking for repentance we might have expected Straw to regret his ready acceptance of the government's lying excuse for attacking Iraq, with all the consequent destruction and killing, for in January 2003 he wrongly asserted that the Blix report "contains the clearest possible evidence that Saddam has weapons of mass destruction...Several thousand rockets are unaccounted for". Does he regret his decision to allow General Pinochet to return to Argentina, although he was wanted elsewhere for trial for thousands of people being tortured and murdered, on the grounds that the dictator was too sick to stand trial? What does he think now about his rejection of an asylum application from an Iraqi man with the advice that "we have faith in the integrity of the Iraqi judicial process and that you should have no concern if you haven't done anything wrong"? And will Alistair Campbell have to flee to Brazil now that Straw has ruled that "outrageously courting the media" constitutes a reason for him to lock you away?

You should get to know Jack Straw, for what he has promised and what he has done and failed to do, for he may soon realise his dream to stand in triumph on the steps of Number Ten proclaiming his pledges and his excuses. Then you should turn and trust yourself to do all that is needed and proper for the world.

IVAN



Voice from the Back

A Clueless Pope

At first glance it might appear that His Holiness is getting bang up to date and having a go at the capitalist system, but on closer examination it is no such thing. "Pope Benedict XVI on Tuesday condemned the 'grave deviations and failures' of capitalism exposed by the financial crisis and issued a strong call for a 'true world political authority' to oversee a return to ethics in the global economy. The pontiff's call for stronger government regulation was made in his third and eagerly awaited encyclical, *Charity in Truth*, which the Vatican chose to issue on the eve of the G8 summit of rich nations being held in Italy." (*Financial Times*, 7 July) What kind of fairy tale society does he live in when he talks about "a return to ethics in the global economy"? Capitalism is a society based on class ownership, exploitation and the profit motive.



To talk of ethics in such a society is nonsensical and "government regulation" is powerless to deal with the slump and boom cycle of capitalism. The Holy Father should abandon his foray into political economy and stick to what he does best - scaring the shit out of believers and passing the collection plate.

This Sporting Life

Capitalism corrupts everything it touches. In this society the cash nexus is everything. Sport may be defined in dictionaries as "pleasant pastime, amusement, diversion" but

in modern society it is just another business. Sport, of course, is all about the glory of winning and (if you are British) the nobility of defeat. Oh no it's not. It's all about the money. Which is why, Max Duthie, of Bird & Bird, says: "In almost every major sport today there are tensions between the regulatory bodies on the one side and the players or the teams on the other - and normally the argument is over money." Patrick Wheeler, of Collyer Bristow, says that "there are four key areas of law that come into play in a sports dispute: intellectual property, contract, competition and regulation." (*Times*, 25 June) Not so much an arena for sporting types more a fertile field for lawyers and accountants.

A BNP Submarine?

The success of the British National Party at the recent European elections surprised many. Their success was put down by some as due to their new more "moderate" policies. How "moderate" they have become can be gauged by the following." Boats carrying illegal migrants to Europe should be sunk, Nick Griffin, the leader of the British National party, said yesterday. In a provocative intervention, Griffin, elected to the European parliament last month, called on the EU to introduce "very tough" measures to prevent illegal migrants entering Europe from Africa. "If there's measures to set up some kind of force or to help, say the Italians, set up a force which actually blocks the Mediterranean then we'd support that," Griffin told BBC Parliament's *The Record Europe*. "But the only measure, sooner or later, which is going to stop immigration and stop large numbers of sub-Saharan Africans dying on the way to get over here is to get very tough with those coming over. Frankly, they

need to sink several of those boats." (*Guardian*, 9 July) Nick Griffin as a U-Boat commander is the sort of fantasy that must appeal to the crazed nationalism of some of the BNP membership.



A Billion Reasons For Socialism

"One billion people throughout the world suffer from hunger, a figure which has increased by 100 million because of the global financial crisis, says the UN. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said the figure was a record high. Persistently high food prices have also contributed to the hunger crisis. The director general of the FAO said the level of hunger, one-sixth of the world's population, posed a 'serious risk' to world peace and security. The UN said almost all of the world's undernourished live in developing countries, with the most, some 642 million people, living in the Asia-Pacific region." (*BBC News*, 20 June) We live in a society that destroys food to keep up prices while people die of starvation Never mind the statistics, a kid is dying today because of the profit motive. Get up off your knees and organise for a world based on production solely for use. We owe it to the world's children.

Free Lunch

by Rigg

