

# socialist standard

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Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain    Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

## MAY'S BREXIT NIGHTMARE



## POPULIST MANDATE

*also: Donald Trump  
Angelica Balabanoff  
Philanthrocapitalism*



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Contents August 2018

## Features

- 5 **The Future**  
Socialism or Barbarism?
- 10 **Brexit**  
Sound & Fury signifying nothing?
- 12 **The Trump Circus**  
Don in Trumpton
- 14 **Philanthrocapitalism IV**  
The Messianic Rich
- 17 **Angelica Balabanoff**  
Picaresque Leftist Adventuress

10



14



12



17

## Regulars

- 4 **Pathfinders**
- 6 **Cooking the Books 1**
- 7 **Wood for the Trees**
- 9 **Material World**
- 16 **Cooking the Books 2**
- 19 **Proper Gander**
- 20 **Reviews**
- 22 **50 Years Ago**
- 23 **Meetings**
- 24 **Rear View**
- 24 **Free Lunch**

## Editorial

### Ruling class split

By calling a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union in June 2016, David Cameron was counting on a victory for the Remain side to contain the Eurosceptics in the Tory Party and see off the challenge from UKIP. Far from overcoming the divisions within the Tory Party, the resulting victory for the Leave side has blown them wide apart.

David Cameron immediately cut his losses and ran, leaving his successor, Theresa May, to pick up the pieces. She attempted to gain the upper hand in her Party by calling a General Election a year later, but unfortunately for her, she lost her majority and is now more vulnerable to the Tory Party's warring factions.

The referendum result has had repercussions for Scotland and Northern Ireland, the two regions where most voters opted for Remain. The SNP government has used it as ammunition to press for a second Scottish Independence referendum. Leaving the EU could jeopardise the Northern Ireland Good Friday agreement, as this was predicated on there being a common customs area between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

Initially, partly to poach votes from UKIP and increase support in Brexit

areas, Theresa May pursued a so-called hard Brexit, where the UK would leave both the customs union and the single market. However, facing up to the reality that most British businesses need to stay close to the EU and to avoid a hard border in Ireland, on the 6th July, the Government at Chequers produced plans which amounted to a "softer" Brexit. There would be a harmonisation with EU rules in trading with goods (but not with services). However, this was too much for some and there were howls of treachery and several ministers have resigned, including David Davis and Boris Johnson. Tory Brexiteers have threatened to mount a leadership challenge. May backed down and accepted amendments from a hardline Tory Brexit group to water down her Customs bill. This sparked a rebellion among furious Tory Remain MPs. May seems to be caught in a pincer movement between the Remain and Brexit factions of her Party and her authority is ebbing away. Some have argued that a Second Referendum on Brexit is needed to resolve this impasse. Others say that another General Election is required.

We are treated to the unusual spectacle of the Tory Party being unable to serve the interests of the majority of the British

capitalist class, who favour staying in the Custom Union. Ironically, it is Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party that appears to better represent the interests of British capitalism on this issue.

This political crisis is really a matter for the capitalist class only, but the working class has been dragged into it. At the 2016 referendum, we argued that workers had no interest in supporting either the Leave or Remain campaigns, as either way they will still have to deal with the problems of capitalism, such as job insecurity, low wages and unemployment, and urged them to write 'World Socialism' over their ballot papers. Should there be a second referendum, we will again be advising workers to do the same.



## 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.

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# PATHFINDERS

## Stars Like Us

LAST MONTH a black woman was 'crowned' Miss Universe Great Britain, a first in the beauty contest's 66-year history, and called it 'a great achievement'. Somehow, apparently, being selected as the country's showpiece exhibit in an annual sexist meat parade is to be considered a success for black women everywhere.

Recently there have been a lot of stories about female and minority representation in 'the arts' (meaning TV and cinema). Huge excitement came earlier this year with the first all-black superhero film, which proved that you can make money out of utter bollocks regardless of ethnic considerations. This followed the success of a female-led superhero film, and UK viewers can soon look forward to the first female Doctor Who and the first lesbian Batgirl TV series, all of which prove that... anyway, you get the picture.

Where this gets a bit weird is the ongoing discussion about 'representation' in the arts. The broadcasting watchdog Ofcom reported last year that 'lots of people feel there are not enough programmes on TV that "authentically portray their lives and communities"' ([bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-41265644](http://bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-41265644)).

Why is this weird? Because in expecting, nay demanding, that made-up stories should be 'authentic' people seem to have lost sight of the essential difference between fiction and reality. This is not to belittle the genuine human need for social affirmation. We all crave a sense that we are not some lonely isolated freak in a hostile and indifferent world, and that others like us exist. Socialists know that feeling too, indeed it's behind a lot of the things that we do as an organisation. If you're reading this magazine, you probably feel the same way at times. But one thing we definitely *don't* do is go round complaining about our 'under-representation' in the arts and demanding our own superhero. It would never occur to us that the 'arts' were anything other than a fictional construct owned and controlled by the capitalist class and used mainly for the oppression and psychological manipulation of the

working class. If it ever tried to 'represent' a socialist character it would not be as a superhero but more likely a stoned 1970s hippy or else an unhinged Bond villain. Much as we all love artistic creativity, we should not lose sight of the fact that capitalist art is generally a weapon used against us, even when it's just for entertainment.



So, not only is this question of 'representation' a fundamental illusion – as if the success of some black beauty queen can ever be an achievement for *you* – it is also a hopeless expression of passivity, a kind of Stockholm Syndrome where we love the thing that enslaves us so much that we want it to look like us too.

This is what the capitalists want – a population of brainwashed automatons who don't know what's real anymore. They want us to sit indoors and let the capitalist TV construct our world for us, removing every jarring trace of cognitive dissonance that might alert us to the fact that we are in dream-mode.

Entertainment is supposed to be escapist, to give us a break from reality. By dressing our entertainment in faux-liberal credentials we're not affirming our 'liberty' or 'diversity', we're fusing reality with fantasy and locking ourselves more inextricably into a prison of our own making. Better to get out there and construct our own world, for real, and with the TV off.

## Voting for the Electric Chair

Here's a work-place experience not unfamiliar to many. The meeting grinds on, chaired by a boss too clueless to be any use but too senior to be challenged, while the air is filled by the drone of tedious gobshites who love to hear themselves talk. The agenda lies forgotten, the plot lost, the will to live gone, and still another hour before anyone can go home. Not surprisingly, a recent informal BBC study discovered that many people doodle during such meetings, or write haiku, or play 'meeting bingo', a secret competition to throw in as many pre-agreed random words as possible (BBC Online, 29 June - [news/business-44642167](http://news/business-44642167)). Imagine, the article goes on to suggest, if all this were not so, the meeting made effective, and the bores told to shut up. What would it take to effect such a miracle? Wouldn't it be wonderful if an artificially intelligent meeting bot could take over?

Wait. What? An AI bot? An electric chair? Yes indeed, says a computer scientist quoted in the article, 'if no new points are made after a while, the AI could suggest to wrap it up'. Apparently this is an ability which humans don't have, according to a meetings consultant: 'while it's a lovely idea to think everybody will be fabulous at running meetings, everybody is not'.

This will be news to socialists, who have been running their own meetings, fabulous or otherwise, for over a hundred years, and have never yet felt the compulsion to introduce an artificial robot to chair any of them. How is this miracle possible? Because, despite what the 'experts' think, humans are perfectly capable of learning how to do things like running meetings, even, dare we say it, whole democratic societies. We do these things with the help of what are known as 'rules' and then by following these 'rules', more or less strictly according to circumstance and preference, we manage to get through a whole list of 'decisions' that need making. Really, it works surprisingly well. These AI enthusiasts ought to try it some time. They might be amazed what humans are capable of, especially when the useless boss is removed from the picture.

PJS



# THE FUTURE

Back in the glory days of the Blair administration, a soft-left journal like the New Statesman would have confined itself to articles on the Kremlinology of Whitehall: who was a Blairite? Who a Brownie? Perhaps the odd John Pilger article would crop up to deplore some aspects of foreign policy. Discussion of capitalism, much less socialism, would have been a rarity.

Fast forward to today, and we have the political editor of that organ, George Eaton, discussing what the consequences of the end of capitalism might be ([newstatesman.com/politics/economy/2018/06/if-capitalism-ended-what-would-replace-it](http://newstatesman.com/politics/economy/2018/06/if-capitalism-ended-what-would-replace-it)).

Now, the Socialist Party has always been clear that capitalism won't end itself, and that only its conscious replacement by politically organised workers will achieve that. Something, though, is clearly in the air when post-capitalist ideas start to gain air-time. Part of that is the clear sense that technological change is transforming the way we work now. Eaton notes the slew of books on the matter: Paul Mason's technology-driven book *PostCapitalism* has been reviewed in the Socialist Standard, and it does indeed put technology front and centre of social change. Eaton also references a forthcoming book with the intriguing title *Fully Automated Luxury Communism* by Aaron Bastani (which we will no doubt be devouring as soon as it is out). Eaton though, explores the possibility, despite the shiny stuff on offer, that the future might well be a choice between socialism or barbarism.

He cites *Four Futures* by Peter Frase, which outlines the possible effects of technological progress: 'Communism' (equality and abundance), 'Rentism' (hierarchy and abundance), 'Socialism' (equality and scarcity), 'Exterminism' (hierarchy and scarcity). All premised on the question of response and resolution to environmental catastrophe. We'll leave the small matter of our standing objection to the misuse of the word socialism hanging, and work within Frase's framework for now.

The futurist and science fiction author Charles Stross set out, in a blog post in 2017, how the exterminist option contains its own horrific and plausible logic:

'Consider Bangladesh, and the Bay of Bengal fisheries collapse, not to mention the giant anoxic dead zone spreading in the Bay of Bengal (which means those fisheries won't be coming back for a very long time). There are nearly 170 million people there, mostly living on alluvial flood plains feeding into



the gradually rising ocean. If the sea level rises by just one meter, 10% of the land area will be flooded; most of the country is less than 12m above sea level. It's a primarily agricultural economy (it's one of the main rice and wheat producing nations), heavily dependent on fisheries for

protein to supplement the diet of its citizens' ([antipope.org/charlie/blog-static/2017/02/some-notes-on-the-worst-case-s.html](http://antipope.org/charlie/blog-static/2017/02/some-notes-on-the-worst-case-s.html)).

As he notes, one horrific option is to just contain the population of Bangladesh, and let catastrophe run in a Malthusian genocide that could be passed off as natural disaster. This is a repeatable option for an elite that can jet to their private fortress islands and escape. No need to adjust to climate change, the deaths of others will reduce the environmental impact of humanity.

This can only be made possible by technology creating a relative surplus population of people whose labour is no longer required for market production.

In the light of this, Eaton is entirely correct, technological change alone will not deliver us from capitalism; and he channels Marx in observing that 'Men and women will continue to make their own history – if not in circumstances of their choosing.' The human response to technological change is, though, at the heart of political battles for the foreseeable years to come, and if we are to make our history, it has to be in the conscious effort to choose what might be called 'fully automated luxury socialism.' The choice we will all face is how to use the time won by labour-saving technology. Not that we need a fully automated society to build a society where 'poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom' but we do need to take control of the gains and benefits of labour saving technology.

PIK SMEET



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**cooking the books**

**Bitcon**  
'Bitcon "will never replace money"' ran the headline of a news item in the *Times* (18 June) about a report by the Bank for International Settlements:

'Bitcon and other cryptocurrencies can never replace conventional money because they lack centralised backing and are riddled with problems, not least that they can simply stop working and have their value totally wiped out ... In contrast to traditional money, cryptocurrencies become more cumbersome and unstable the more they are used.'

As the BIS is the international of state central banks, which issue conventional money, it is tempting to think 'they would say that, wouldn't they?' They would, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they haven't got a point.

Bitcon was a free marketeer project, a scheme to create a currency that had nothing to do with the state, in accordance with the view that the state was a hindrance to the proper functioning of a genuine market economy. From a technological point of view, its creators succeeded – they

did devise a way of making an electronic payment without using state fiat money.

However, although dubbed a 'cryptocurrency,' bitcon has never really functioned on any large scale as a means of payment. It has served two other purposes – speculation and a means of making transactions without states knowing.

People have bought bitcons, speculating on its price rising; which is why some have suggested that bitcon is more a 'crypto-asset', something to hold to keep or enhance what you paid for it like paintings or gold. Since bitcons are intrinsically worthless the price is just a bubble that would burst if there was no other reason for holding them.

It so happens that there is another such reason. Very few of those who use bitcons are anti-state idealists. The vast majority are shady capitalists such as drugs barons, arms dealers, tax dodgers, sanctions busters, money launderers and others who don't want the state to know about their financial dealings. It is their demand that determines the bitcon price, so enabling it to be a subject of speculation. As one critic has put it, the bitcon price is an index of money laundering. This is shown by the fact that, following state authorities taking measures to try to stop bitcons being used for these purposes, the price of one bitcon slumped from

nearly \$20,000 just before last Christmas to nearer \$5000 today.

Although a technologically elegant solution to what the free market computer geeks wanted, it is a waste of time and energy. New bitcons are created by using computers to solve a complicated mathematical problem. This requires a huge amount of computer time and so of electricity, all pure waste from a rational point of view. Further, each time a bitcon is used this is recorded, so the string of computer code representing it gets longer and longer. It's as if every transaction using a particular paper note or metal coin had to be recorded. The BIS calls this 'cumbersome'. Crazy is more like it.

Having said this, the computer technology which is used to do this – blockchains – does have other uses. Since it is almost impossible to tamper with it could be used, for instance, to confirm the origin of meat so that horse meat can no longer be passed off as beef.

So the BIS is right. Bitcons will never replace state fiat money. State fiat money isn't that stable itself of course but nowhere near as unstable as bitcons. No doubt it will last till the time when capitalism is replaced by socialism and all forms of money become redundant.

# WOOD FOR THE TREES

## Competition: a race to where?

AT THE time of writing the English Summer is, for once, not merely an oxymoron; it has enabled a multiplicity of sporting delights. Tennis at Wimbledon, cricket at Lord's, motor racing at Silverstone and (not dependent on English weather) world cup football from Russia. Whilst listening to the England v. Panama football match I overheard the commentators debate something which, unusually, is of interest not just to soccer enthusiasts but to those intrigued by the politics of competition. During the committing of one of the game's innumerable fouls a commentator wearily concluded that the Panamanian team and its supporters could only interpret any such event through biased eyes; his colleague, however, objected to this stating that he believed most of the fouls were obvious infractions of the rules that anyone with any honesty could see.

In these cynical times it was refreshing, although somewhat naïve, to hear someone articulating the possibility of a level of objectivity overcoming sectarian bias. He may well have been unaware of the political implications of this insofar as it undermines the 'my country, right or wrong' ethos of nationalism/patriotism. We might go further and say that competition itself necessarily excludes any kind of objective fairness. If this is the case then it exempts capitalism from any moral or rational concern for justice because it depends on competition from top to bottom. Can there ever exist something we can call 'fair competition'?

Competition between nation states, corporations, scientific researchers, academics, artists, politicians and even between individuals is endemic to capitalism. We are told that competition breeds excellence when in reality those who proclaim this will do everything in their power to circumvent the rules to get an advantage over their competitors. So what are 'the rules of the game'? Like all forms of competition there is a continual attempt to impose rules that will benefit all those involved by creating a 'level playing field'. The capitalist class invests heavily in legal frameworks for trade, financial institutions, property

ownership and employment but the overriding need to be competitive and thus commercially successful creates a continual tension that often leads to corruption, trade wars, monopolies and militarism; a dangerous contradiction exists between the recognition by the bourgeoisie of themselves as a class with their shared political interests and their need to compete with each other to survive in the cutthroat business environment. The media is full of stories of corporate greed and corruption that focuses on the immoral and illegal acts of individuals (scapegoats) as if, somehow, it is always 'human nature' that is to blame rather than the structure of corporate and political institutions. Dialectically we can say that when the quantity of these cases of corruption become so numerous and continual they then become a quality of capitalism itself.



Some may object to this cultural understanding of competition by pointing to 'nature' and its inherent struggle for survival. It is a favourite manoeuvre of reactionary ideology to attempt to incorporate Darwin's theory of evolution in its bastardised form of 'the survival of the fittest' to justify economic competition. Any such

recourse will however serve to prove the opposite of such an assertion because we are a social species and our success is due primarily to our cooperative abilities. Males may compete for the right to procreate in nature but in a human cultural context we know that the 'successful' members of our society are far from being the 'fittest' either physically or intellectually – just look at the 'rich list'. Inherited wealth and status are still the predominant elements of 'success' within a capitalist context, that or the dumb luck of winning the lottery. Again those who seek to defend capitalism might point to the sporting elite who have had no advantage other than that of a talent honed by competition. Here we return to how we began with a consideration of the relationship between sport, politics and money.

Ever since the invention of private property we have had wars over its retention and extension between ruling elites. From ancient civilisations we have evidence of the origin of sports being an arena for practising the arts of war. The original Olympic Games provided an opportunity for both competition between Greek city states and a celebration of a shared culture or 'Greekness'. The individual athletes would be pampered and admired by their ruling classes because they were representatives of the power of the respective states. The modern Olympiad was also motivated by ideas of the world as a community. Inevitably, like everything left in the hands of capitalism, it has become a celebration



of the tribalism of nation states combined with the marketing of consumer goods. Today's elite soccer players are commodities who are occasionally called

upon to masquerade as symbols of national pride in contrast (although a good international performance will enhance their value) to their normal existence as money making machines for the football industry. With all of these pressures it is not surprising that any rules are a remote secondary consideration compared with winning. Once the phrase 'it's not cricket' could be used as a universal condemnation of any rule bending but now even this bastion of gentlemanly behavior has been witness to the sordid phenomenon known as the 'professional foul'.

Rules of behaviour (not the logically innate structural and procedural rules) in all areas of human activity are only necessary when pressures exist that create confrontation and potential violence. Competition is one such pressure and that is one of the reasons that socialists believe it should be confined to sports. If identity is dependent on feelings of superiority rather than community we have a recipe for the distress and violence we see around us in capitalism. Another reason is that all of that egotistical infantile energy is so wasteful and counterproductive. If you can imagine a world where competition is confined to the entertainment of sports where its child-like qualities can be embraced with humorous indulgence then you are a long way towards becoming a socialist.

**WEZ**



# BREXIT: WILL IT ALL BE A FUSS ABOUT NOTHING?

'IAIN DUNCAN SMITH: Cabinet's Brexit proposal is a betrayal of 17.5 million voters who wanted to take back control of their own laws, borders, money and regulations', was the heading of his article in the *Mail Online* on 8 July. That's only his opinion. Actually, 17,410,742 voted 'Leave' to the question on the ballot paper 'Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?' while 16,141,241 vote 'Remain'. Strictly speaking, then, what there was a majority for, was for the UK to withdraw from the Treaty under which it joined the EU and so from the EU's decision-making institutions (Commission, Parliament, Court of Justice, etc).

Iain Duncan Smith may have voted Leave because he wanted the British capitalist state to take back formal control of UK 'laws, borders, money and regulations'. Many others may well have done so too, but others will have voted to withdraw merely from the political side of the EU project. As the Tory MEP, and prominent Leave campaigner, Daniel Hannan noted, one argument used to attract Leave voters was that things had changed since they had voted in the 1975 referendum to confirm staying in: 'I voted to stay in the common market. No one ever mentioned a political union' (*Spectator*, 28 April). It will only have taken 634,751 (half the difference between the Leave and Remain votes plus 1) to have been convinced to vote Leave on this ground and Iain Duncan Smith's claim that a majority voted for what he wants falls.

Hannan himself is pretty relaxed about just withdrawing from the EU's political institutions as long as the UK has some scope to do its own trade deals, writing on a Tory discussion forum:

'A 52-48 outcome pointed to some sort of association that stopped short of membership. Britain would keep most of the economic aspects of the EU while losing most of the political ones ... We'd end up very broadly, in an EFTA-type arrangement *à la Suisse*' (*Conservativehome*, 10 May).

We can leave these two high-profile Leavers to slug it out. The Tory party can split over the issue for all we need to care.

People will have voted Leave for all sorts of reasons – to kick out the Poles, to do down the government, because they

believed the promises that they'd be better off, to protest against their personal economic plight. Who knows? In the end it doesn't matter why, since the outcome will depend on jostling between different sections of the capitalist class.

Most of them were in favour of Remain. A minority, mainly financiers who didn't want their dealings to be regulated by the EU (and who largely financed the Leave campaign), favoured Leave. Perhaps unexpectedly, they won. Ever since, the majority section, and the politicians who represent them,

have campaigned and lobbied to limit the damage to their interests. The plan agreed at Chequers on 6 July goes a long way to catering for their interests. It is more or less what Hannan envisaged as a compromise between the two sections of the capitalist class, even if Jacob Rees-Mogg, the cartoon toff – Lord Snooty in the *Beano* – doesn't like it. But then, he's a financier with interests in Hong Kong.

## A customised union

A 'customs union' is an arrangement between capitalist states under which there is tariff-free trade between them. A 'single market' takes this a step further by also removing non-tariff barriers to free trade such as differing technical, safety and environmental standards. This means that trade within the area can be 'frictionless' as there is no need for border checks to see if the goods conform to these standards since they are the same in all the participating states. Another way of defining a 'single market' would be that it is a customs union with a 'common rulebook'.

At Chequers the government agreed that the UK should in effect stay in the EU single market for goods (if not services). It is what the manufacturing section of the capitalist class, as represented by the CBI, wanted, even if it won't be as good for them as now since they won't have a say, via the government, in drawing up future additions or amendments to the common rulebook.

Trump had a point when he blurted out that this could sink a US-UK trade deal in goods. There would be no point. As he said, the US would deal with the EU as what was agreed with them would apply to the UK as part of the single market:

'If they do a deal like that, we would be dealing with the

European Union instead of dealing with the UK, so it will probably kill the deal' (*Sun*, 13 July).

He's not all that badly briefed. The government replied that he hadn't read the small print, and it is true that the Chequers proposal does come up with a novel way for the UK to be able to do trade deals with non-EU countries, if any are interested. Normally, a customs union (which is what a single market implies) involves a common external tariff against imports into the area. The government is proposing that this should only apply to goods intended for parts of the single market other than the UK. So, as now, the UK would collect the common tariff on these goods entering the UK (and pass the money on to the EU), but not on goods from outside the EU intended for the UK market only.

In theory this might work, but it wouldn't make a trade deal only with the UK that attractive since the EU market is much larger. Conceivably the US might agree to a deal that would allow chlorinated chickens and GM foods to be imported into the UK but there would have to be some way of preventing these getting into the rest of the single market by, for instance, being smuggled across the Irish land border.

It might work if the EU agrees to go along with it. The EU might if they can get guarantees against smuggling but they can be expected to insist on the Court of Justice having a decisive say in any disputes. And there will have to be a deal rowing back on the free movement of people (incidentally, one of the few benefits of the EU for ordinary people) towards the free movement for employment that was part of the original Treaty.

Services (which are mainly financial) are to be excluded from the common rulebook. This should please those financiers who funded the Leave campaign – they won't be subjected to EU regulation. On the other hand, less shady financiers won't be happy as they will be excluded from some trading with the EU. To get round this they will have to move a part of their business from London to Frankfurt or Paris or Dublin but no doubt they will be able to live with this. And maybe they will bargain US access to providing services to the NHS for more access to Wall Street.

One thing that won't happen is the UK crashing out of the EU with no deal. That would provoke an instant economic

crisis that would have global consequences, as well as likely to re-ignite the Irish Republican armed struggle in North Ireland. It's in nobody's interest. Even those who feign to believe that 'no deal is better than a bad deal' don't really believe this. It's only bluster to try to strengthen the UK's negotiating hand.

So, in the end, it looks as if it's all going to turn out to be a fuss about nothing. Britain will stay in the single market and business will continue as usual. Maybe many of those who voted Leave will feel betrayed but they would also come to feel betrayed, if the hard Brexiteers had their way, when

these cynical ambitious politicians failed to deliver on their promises of a better life. They wouldn't be able to deliver because, no more than a change of government, can a change of trading arrangements make capitalism work in the interest of wage and salary workers and their dependants.

ADAM BUICK



And he went Trumpety, Trumpety, Trumpety, Trumpety, Trumpety, Trumpety, Trump! Trump! Trump! The ever predicable Trump was in inimitable trumpeting form during his – almost, but not quite – state visit to the UK. After a little warm-up trumpeting at the NATO conference in Brussels, demanding European countries increase military spending to 4 percent of GDP - none of that wishy washy 2 percent target of his predecessors – he was in trumpeting hyper-drive by the time Air Force One touched down on British soil, announcing: Theresa you're fired! 'I told her how to negotiate Brexit but she just wouldn't listen!' Boris you're hired! 'I think he would make a great prime minister!' Sadiq Khan you're fired! 'I think he has done a terrible job as London Mayor.'

Trump came over to the Old Country determined to demonstrate that he was the Supreme Leader and hardly any of our feckless politicians put up a fight. His torrent of trumpeting generated the usual theatrical outrage amongst commentators and pundits. But why all the fuss? Trump was merely affirming the Special Relationship, whereby the UK is America's poodle, but in more brazen fashion than former US presidents.

### The highlights of the buffoonery

Trump's trip amounted to a golfing weekend at his beloved luxury resort in Scotland, preceded by the berating of all and sundry in line with his idiosyncratic style of diplomacy: shoot first and ask questions afterwards.

On arrival Trump flew over London to the sanctuary of the US embassy fortress in Regent's Park, the helicopter rotors drowning out the chants of protestors on the ground and the giant baby blimp grimacing at him through the porthole window; an organiser of the London demonstration excitedly proclaiming: 'It's going to swamp his Twitter feed!' Revolutionary foment no less, but only of the virtual kind.

Then on to the reception at Blenheim Palace (but not a Royal Palace of course) with hosts Theresa and investment banker hubby kept waiting ignominiously in the courtyard, looking like a couple of schoolchildren nervously anticipating the arrival of the headmaster to give them a good spanking. Then on to Sandhurst the following morning to see the US and UK's Finest in action; to Chequers in the afternoon for what was described as 'bilateral talks' – i.e. Trump gives Theresa May another good talking to – followed by a press conference, an opportunity for even more trumpeting; then afternoon tea with the Queen. Then to Scotland and down to the serious business of golfing, replete with a cordon of 700 Scottish Bobbies to contain a group of 50 placard waving protesters, including an impromptu fly past by a Greenpeace paraglider with banner streaming below displaying the incendiary message: 'Trump, well below par.' Early to bed on Sunday evening ready for yet more trumpeting with President Putin on Monday. And that was that!

After all the shilly-shallying around – would he, wouldn't he, should he, shouldn't he – it was all over in a flash; the millions of words of print and thousands of broadcast hours consigned to the wrappings of a fish and chip supper. But not before the mainstream media had dutifully spewed their superlatives to bolster the anachronistic spectacle of pomp and pageantry that sought to flatter The Man Who Would Be King; although, given the narcissist that he is, Trump will not forget the snub of the less than Regal welcome.

Notwithstanding the insipid character of this un-Regal occasion the mainstream media was at its obsequious best in the main, trying to whip the punters into a frenzy of adulation. This included on the BBC, where the woman commentator

was almost orgasmic: 'We now have the pictures of The Beast coming up the hill. Look at that! The Beast roaring over the horizon! If you want a projection of power around the world there are few better ways than...' It wasn't clear until the end that she was referring to the armour-plated limousine rather than its occupant.

Amid all the hyperbolic superlatives thrown around like confetti no one seems to have stopped to consider whether this mock aristocratic spectacle is any longer appropriate fodder for the public in the twenty first century. But what do the media care about such niceties. They are too busy using Trump as a cash cow, whilst berating him for his buffoonery; salivating like Pavlovian dogs awaiting the next early morning Tweet so that they can splash it around as click bait. One certain legacy for Trump is that he will have received the most media coverage of any person in history. Like the wicked witch in the pantomime he might get the most boos, but he also gets the most reviews. Whilst the media chew over every Trump morsel the man himself is deliriously happy, astride his monopoly board of world proportions, rattling the dice and taunting his opponents that he always throws a double six, with the dice suitably weighted of course.

His latest wheeze to fix the game is the flatulently named: Fair And Reciprocal Tariff Act (ordinarily referred to by its acronym, the FART Act) which if passed (no pun intended) by Congress will give Trump dictatorial powers to vary any US tariff on any country at will; thus effectively tearing up WTO rules. The other players in this giant monopoly game could be forgiven for throwing in the towel. Trump is a man who knows how to play hard ball. He cut his teeth in the days when he was building Trump Tower in New York, doing deals with the Mafia to secure the huge amount of concrete he needed to erect his phallic symbol. But those who describe Trump as an imperialist or a Fascist bestow upon him too much of an accolade. He doesn't have the intellectual acumen or ideological inclination to be either. He is just a simple businessman - with all the pejorative connotations that the word entails - and a second rate one at that; albeit one that has some big toys to play with nowadays.

### So what does all this Trumpery amount to?

Trump is a racist, a misogynist, a bigot, a sexual predator, a xenophobe, a homophobe, an Islamaphobe, a reprobate and, to cap it all, a birther to boot; with his incessant taunts about Obama's pedigree. As the Yanks say: 'he might be a son of a bitch, but he's our son of a bitch!' and that makes all the difference. Trump is the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the United States and the Commander-in-Chief of the most powerful nation on Earth, with a multi-trillion dollar arsenal of deadly weapons



at his fingertips which he is prepared to lever into any deal to make an offer that can't be refused. Trump might yet achieve the ultimate legacy - if anyone is left to write it - as the president who, through nuclear Armageddon and/or climate meltdown, had the most profound impact on the world of any that came before him. No, Trump should not be written off as an irrelevance.

Putting these apocalyptic possibilities aside Trump is relevant in other ways too. In the early days of the presidential campaign the capitalist elite – the bankers, the military industrial complex and other ne'er-do-wells – realised the dangers of a Trump presidency. Like the drunken slob at a wedding they knew that he could embarrass them by exposing their game; especially when they had wallowed in the luxury of the smooth operating front man, Obama, for the previous eight years; a consummate performer

capable of delivering the most bitter pills of capitalism with a sugar coating. On the other hand Trump, not being one for decorum, will say and do anything to make a fast buck, as will any good capitalist. But Trump does it with a megaphone. It is this raw meat characteristic of Trump that has the capacity to inflict damage on the capitalist brand.

But as all good entrepreneurs know every problem can be turned into an opportunity. Ironically, whilst Trump has been busy scapegoating everything in sight to explain away the ills of United States society, the liberal media, egged on by their corporate paymasters, have been moulding Trump into their very own scapegoat by branding him as the 'unacceptable face of capitalism' and thus subtly inculcating the corollary: that there is an 'acceptable face of capitalism.' As with all marketing ploys it matters not that it is a fabricated concept, so long as it sells well. And it seems to be selling like hot cakes, as indicated by the burgeoning movement of anti-Trumpeters. Under cover of this flak the ruling class hope to buy time to select, or manufacture, another snake oil salesman like Obama to re-launch the brand.

This is not to say that the demonstrators are wrong to protest against Trump. For some it might be cathartic. But they should not succumb to the fiction that Trump is the product of some evil gene. Some of the more discerning commentators are beginning to eschew this genetic interpretation in favour of a more nuanced position. Owen Jones, of *Guardian* columnist notoriety and an organiser of the London anti-Trump protests, is the latest to pick up this new baton, imploring us to: 'don't just protest against Trump, but protest against Trumpism', which he loosely characterises as neo-liberal globalisation. But it's not Trump or Trumpism, or neo-liberal anything. The problem is capitalism, pure and simple. Alternative explanations only lead people down blind allies and encourage them to take their eye off the ball.

Whether or not the establishment succeed in giving

capitalism a temporary facelift its pernicious features are hardwired into the system and its apocalyptic course is set. Capitalism is incapable of taking into account the need to preserve and nurture the essential live-sustaining elements of our society. Its destructive force on humanity has been well documented over the years: the enslavement of people in a system of production where the wealth produced by the workers is creamed off by a decadent elite, thus perpetuating an antagonistic mode of existence which impoverishes the human spirit by chaining it to this perverse economic machine. But it is only in recent years that the full cataclysmic implications have been understood. Capitalism fetishises money by knowing the price of everything and the value of nothing. The obliteration of the rainforest, the acidification of the oceans, the pollution of the air, the annihilation of species, the contamination of the soil and all the other destruction unleashed upon the natural environment are euphemistically referred to as 'external costs;' that is they don't appear in the profit and loss account and so, as far as the capitalist is concerned, they are of a no consequence. The abolition of capitalism is no longer merely socially desirable, it is an ecological necessity.

Despite this the death cult of capitalism continues unabated, like a raging bull, oblivious to the destruction it leaves in its wake. The corporate capture of the faux democracies of the world ensures that our elected representatives shamefully step aside and allow the bull to stampede unhindered. Like a demented rodeo cowboy Trump is astride The Beast, digging his spurs into its belly and urging it to go ever faster. And the modern day Roosevelts – the Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbys – who promise to step into the path of the bull to slow it down or deflect its course will find that they are quickly trampled underfoot.

### Is Trump good for socialism?

Trump should not be dismissed as a parody, or a caricature, or an aberration. He is the real McCoy. He is the manifestation of raw unadulterated capitalism. But Trump is only a carrier of the disease, he is not the disease itself. He is the child of the system, not the parent and, in this sense, Trump is a victim like everyone else. But it is not Trump or Trumpism, or any other contrived representation of our current malaise that ought to be the focus, it is the system of capitalism itself.

Trump helps the cause of socialism by ripping away the sticking plaster to expose capitalism in all its raw festering septic state. The capitalist elite is busy trying to put the sticking plaster back. The task for those who advocate socialism is to dig away at the wound to ensure it remains open and exposed. This should be made easier by the ever accelerating concentration of wealth amongst a tiny degenerate elite and the relative impoverishment of everyone else. As Marx argued, unfettered capitalism is potentially a revolutionary force.

But Trump's usefulness, in exposing the raw meat of capitalism, is only one side of the coin. The other side is the opportunity he presents to promote socialism as a positive alternative and to ensure that it comes about before the social and ecological tipping point is reached and before people's conception of life becomes so muted by the oppressive weight of capitalism that, like the caged hamster on the wheel, they can conceive of nothing else.

As a species we have the intelligence and the imagination to create a better society, if only we had the will to do so. Throughout history we have demonstrated our incredible resourcefulness and creativity and, in recent times, capitalism

(Continued on page 22)

## No such thing as a free gift

The concluding article of our series on 'philanthrocapitalism'

A significant motive driving philanthrocapitalism has to do with the tax incentives involved in charitable contributions. In most countries in the world, taxes constitute the primary source of government revenue (government borrowing, mainly through the bond market, is another important source). Paying less tax may be good for the businesses concerned but it obviously impacts on government revenue and, hence, the state's capacity to finance reforms such as social welfare programmes. That in turn has consequences for private charity and the scale of the task it faces.

Some philanthrocapitalists appear to have grasped this point well enough. An example of this is the Boston-based project, Responsible Wealth – a 'network of business leaders, investors, and inheritors in the richest 5%' of the US population. It lists amongst its supporters Warren Buffet and Bill Gates Sr and is an offshoot of the aforementioned 'United for a Fair Economy' which it describes as 'an organization that supports workers to organize and advocate for policies that make our economy more fair and equitable' ([www.responsiblewealth.org](http://www.responsiblewealth.org)).

Amongst other things, it calls for higher taxes on the very rich and an increased level of public investment. However, the bizarre spectacle of billionaires taking up apparently left-wing causes might not be all that it seems. There is undoubtedly an element of self-interest involved, based on a recognition that the way things are panning out might not be good for the long-term stability and prosperity of capitalism itself. Though a system of cut-throat competition tends to foster 'short-termism', that does not rule out the possibility of sections of the capitalist ruling class rising above their circumstances to take a longer-term perspective.

Given that the state, famously described by Marx as the 'executive committee of the ruling class' has more leeway than capitalist corporations in what it is able to do within the context of market constraints, it is not surprising that such a longer-term perspective has tended to be associated with, and organised around, a more statist-oriented prescriptive approach. An example of this would be the kind of thinking that led to the setting up of the modern welfare state.

Germany under its distinctly non-left-wing chancellor, Bismarck, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, was the first country to truly implement this idea of a welfare state. As Germany began to overtake Great Britain as an industrial power around this time, sections of the British capitalist class, alarmed by this development, began to take a serious interest in Germany's state welfare programme. They began to see a connection between this and Germany's growing industrial strength. Years later, in 1943, the millionaire Tory industrialist, Samuel Courtauld, articulated such thinking when he strongly endorsed the Beverage Report's proposal to set up a welfare state in Britain too on the grounds that 'Social security of this nature will be about the most profitable long-term investment the country could make. It will not undermine the morale of the nations' workers: it will ultimately lead to higher efficiency among them and a lowering of production costs' (*Manchester Guardian*, 19 February 1943).

However, there is always that current of short-term thinking, generated by market competition, against which this longer-term perspective has to do constant battle. Economic boom conditions can, to some extent, shore up the latter perspective, by making state welfare programmes more affordable and,

also, by empowering workers in their bid to increase the social wage. But when boom turns to bust as it did in the 1970s, ushering in an era of neoliberal austerity, philanthrocapitalism was then able to play a more prominent role, filling the vacuum created by the retreat of the welfare state. Philanthrocapitalism came to be increasingly identified as the bearer and nurturer of this longer-term perspective which the neoliberal state appeared to have abandoned in its bid to cut costs and restore national 'competitiveness'. Hence the title of Bishop and Green's book, *Philanthrocapitalism: How the Rich can Save the World*, referred to earlier. The thinking behind this was that enormous fortunes of the super-rich to some extent cushioned them from the short-term exigencies of cut-throat competition, giving them the freedom to spend their money on whatever they chose

### The economics of philanthrocapitalism

Though philanthrocapitalists may profess to adopt a long-term perspective of wanting to 'save the world', their actions all too often belie the image they are intent upon projecting. Take the case of taxes. While some philanthrocapitalists such as those involved in 'United for a Fair Economy' seem intent upon advocating higher taxes for people like themselves, this does not apparently prevent them trying to run their own businesses in a manner deliberately designed to avoid paying taxes as far as possible, knowing full well the fiscal impact of this on a state's budget and on the state's ability to fund social welfare programmes.

This incongruity might seem puzzling but it is quite predictable in terms of game theory. Our 'selfless' philanthrocapitalists are quite willing to pay more taxes providing everyone else – meaning their market rivals - does as well. Until then, they will strenuously seek to avoid paying taxes as far as possible just like their 'selfish' counterparts in the capitalist class (who they will also try to emotionally blackmail through such stratagems as the 'Giving Pledge' to ensure the costs of philanthropy are shared more evenly). After all, taxation is ultimately a burden on the capitalist class, not the working class, and the squabble over that burden essentially boils down to a conflict of interests and perspectives between different groups of capitalists over how a capitalist economy ought to be administered.

Tax avoidance, unlike tax evasion, is of course perfectly legal under current legislation. The higher the taxes the stronger the incentive to avoid them, since taxation eats into profit margins and impairs the ability of businesses to compete on an increasingly globalised market. The significance of this to philanthrocapitalism lies in the fact that charitable donations are one of the ways in which the payment of taxes can be avoided.

In America, perhaps contrary to impressions, corporate taxes have been historically amongst the highest in the world (although Trump's recent tax reform bill will cut these to a level just below the global average as well as reducing some personal taxes). Large US-based transnational corporations are particularly adept at tax avoidance, engaging in such sharp practices as transfer pricing and intra-corporate loans, and being able to employ expensive legal terms to ensure everything appears hunky dory and above board. Huge sums of money are offshored into tax havens or reinvested in other foreign operations. As Farok Contractor notes: 'The accumulated, but unrepatriated, profits of American multinationals' foreign subsidiaries—which have legally escaped US taxation—are estimated between \$2.1 and \$3 trillion' (*Rutgers Business Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 27–43).

As stated, making charitable donations is just another form of tax avoidance. Indeed, some of the most notable

philanthrocapitalists are associated with businesses with a notorious record of tax avoidance. One example is Bill Gates. According to a report by *The Independent*: 'Microsoft has reportedly avoided up to £100m a year in UK corporation tax by routing its sales through Ireland' (19 June 2016). Over £8bn of revenues from computers and software bought by customers in the UK has been diverted to Ireland since 2011, under an arrangement agreed with HM Revenue & Customs.

Another example is Mark Zuckerberg. His corporation, Facebook, has been severely criticised for its tax avoidance stratagems and, like Microsoft, has resorted to funnelling profits through Ireland. In 2014, Facebook paid only a paltry £4,327 in corporation tax on an annual profit of £1.9bn (though the company has more recently agreed to pay several millions in taxes).

The case of Zuckerberg and Gates epitomises a trend in philanthrocapitalism. Instead of philanthrocapitalists giving directly to charities, they are increasingly setting up foundations of their own as a vehicle through which they can exercise 'social entrepreneurship', funnelling money to causes of their choosing. Some like Buffet seem to be the exception to this trend. In his case, his charitable donations have mainly gone to the Gates Foundation, the largest of its kind in the world, thereby amplifying its already enormous power and reach.

Indeed, the Gates Foundation is said to contribute about 10 percent of the total budget of the World Health Organisation which, critics claim, gives it undue influence on policy making. In a special report, the 'Global Justice Now' campaign group comment on the nefarious workings of the Foundation: 'We argue that this is far from a neutral charitable strategy but instead an ideological commitment to promote neo-liberal economic policies and corporate globalisation. Big business is directly benefitting, in particular in the fields of agriculture and health, as a result of the foundation's activities, despite evidence to show that business solutions are not the most effective' ([globaljustice.org.uk/resources/gated-development-gates-foundation-always-force-good](http://globaljustice.org.uk/resources/gated-development-gates-foundation-always-force-good)).

How philanthrocapitalism goes about financing various causes, gives us more clues as to its real nature and intent.

While attention is focussed on the huge sums of money involved in charitable giving, it is easy to overlook what all that money is spent on. Quite a significant chunk of it is spent, in the first instance, on administrative costs and fundraising (which is, of course, indispensable in a capitalist money-based economy). According to a report by the *Daily Mail* (12 Dec 2015), one in five of the biggest charities in the UK are 'spending less than half their income on good work' and, in a few cases, as little as 1 percent.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that many of these charities are little more than a lucrative gravy train for



those employed in them. Indeed, the *New York Times*, (29 March, 2008) refers to a report on the fraudulent misuse of charitable money for personal gain in the United States. The authors of this report estimated that the overall costs of fraud came to a staggering \$40 billion for 2006, or some 13 percent of the money given to charity in the US. In early 2007, another report by the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University (partnered by Google) provided some revealing data on the subject of what

charitable money is spent on. According to the report, less than one third of the money that the American public gave to non-profit organisations in 2005 was focused on the needs of the economically disadvantaged. Of the total of \$250 billion donated that year, less than \$78 billion explicitly targeted those in need.

While we tend to think of charity as essentially an endeavour seeking to ease the plight of precisely those in need, this can be quite misleading. Ginia Bellefonte in the *New York Times* (Sept 8, 2012) notes that:

'Nationally, 32 percent of the \$298 billion given away last year went to religious institutions, 13 percent to cultural organizations and 12 percent to social services, according to a report issued annually by the American Association of Fundraising Counsel. But if giving were conducted with the greatest consideration paid to the most urgent needs of the society, then Yale, a private institution with a \$19.2 billion endowment, would arguably never receive another 50 cents.'

According to a Wikipedia entry on the billionaire Koch brothers: 'Charles' and David's foundations have provided millions of dollars to a variety of organizations, including libertarian and conservative think tanks. Areas of funding include think tanks, political advocacy, climate change scepticism, higher education scholarships, cancer research, arts, and science' ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koch\\_family\\_foundationswikipedia.org/wiki/Koch\\_family\\_foundations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koch_family_foundationswikipedia.org/wiki/Koch_family_foundations)). That climate change deniers and the advocates of free markets should count as the recipients of philanthrocapitalist charity speaks volumes as to the supposed efficacy of such charity in addressing the needs of the poor. It is precisely the poor of the Global South, above all, who stand to lose most as a result of the very climate change which its deniers are unwittingly enabling.

However, it is arguably when charitable donations are funnelled into for-profit enterprises that the very term itself becomes most particularly questionable. As Matthew Reiz notes in his review of Linsey McGoey's book, *No Such Thing as a Free Gift: The Gates Foundation and the Price of Philanthropy* (2015), there is a long-standing tradition of donating money to for-profit businesses in America and it has become more pronounced in recent years. McGoey's book gives examples of this such as the Gates Foundation's donations to Scholastic

Inc, a large publisher of education material. Another recipient of the Foundation's money was a project called M- Pesa, for 'which Vodafone and its subsidiaries built, in Kenya and then Tanzania, a system that allowed villagers access to mobile phone banking'

([www.timeshighereducation.com/features/the-perils-of-philanthrocapitalism](http://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/the-perils-of-philanthrocapitalism) [www.timeshighereducation.com/features/the-perils-of-philanthrocapitalism](http://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/the-perils-of-philanthrocapitalism)).

As an article in *The Economist* put it, one of the things revolutionising American philanthropy is the 'blurring of the distinction between the profit and the non-profit sectors. In health care, and even in education, for-profit companies are increasingly doing things that used to be reserved for non-profits. And non-profits increasingly model themselves on profit-making businesses. Business schools put on courses for voluntary workers. Non-profits hire managers from the private sector, and pay them accordingly. Some non-profits even charge for their services or spin-off profit-making subsidiaries' (28 May 1998).

Though the sums of money involved in charity donations are substantial - in America for

example, by 2016, total giving to charitable organisations had risen to \$390.05 billion, 72 percent of this coming from individuals compared with 15 percent by foundations and 5 percent by corporations and the rest by bequests - it is

still small by comparison with state expenditures on welfare programmes. In America, if you include both federal and local government spending, the latter comes to about \$1 trillion per year. Given that only a fraction of charitable giving in the US (which itself represents only 2.1 percent of GDP) is actually targeted on the needy this further underscores the utter absurdity of such brash claims about the super-rich wanting to 'save the world'.

Philanthrocapitalism is not about saving the world. It is about saving capitalism through a face-saving attempt to justify what cannot be justified. It is about promoting the patronising belief that the poor depend upon the super-rich when the reality is the complete opposite.

ROBIN COX



### Are we exploited twice?

A recent anarchist pamphlet *Fight for the City* revives the theory of secondary exploitation that was popular in anti-capitalist circles before WWI. This is the theory that workers are economically exploited not just at work through producing a 'surplus value' over and above what they are paid for the sale of their mental and physical energies to an employer; they are also said to be exploited outside of work by landlords, moneylenders, shopkeepers and others when they spend their wages. Here's how the London Anarchist Communists put it in their pamphlet:

'We are already exploited at work. Wages are as low as the bosses can get away with in order to maximise their profits. But we are exploited in other ways. Increasingly, all aspects of our non-working lives involve the spending of our wages on things that make profits for others: landlords, banks, and all the companies providing the goods and services that we buy (...); at every stage, whether in the act of producing or consuming, more surplus is creamed off our wages, creating profits and wealth for

a few. The fight for the city is therefore a class struggle – a struggle against those who want to squeeze everything they can from us.'

This is economic illiteracy. Marx based his theory of surplus value on the premise that workers are paid the full value of what they sell, i.e., that their wages cover the full cost of creating and recreating their working skills. Surplus value arises from the fact that there is a difference between the value of their labour power (the labour incorporated in it) and the value they add to what they produce (the total new labour they incorporate into it); that, for example, their wages represent 20 hours labour while they add 40 hours labour to what they produce. This difference belongs to their employer and is the source of all non-work incomes.

Suppose that, when it came to spending their wages, workers were not engaged in equal exchange, that they didn't get goods and services that took 20 hours to produce but, say, only 15 hours' worth. This would mean that they would not be in a position to recreate the value of their labour power as this requires them to consume goods worth 20 hours. They would not be able to work so intensively or so efficiently for their employer and so not produce as much surplus value.

What workers buy has always helped those they buy from to turn the surplus

value produced by their employees into a monetary profit, but that is not the same as creating surplus value for them. This is created by their employees not their consumers.

Individual workers and groups of workers can be, and sometimes are, swindled by landlords and shopkeepers who don't give them a product of equal value to what they pay, but this is still not extracting surplus value from the workers concerned. If such swindling becomes the norm, then employers would have to increase wages to, in our example, 25 hours to take account of this and ensure that they are getting the full value of what they pay for.

Normally workers do exchange the full value of their wages for goods and services of an equal value. As just explained, that they should do so is in the employers' interest too and is why there are laws to protect consumers and to limit how much interest moneylenders can charge.

There is no secondary exploitation, only occasional swindling. Of course if they are ripped off workers are going to react but this cannot be described as part of the class struggle between workers and employers as it is essentially a struggle between consumers and sellers that can be settled by ensuring equal exchange.

## Angelica Balabanoff: To Bolshevism and back

Angelika Isaakovna Balabanova was born in Černigov, now Černihiv in Ukraine in August, probably around 1868. Her family was wealthy and she had a privileged upbringing. Yet, she soon realised that she did not fit in that type of high-class society and broke with her family, moving to Brussels to attend the *Université Nouvelle*. There she met



Clara Zetkin & Rosa Luxemburg

leading figures in and around the Second International, such as Élisée Reclus, Émile Vandervelde, and Georgi Plekhanov. In Leipzig, where she moved for a short while, she met Rosa Luxemburg who became her role model for the years to come. Then she moved to Berlin where she attended economics lectures and met various high-level SPD members such as Clara Zetkin and August Bebel. She heard about an Italian professor of philosophy, Antonio Labriola, who was quite well known amongst SPD students; so she decided to move to Rome where she attended Labriola's lectures and met PSI founders Filippo Turati, Claudio Treves, and Turati's partner, fellow Jewish Ukrainian, Anna Kuliscioff.

### Mussolini

She became a member of the PSI in 1900. The Party asked her to move to Lausanne to educate the Italian immigrants to socialism. Here she met Benito Mussolini. She describes her first encounter with him in her book *Traitor: Benito Mussolini and his 'Conquest' of power*. He was destitute. He could not work because he was 'ill'. 'I'm good at nothing, not even to earn a piece of bread', the future *Duce* told her. He was implicitly asking her help to translate a Kautsky pamphlet from German, in which he was a beginner, to earn some money. Out of pity he was invited here and there to give speeches at socialist conferences for a few francs. As we all know, he turned out to be an effective as well as a bombastic speaker.

In Switzerland she also founded *Su Compagne* (Come on Women Comrades) and she met the Menshevik leaders Martov and Axelrod. She joined in the *League of Academic Marxists* led by Chicherin, and she met Trotsky in Vienna in 1906. Balabanoff probably met Lenin for the first time in Berne. In 1907, she represented the *Russian Academic Students* at the 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Party in London. The same year she also participated in her first meeting of the Second International in Stuttgart. Here she mainly contributed as a translator, and met Karl Liebknecht.

Together with Giacinto Serrati, future leader of the PSI, she helped Mussolini to leave Switzerland and find a good job in Trieste, a job that he was not able to keep for very long. She gave an interesting account of the day when Mussolini was elected as director of the local magazine *Lotta di Classe* (Class Struggle). The editor wanted to give up this position and offered it to Mussolini who he thought must be a good socialist considering his father's politics (he had named his son after a Mexican revolutionary), and because he had no work commitments. The start of Mussolini's political fortune

is often identified with the role he played at the 1912 Party Congress, when he proposed the motion to expel certain high-level reformists from the Party. Balabanoff tends to minimise his role. According to her, he was of course for their expulsion, but he was nominated to propose the motion to expel them only because he was pushed by the comrades of his region and because of the lack of other volunteers.

The victory of the intransigents in the leadership of the PSI pushed reformist Claudio Treves to resign from editing the party organ *Avanti!* Also in this case Mussolini was offered the job because of the lack of others without work and family commitments. When he was offered this post he was hesitant, and accepted only on condition that Balabanoff joined him. Balabanoff gives an account of Mussolini as being prone to corruption. She broke with him before his betrayal, because of his opportunistic and selfish behavior. Some believed that Balabanoff and Mussolini had a romantic relationship. This does not concern us, but what is sure is that Mussolini's himself at the peak of his power admitted that without Balabanoff's help he would have remained nobody.

### Zimmerwald

At the outbreak of WWI in July 1914 she was called urgently to Brussels for a special meeting of the International. She proposed mass strikes against the war, while Viktor Adler and Jules Guesde were against the idea; she was backed only by the Labourists Keir Hardie and John Bruce Glasier. In August she met Plekhanov in Geneva who hoped to see the Italian party push for Italy's intervention on the British-French-Russian side. In Italy, by now on the verge of intervention, it was hard to be a foreigner. When the German SPD member Albert Südekum visited Italy to push the PSI to convince the masses to intervene on the German-Austrian side, she was attacked as pro-German, although she reminded the crowd that she had been expelled by Austria in 1909 and by Germany earlier in 1914.

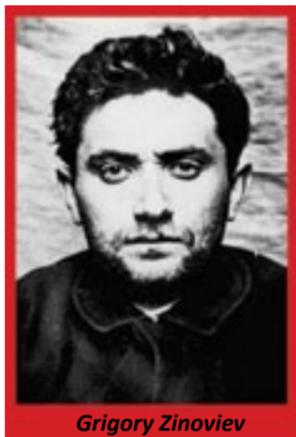
Balabanoff moved to Switzerland. In December 1914 she moved to Berne where she was instrumental in organising the conference of anti-war Social Democrats in Zimmerwald which took place in September 1915. She became a member of the executive bureau composed of the Swiss Social Democrat Grimm, the Italian Maximalist Lazzari and Rakovsky as secretary. The Zimmerwald manifesto, drafted by Trotsky, was the result of the clash of the moderates against Lenin's Left fraction. The topics discussed at Zimmerwald were the peace action by the proletariat, the position with regards to the Second International, and the transformation of the war into a revolutionary civil war. The moderate view prevailed, thus Zimmerwald stood mainly for peace. It did not officially break with the Second International and did not propose to transform the war into a civil war

### Bolshevik

Balabanoff lived in Zurich until the outbreak of the Russian revolution in February 1917. As did other revolutionaries, she left Switzerland to reach Russia on a special train, travelling with Martov, Axelrod and Lunacharsky. She became disillusioned with the February revolution and began to lean toward the Bolsheviks. In this period she saw Trotsky very often. She signed a resolution together with Trotsky, Kamenev and Riazanov for an outright boycott of the Russian Provisional Government. She travelled to Stockholm to organise the 3<sup>rd</sup> conference of the Zimmerwald movement, which took place in September 1917. By now the moderate block was poorly represented and Lenin's left prevailed. After the 1917 October revolution Lenin

asked her to stay in Stockholm to propagate from there news about Russia, providing her with plenty of money to do this. On two occasions the Anti-Bolshevik League tried to assassinate her. In the end she tried to return to Moscow in September 1918, because Lenin had been severely injured by Fanny Kaplan's attempted assassination. But because of the fighting between White and Red armies at the Finnish border she had to go back to Stockholm. She eventually managed to enter Russia in October. She met Lenin who was still recovering in his country house.

She was soon on the go again. In Zurich she was accused of carrying 100 million francs to finance the revolution in Italy. She was expelled from Switzerland, while Italy asked for her extradition to put her in jail there. She, together with other Bolsheviks, was transported to Germany where the November 1918 Revolution was taking place. However, with the victory of the SPD, they were sent to Russia. While in Berlin she was



Grigory Zinoviev

the guest of Adolph Joffe, the Bolshevik ambassador in Germany. She met some members of the Independent Social Democratic Party to convince them to follow the Bolsheviks, with no success. When the new International, the Comintern, was established Lenin nominated Zinoviev as President and Balabanoff as secretary. Lenin needed her for her international networking. But she found herself doing mere administrative work for the Comintern. She was sent

to Ukraine as commissioner of foreign affairs, but in 1920 the Bolsheviks had to flee Ukraine and she returned to Moscow. She had quite some friction with Zinoviev who tried to get rid of her in many ways.

In June of that year a delegation from the PSI arrived in Moscow led by Serrati, now its leader. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Comintern was taking place at the same time, at which Lenin laid down the conditions for parties to join; for the Italians this would mean expelling open reformists like Turati. Serrati was against this and Balabanoff leant towards his position. When Lenin asked her to write something against Serrati she refused, telling him 'I agree more with him than with you'.

Balabanoff reported another episode of Lenin's despotism, at the 9<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Russian Communist Party in 1921. Alexandra Kollontai, a People's Commissar, had criticised the Party for allowing very little autonomy to workers' organisations; this was enough for Lenin to destroy her publicly. At the beginning of 1921 the peasants rose up against requisitions; many were executed. Kronstadt rose up against Bolshevik rule, leading to the bloody suppression of the local Soviet. These were the last straws that made her decide to leave Russia. Yet she needed Lenin's permit to do so.

While Balabanoff was waiting to leave Russia Clara Zetkin arrived there. Zetkin stayed with her. According to Balabanoff's account Zetkin seemed quite sensitive to and quite liked the Bolsheviks' adulations. Zetkin tried to convince Balabanoff to remain in Russia. Balabanoff refused to be a translator at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the Comintern in June 1921. In December 1921 she was eventually allowed to leave Russia. From this point on she was an open anti-Bolshevik, though she was officially expelled from the RCP only in 1924.

### Anti-Bolshevik

Lenin had asked her not to leave. She responded that she

did not agree with the Bolsheviks' despotic and demagogic methods. Years later when Trotsky was a refugee in Mexico she wrote to express her sympathy and she reminded him that the same methods of denigration used against him had been used by him against others. He answered: let's not mention the past; those were different times; let's not ruin our friendship.

Balabanoff had seen the Bolsheviks from close quarters and was convinced that without Lenin there would have been no Stalin. She explained that Lenin's regime and the apparatus he had created allowed creatures like Stalin to develop, with no inhibitions, no brakes; in fact, the climate created by the regime fertilised this and encouraged the immoral tendency of the future dictator.

After leaving Russia, she stayed in Sweden and then she moved to Austria where Social Democrats like Otto Bauer were in power. Here she wrote for *Arbeiter-Zeitung*. In 1927 she moved to Paris, called there by the PSI in exile. She moved there, against her inclination, because the PSI lacked an old guard, Serrati having passed to the Communists shortly before his death; Lazzari had also died. At the Congress in January 1928 she was elected secretary of the Party and editor of *Avanti!* The party also decided to enter an anti-fascist coalition. She was against the United Front because of her anti-bolshevism and did not want to work with reformists or communists. Later, Trotsky wanted her to join his 4<sup>th</sup> International but she was not interested.

In November 1935 she obtained a visa to move to the US, where she got close to the rightwing Social Democrat, Gaetano Salvemini. In 1938 her autobiography *My Life as a Rebel* was published. In 1941 the Maximalist faction of the PSI ceased to exist and with it the legendary *Avanti!*

In 1947 she returned to Italy. Balabanoff was used by Saragat to promote his Workers' Socialist Party of Italy (PSLI), a reformist party which was claiming at that time to continue the legacy of Turati's 1892 PSI. She was in it because of her anti-bolshevism, but also because she believed that the PSLI was ideologically closer to the Italian reformists of the early 1900s. In 1955 she was invited to the Congress of the 'Socialist International' in Vienna where she was acclaimed as a living legend. She spent most of 1957 in Austria and Switzerland. She got close to Golda Meir and was pro-Israel. Finally, in 1960 she settled permanently in Rome. She died on 25 November 1965.

Balabanoff was the archetype of the revolutionary maximalist Social Democrat. Her Marxism was rather idealistic and lived as a faith. She saw herself as a missionary. Her mission was to convert workers to Marxism. With this in mind, one can understand why she took to heart Mussolini's case, helping this idle anarcho-syndicalist to become a respected socialist, how she gave in to Lenin's Bolshevism to pursue the maximal revolutionary goal, and how, at the same time, she defended the integrity of the Second International by means of Zimmerwald. Later in life, she stood for early 20<sup>th</sup> century Marxist reformism.

Balabanoff had the merit of exposing from first-hand experience Mussolini (*Traitor*), and above all Lenin and Bolshevism (*Impressions of Lenin*) in a period when it was not popular or even allowed. These two works are worth reading and why she is worth remembering.

CESCO



Balabanoff in 1962

# PROPER GANDER

## Counter Culture

A shop marks the end of the long journey which a pair of socks or a tin of beans has taken to reach us. And the last of the innumerable workers who contributed to getting it to us is often the 'shopgirl'. Shops and their staff, therefore, have a crucial place in the economy, on the front line of consumerism, as highlighted by the BBC's *Shopgirls: The True Story of Life Behind The Counter*. This documentary series focuses on how the role of the shopgirl has changed over the decades, and the wider trends behind this. Presenter Pamela Cox, professor of sociology at the University of Essex, tells the story in an engaging, cheery way, linking up personal accounts with the bigger picture.

Shop work was for men only until the mid nineteenth century, and at least one woman (dubbed a 'romantic freak' in the press) twice disguised herself as a bloke to get a job in a shop. The ever-increasing number of mines and factories which were springing up led to an ever-increasing number of stores to sell their products in. This meant more people were needed for the labour market, so the proportion of women employees grew. The widespread assumption that women were more suited to domestic duties put them at a disadvantage when competing for jobs, meaning they ended up in low-status roles, especially in shops. Many shop staff 'lived in', meaning their job came with accommodation: usually bleak, strictly-run dormitories. By providing accommodation, employers could both keep and control their staff. Working hours were long, pay was low, and there was constant pressure to perform. 'The more obsequious and helpful the assistants were, the better you did [as a business]'. Many of their tasks were monotonous and useless, such as winding and unwinding ribbons to give the impression of busyness. Lengthy days without being able to sit down were called 'the standing evil', one of many damaging effects on shopgirls' health detailed in the 1884 report *Death And Disease Behind The Counter*. Despite the government knowing about the harm which shop work caused, little changed for decades.

One group aiming to improve conditions was the Co-Operative Women's Guild, which was founded in 1883 and only closed in 2016. It was set up to provide mutual support, not only for work-related issues, but also with education and welfare. However, many workers were

reluctant to organise together, not least because joining a union could lead to getting the sack. Margaret Bondfield was a prominent member of the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen, and Clerks who campaigned for union membership and also wrote a series of articles exposing the shop worker's lot. In her later career, she sided fully with the establishment, becoming the first female cabinet minister when she was appointed Minister of Labour in 1929.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the rising number of women employed in shops had reached nearly a quarter of a million. In 1909, a branch of Selfridges opened in London, its stylish brand imported from America, along with working practices uncommon in Britain. Selfridges' shopgirls didn't live in and were trained to be more confident and less deferential. Grand shops with showy window displays were a visible sign of

self-service, the customer would go to the counter and the shopgirl would encourage them to buy whatever, measure out how much they wanted, and then wrap it up. The packaging on the goods lining the shelves did the same job, starting the shift towards the shopgirl role meaning shelf-stacking and sitting bored behind a till.

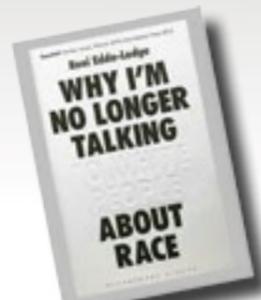


Not so for a shopgirl in a with-it fashion boutique in the '60s, though. They were hired to look fab and hang out with the customers, with any hard selling being seriously uncool. But the groovy image of the boutique didn't convince everyone. In the early '70s, feminist magazine Spare Rib published a report on how shopgirls in boutiques were exploited, and the Angry Brigade bombed a branch of Biba, accompanied by a statement that criticised its staff for their uniformity. But it was changing shopping habits which had a greater impact on the boutique's decline, as they were squeezed out by the growth of department stores and clothing chains. And into the '80s, Thatcherite policies like deregulation of planning and employment laws encouraged the shift towards supermarkets and out-of-town malls.

The programme crowbars a mention of Margaret Thatcher's early years living above a shop in Grantham, which Cox ridiculously claims taught her 'that the power lay with the customer. She believed in the "right to buy" in the broadest sense, that the customer should have what they wanted when they wanted it'. It's doubtful that Thatcher had such a naïve view of capitalism, although she probably wanted us plebs to believe it. Today, retail workers are the largest group of private sector employees, almost two thirds are women and almost half work part time. Staff today cite pressure to perform, low pay and the stigma of being a shopgirl as problems, as others have in previous times. The efforts of unions, campaigners and reformists haven't been able to create ideal conditions for shop staff. As the programme shows, wider forces such as the profitability of emerging ways of shopping, and wars, have done more to shape how shop work is carried out. And it's still changing: now, the role of the shopgirl is being pushed out by the popularity of online shopping and the spread of those annoying self-checkouts.

MIKE FOSTER

## Talking About Race



Reni Eddo-Lodge: *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*. Bloomsbury. £8.99.

Most people will be familiar with the idea of institutional racism, whereby some organisation (the police, maybe) discriminates against part of the population on ethnic grounds. Eddo-Lodge widens this to the concept of structural racism, which goes far beyond traditional institutions to cover much of society: 'It is not just about personal prejudice, but the collective effects of bias.'

So black children do less well at school and are more likely than the general school population to be permanently excluded. Black university students are more likely than others to receive the lowest grade of degree. This discrimination continues into employment, with higher rates of unemployment among black people. Research has shown that applicants with African- or Asian-sounding names are less likely to be invited for a job interview. In contrast is white privilege: 'if you're white, your race will almost certainly positively impact your life's trajectory in some way.'

The author also deals with the concept of intersectionality, which may involve black women being subjected to two kinds of discrimination, racism and sexism. Some object to this as a piece of useless jargon, while Eddo-Lodge sees the backlash against it as 'white feminism in action', which claims not to see race but in fact positions whiteness as the norm. Feminism, she says, should not leave anyone behind, and the most popular current versions of feminism may not be able to achieve this.

A chapter on race and class sounds as if it might be interesting. It starts off by considering the Marxist analysis of class, but completely misunderstands this by saying that, if you are paid monthly and own your own home, you are middle class.

But then it adopts the seven-class analysis of the Great British Class Survey, with black people mainly found in the more impoverished groups. The author says: 'if you are born not white in this country, you probably haven't been born into wealth.' But this misses the obvious point that the vast majority of the population are not born into wealth. There is nothing here about the capitalists and the privileges they and their children enjoy.

Eddo-Lodge records that when she gave a talk about racism at a sixth-form college, one (white) girl asked, 'When do you think we'll get to an end point?'. Her response is that you cannot skip to the end point without having the difficult conversation first. But this is a very unsatisfying dismissal, and it is not even clear what she means by skipping to the end point. After all, you have to have an idea of what to aim for before having the difficult conversations that will help to get you there.

There is no doubt that racism is an important part of current British capitalism. This book says a great deal about how this plays out, but it does not go far in criticising the whole system.

PB

## Same difference



*The Socialist Challenge Today*. By Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin. 100 pages. Merlin Press

This pamphlet-length book is an attempt to draw a distinction between 'Social Democracy' (which seeks merely to run capitalism better) and 'Democratic Socialism' (which seeks to transform capitalism away). The authors see Bernie Sanders' campaign to get the Democrat presidential nomination, the rise of Syriza in Greece, and the election and re-election of Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party as examples of the latter.

These do represent a change in conventional politics but what the authors forget is that what they call 'Social Democracy' also originally set out to transform capitalism away. However, through the experience of being in government under capitalism, they ended up as a mere alternative team for managing capitalism. Instead of them transforming capitalism, capitalism transformed them.

What the authors call 'Democratic Socialism' is essentially a return to the original aim of 'Social Democracy' anyway. There is no reason to suppose that their fate will be any different. Panitch and Gindin quote, and endorse, Tony Benn as saying that any serious 'socialist' strategy has to begin from

'the usual problems of the reformer: we have to run the economic system to protect our people who are locked into it while we change the system.'

This is accepting that a left-wing government would have to be running capitalism for a while. But both the theory and the experience of how capitalism works show that it cannot be made to work in the interest of the majority class of wage and salary workers; and that any government that tries this may well, at the beginning, be able to introduce a few favourable reforms but in the end will have to 'run the economic system' on its terms, by giving priority to profit-making over spending on reforms.

The authors have a different explanation for the failure of Social Democracy – not that no government can change the economic laws of capitalism but that previous left-wing governments neglected to transform the state. Instead of mobilising their supporters in the country by establishing popular committees to oversee and implement reforms decided at government level they left the existing state apparatus as it was. In other words, a political rather than economic explanation, a variation on the familiar theme that left-wing governments fail because they were not determined enough.

This is in fact the main theme and policy recommendation of the book. But it doesn't stand up. Not even popular mobilisation can overcome or change the economic laws of capitalism. The Chavez government in Venezuela tried this but still failed. In fact it is instructive that Panitch and Gindin chose not to include Chavez alongside Syriza, Sanders and Corbyn.

ALB

## Film review: *The Young Karl Marx* 2018. Director: Raoul Peck.



This is a German film by a Haitian director. The timing of the film – 200 years after the birth of Marx – will be intended to piggyback the publicity around this anniversary. It will also benefit from the recent general upsurge in interest in Marx and socialism after almost 30 years in the wilderness following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The film, mainly spoken in German with English sub-titles, focuses upon Marx (August Diehl) and Engels (Stefan Konarske) during the years of the formation of their friendship from 1843 through to their collaboration in the drafting of the Communist Manifesto in 1847; thus dealing with a short but vital period in their lives and stopping short of depicting the revolutions in Europe in 1848. Marx's wife Jenny (Vicky Krieps) and Engels' wife Mary Burns (Hannah Steele) have significant supplementary roles, predominantly supporting their men.

The film opens in Germany when Marx is arrested for his criticism of new laws which take away the traditional right of peasants to gather firewood on a landowner's property. He is exiled to Paris where he meets Engels and then to Brussels and finally London. The film captures their personal and political development as they wrestle to articulate their ideology.

Whilst Marx battles with the authorities and contends with poverty Engels clashes over his father's treatment of the workers at his mill; the conditions of which are vividly captured in the cinematography. The film illustrates how the two young men develop their economic theory of the social relations of production through personal contemplation and in debates with such figures as Proudhon, Bakunin,

and the Young Hegelians. In the process Marx moves away from philosophy – which he increasingly regards as a sterile discipline pre-occupied with interpreting the world – towards his theory of political economy, in order to act upon the world to change it.

The film has the feel of a biopic period piece which would be more at home as a BBC drama than an epic of the big screen. The volume of historical events seems to be turned down, effectively muffling these momentous times. Raoul Peck said that he made the film for young people. Perhaps this is why it has the feel of a soap opera. It was interesting to see these historical figures brought to life on the big screen and humanised through a window onto their private lives, rather than either lionised or demonised for their political beliefs; but overall the film was enjoyable, rather than spectacularly informative or stimulating.

It ends with a montage of video clips from the twentieth century depicting momentous events of social upheaval, to the musical accompaniment of Bob Dylan's: 'Like A Rolling Stone.' Perhaps this is a further nod to the Millennials, although a more twenty-first century resonance for this audience might have been provided by Marx's quote from the nineteenth century: 'There must be something rotten in the very core of a social system which increases its wealth without diminishing its misery.'

Given that it is a rare event for the film industry to grasp such a difficult and controversial topic it feels like a missed opportunity. Perhaps there will be a sequel; in celluloid and in real life.

TIM HART

## Exhibition review: *The Sea is the Limit*



With a title that refers to the saying 'The sky's the limit', York Art Gallery is currently running an exhibition dealing with issues of migration, refugees and borders, on until early September. It contains works by a number of artists from various countries, using several types of installation.

The sea can be both a barrier to travel but also a means of escape, and the works on display refer to both these concepts. Nidhal Chamekh (who is from Tunisia) emphasises the barrier aspect with drawings of the refugee camp in Calais, including tents and other self-built shelters. Nick Elwood depicts those who live or lived in this camp, focussing on them as individuals rather than just as part of the influx of migrants that so scares some people. As a reminder of what some people are escaping from, Brian Maguire displays paintings of ruined buildings in Syria, which show graphically the devastation caused there by many years of fighting.

Halil Altindere offers a novel idea of a 'Journey to Mars', using a virtual reality headset to show a possible sanctuary for refugees in space: demonstrating perhaps how unrealistic some of the demands of those who want to clamp down on migration are.

It is not a large exhibition but it is a thought-provoking one. In the library at Manchester Metropolitan University is another small but informative display, 'Oceans Apart', dealing with transatlantic travel between 1870 and 1940. The direct link to the York exhibition is that of emigrants, many from Ireland, who travelled in crowded conditions in 'steerage'. At one time such migrants were welcomed as a way of populating the unworked fertile lands of the so-called US cotton states, but later it was claimed that many of them lived in unhealthy conditions in the big cities. In contrast were the grand tours for the wealthy, on liners run by companies such as Cunard and P&O, advertised on colourful posters, a variety of which are displayed here. The ultra-rich passengers enjoyed suites with their own bathrooms,

a far cry from the crowded conditions endured by most travellers.

PB

# 50 Years Ago

## Rail Go Slow

Strikes and go-slows are an established part of British Rail life—a comment on the wages, conditions and prospects of a job on the railways.

Commuters who as a result every so often wait for trains which do not arrive, or who when they are lucky travel to work in carriages packed to suffocation, cannot be expected to welcome militant action by the railwaymen. But if they have time and patience, they should consider one or two facts.

The railwaymen are only struggling to improve conditions of employment which are abysmally low. As the recent go slow showed, the railways need an enormous amount of overtime for their efficient running—and the workers also depend on the overtime to make up their wages.

The commuters are also engaged in this struggle, although many of them may not do so in an organised way and would

not dream of coming out on strike. This does not alter the fact that, as both commuters and railwaymen are after the same thing, their interests must be the same.

The chaos caused by the work to rule also showed up who are the productive people in society. No comparable confusion would be caused by the capitalist class ceasing to fulfil their function as parasites and exploiters. Society can do without them but it cannot do without productive work.

This point has been made before, when railwaymen or dockers or factory workers have downed tools. It was shown up recently in New York, when the dustmen went on strike.

Outraged commuters are fond of adopting a moral attitude. So what about the morals of a situation in which the people who are important to society can barely get a living?

(Socialist Standard, August 1968)



Last steam driven passenger train in England, 1968



(Continued from page 13)

has been a significant driver of such progress, but always at an unacceptable cost to society and, we now know, with catastrophic consequences for the planet itself.

The alternative cannot be found under such fatuous labels as 'liberal' 'progressive,' or 'radical.' Nor is it going to come about by bandying around lazy slogans such as: 'real change', 'real democracy,' 'change we can believe in' or jingoistic calls to 'make our country great again!' Systemic failure requires systemic change and that change is socialism: a class-less, moneyless, borderless, state-less, society where private property is abolished in favour of being held in common for the benefit of all; where power is widely diffused to facilitate participative democracy; where work is an integral and enriching part of life, rather than a necessary chore to sustain it and where everyone can choose the way in which they contribute to the community: from each according to ability, to each according to need. Under socialism war becomes impossible because there are no nations to wage it and no private property to fight over. Without nation states and borders the so called 'migrant problem' evaporates. Without money there are no markets, no debt, no poverty, no financial hardship and none of the huge wasteful financial state and corporate apparatus through which the money system is controlled. Every person has the opportunity to become what they have the potential to be, rather than what the capitalist machine tells them that they are. This is the positive socialist message which the Trump era can facilitate. Trump bashing should be a side-show for therapeutic and

recreational purposes only. It should not be the main event.

What of Trump and the rest of the capitalist class after the socialist transformation? They will be liberated from their chains like everyone else; free to take up more wholesome pursuits like painting and basket weaving and probably much happier and content for it. Trump might decide to learn to play the guitar and become a folk singer; in which case he could be welcomed back in his rehabilitated form. Until then it would be preferable if he stays away.

TIM HART



Liz and Don in Trumpton

## Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

### AUGUST

#### BIRMINGHAM

Friday 3 August, 5.00 p.m. – Sunday 5 August, 2.00 p.m. Summer School – “Gender and Power”  
Venue: Fircroft College of Adult Education, 1018 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6LH

#### CANTERBURY

Saturday, 25 August - Street Stall, The Parade, Canterbury from 12 noon

#### LONDON

Bank Holiday Monday 27 August Carshalton Environment Fair The Socialist Party will have a stall 10.30 a.m. To 5 p.m.  
Venue: Carshalton Park, Ruskin Road, Carshalton, SM5 3DD

## 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

### SEPTEMBER

#### LONDON

Hammersmith Saturday 15 September, 2.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m. Socialism and Law  
Speaker: Tim Hart  
Venue: Quaker Meeting House, 20 Nigel Playfair Avenue, London W6 9JY

#### CHISWICK

Saturday 22 September from 10.30 to 4.00 pm  
**Stall at West London Peace Fair**  
Venue: St Michael and All Angels Church Hall, The Avenue/Priory Ave, Bedford Park W4 1TX.  
Nearest tube: Turnham Green (just opposite)

#### KENT AND SUSSEX

Sunday, 16 September Branch Walk. Meet Faversham station at 11am.

of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

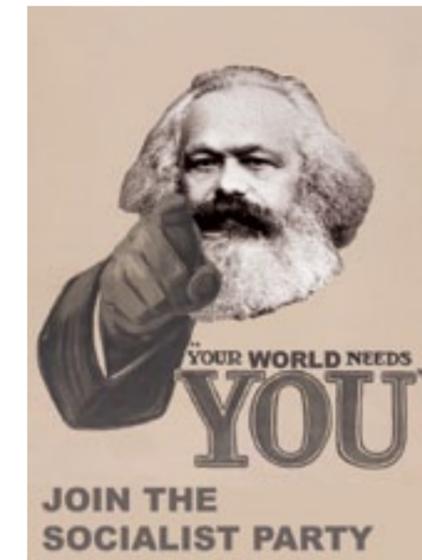
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

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.

Circular Swale Estuary walk around Oare Marshes Nature Reserve, along Oare Creek and back to Oare village ending up at The Three Mariners pub. Just under 4 miles.



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- Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, 2017, Jesse Korman, CCBY-SA4.0

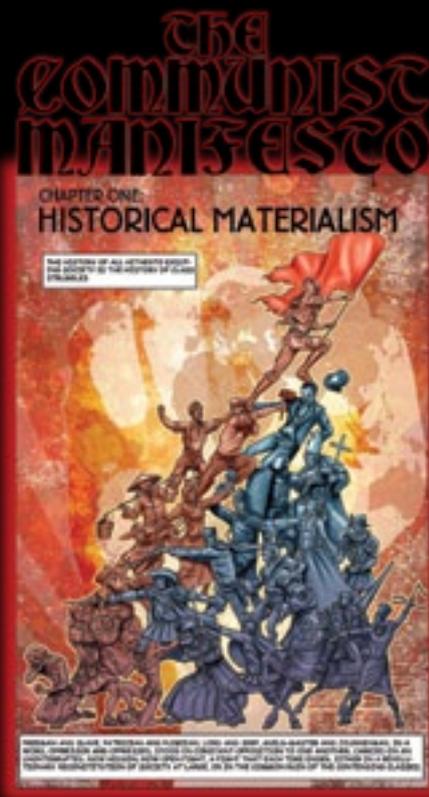
## The Mainstream Media Matrix

One of many examples is the BBC – Broadcasting Bourgeois Canards since 1922. Their advertisements want us to believe otherwise, to swallow the lies with little or no question. 'Take away the noise, the fury, the fighting voices, the distortions, cosmetics, the colour and the flashy effects, but most of all, you can take away the lies, the slander, the misrepresentations that seek to pull us apart, and then ... you can find out what is actually happening, and when you find that, then you will find BBC News[peak].' Stop consuming their canards – take the red pill of socialist understanding instead. 'All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind' 'He becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack, that is required of him. Hence, the cost of production of a workman is restricted, almost entirely, to the means of subsistence that he requires for his maintenance, and for the propagation of his race' (*The Communist Manifesto*, 1848).

## Campaign for real socialism

'Lookups for socialism spiked on June 27, 2018, following the Democratic primary victory for a congressional seat in New York City by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, defeating 10-term incumbent Rep. Joe Crowley' (merriam-webster.com, 27 June). But unsurprisingly the same dictionary defines socialism as 'a way of organizing a society in which major industries are owned and controlled by the government rather than by individual people and companies,' and democratic socialism [there is no other kind!] 'is a form of government in which state regulation (without state ownership) would ensure economic growth and a fair distribution of income.' Socialism, as originally used by the followers of Robert Owen, appeared for the first time in their *Co-operative Magazine* of November 1827 and later made famous by Marx, will be a system of society where production takes place directly for human needs, where

money, governments and states do not exist. This is still the only sensible way of understanding socialism, and not the Alice in Wonderland world where words mean whatever anyone says they mean. Ocasio-Cortez is better defined as a social democrat, a term associated with the German politician Eduard Bernstein. He rejected socialism's revolutionary and materialist foundations and advanced the position that it should be grounded in ethical and moral arguments and achieved through gradual legislative reform.



that of socialism or communism but state-capitalism. He and Ocasio-Cortez are clueless. During one of her interviews she at 'first tried to argue there was a significant difference between her beliefs and socialism.' Indeed, but finding herself in a hole she started digging: '... there's a huge difference between socialism and Democratic socialism ... Democratic socialism, and really what that boils down to me, is the basic belief that I believe that in a moral and wealthy America and a moral and modern America, no person should be too poor to live in this country' (freebeacon.com, 29 June).

## Defenders of the status quo

Main stream media, Beck and Ocasio-Cortez support the status quo. They are opposed to the revolutionary nature of socialism (or communism – Engels & Marx used both terms interchangeably). Here the 170-year old *Communist Manifesto* again remains relevant. 'There are, besides, eternal truths, such as Freedom, Justice, etc, that are common to all states of society. But Communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis; it therefore acts in contradiction to all past historical experience.' 'The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas.' 'Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries unite!'

## Not so strange bedfellows

"There's no way around it, Socialism and Communism are kissing cousins. The only difference is when this concrete strategy begins to fail, that's when somebody grabs a gun and Socialism goes to Communism. Socialism really is just diet-Communism," said Glenn. "Putting 'democratic' before Socialist ... makes it seem, I dunno, a little less Stalin and more Bernie Sanders" (theblaze.com, 29 June). The spectre haunting the likes of Glenn Beck is not



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

