

# socialist standard

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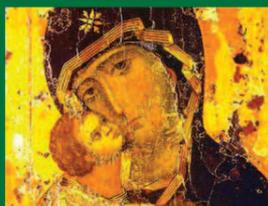


## The Whitehall Job

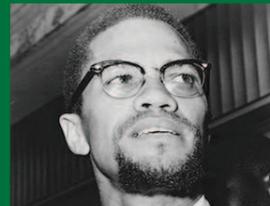
Three dodgy geezers get into top gear



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The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 8 May** at the address above. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

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# Introducing The Socialist Party

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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.

**If you would like more details about The Socialist Party, complete and return the form on page 23.**



# socialist standard

APRIL 2015

## Editorial

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### There's a general election coming

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THERE WILL soon be a General Election in Britain. We predict now with complete certainty that the Conservatives, Labour, Liberals, UKIP, etc, and the Green Party, will all be standing on programmes of keeping – not ending – capitalism. They will each dress it up differently, they will each claim to have different priorities, values, intentions and even policies.

But whichever ones succeed in getting the power they seek, they will not really be in control. Their actions will be determined by the needs of the market system which they accept, support, endorse and seek to run. The market system which exists to protect and increase the power and wealth of a tiny minority.

Ask any of them about a world without the capitalist system which is at the root of all of our problems, and they will cry in chorus, 'no! it's utopian! not possible! not now! maybe in a thousand years! we need to work within the system! we can change and improve it from within!' They have been saying this for a couple of

hundred years and, not surprisingly, this system therefore still exists, with all the same problems it has always generated.

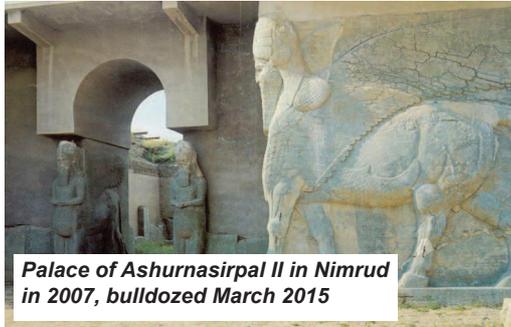
If you do not support this insane system of global destruction and poverty then do not vote for any of these politicians pretending to be able to tame the beast. The solution is production for need, not profit. Common ownership of productive resources, not private or state ownership. Genuine democracy, not the token democracy of one vote twice a decade between versions of the same sick joke.

At the heart of all our problems is the fact that a tiny handful of under 1 percent own and control all of the world's productive resources. It is run for them. None of these parties, including the Greens, Labour, Liberals, UKIP, etc as well as Conservatives, has the slightest intention of ending that fact or even discussing it. We therefore have to laugh at them all with the derision they deserve and take steps to organise for a better future.

## Selling History By The Pound

YOU HAVE to hand it to Isis, in a way, for their orgiastic ability to outpace the world's sense of shock-fatigue. Now they are bulldozing cities and sites which are among the most ancient in the world, sites like Nimrud, an Assyrian city dating from 1250BC, and Nineveh, capital of the Assyrian Empire and the largest city in the world until it fell to a coalition of Babylonians, Persians, Medes and Scythians. This at a time when Rome was still a village and western Europeans lived in hill-forts and hide tents.

It turns out though that Isis have not simply gone insane with cultural bloodlust against anything un-Islamic. They are canny operators in the capitalist marketplace. In public and on camera, they are weighing into ancient statues and monuments with pick-axes and sledgehammers. Privately and away from view, they are looting archaeological sites and making a fortune selling artefacts to western collectors through a black market administered by organised crime (*New Scientist*, 14 March). With sculptures, mosaics and coins fetching anything up to \$60,000 a piece, it's not hard to understand the incentive, and a bit of public vandalism is a very useful way to drive up black-



Palace of Ashurnasirpal II in Nimrud in 2007, bulldozed March 2015

market prices. Any socialist comment would be redundant.

### Let's Get Medi-evil

That Isis are total unmitigated bastards

intent on clocking up crimes against humanity is hardly news, but nevertheless some liberals, ever cautious when faced with absolute statements of any sort, are tempted to look for mitigating factors. In an interview with the cast of BBC's Tudor drama *Wolf Hall*, one actor observed that Islam was approximately 500 years behind Christianity in terms of age, and that if one were to look 500 years or so backwards in English history, what were we doing to each other then? The answer: beheading, burning, hanging, drawing and quartering. The intention of this observation was not to excuse Isis as such, but merely to provide some sort of historical context. The unfortunate effect, though, was to patronise the great majority of western Moslems who are quite at home with modern values, thanks very much, and don't appreciate being described by well-meaning white actors as medieval barbarians.

It's a silly argument anyway. The post-Columbian United States is around 1,500 years younger than Christianity, so on this logic American policy-makers should still be crucifying people, sacrificing goats and reading the future in chicken guts.

The reality is that societies don't necessarily develop at the same rate nor independently of each other. Ideas don't stop at frontiers and societies at different stages of development are forever cross-fertilising each other – that's why we think socialism will spread geometrically and not serially. As for what 'we' did to each other in Tudor England, it was no different from behaviour across the whole of 'civilised' Europe at the time. When these forms of behaviour later came to be regarded as brutal, they fell out of favour in all related societies.

For an interesting historical account of the birth of Islam, see page 12 in this issue. Isis are out of step with modern times and modern ethical values not because they are somehow psycho-historically underdeveloped but because they have a calculated and steely resolve to scare the living shit out of everyone they meet. As a strategy of terror you just can't beat biblical brutality,

and that's something Isis probably did learn correctly from history, theirs and ours, unlike some people who act in plays.

### Death Row Dispatches

They might not be crucifying people or burning them at the stake, but some American states are having trouble choosing ways to execute them, now that European pharmaceutical companies have almost unanimously grown a spine and refused to supply the US with lethal chemicals for use on Death Row inmates. Now Utah is proposing bringing back the firing squad, despite liberal objections that it is an inhumane method of murder (*BBC Online*, 11 March). Hmm, really? In Oklahoma they're considering using gas, a method with unpleasant historical resonances. Well, we've got news for the liberals. All methods of murder are inhumane, by definition. It says something about liberals that this is even considered negotiable.

### Nuts to Bosses

Here's an idea what we can do in socialism with all those ex-aristocrats and ex-CEOs who remain narcissistically devoted to their own self-importance. Such people will undoubtedly exist, and while the majority of us will just ignore them or, perhaps cruelly, laugh at them, some will find it in their hearts to pity the petty Napoleons, flapping like fish out of water in a society that has no use for them. Assuming that they are addicted to power the way junkies are to smack, we must also assume that going cold turkey will be an unbearable torture for them. So how could we make it easier on them? Simple. Give them robot flunkies to order about. AI will make a terrific Jeeves to their Bertie Woosters, grovelling tastefully on cue and getting them out of all sorts of scrapes, thus saving the rest of us the trouble of minding them.

Think this is a joke? Just look at the behaviour of some of these people today, like the lunatic executive of Korean Air who forced a plane to taxi back to the departure gate and worse, forced an air steward to kneel in front of her and receive a humiliating barrage of vilification over a stupid bag of nuts (*BBC Online*, 11 March). If businesses in South Korea are really run by preening princesses like her, and workers put up with it, it makes you understand how the North Korean junta gets away with it. Happily though the steward didn't put up with it, and sued for damages. Even more happily, the executive ended up in jail, though for obstructing aviation safety rather than for behaving like an arrogant tit.

So, no reason for the likes of Stephen Hawking to fear that AI is going to kill us all in a Terminator-like Armageddon. Just get the robots to wear morning suits and eat lots of fish, and the world's ex-bosses can be kept in delusional bliss while the rest of us get on with the important matters of life.

### We Dream of Gini

Socialists are always looking for ways to make the case simpler, and here's one approach we haven't tried before: Object: to set the Gini coefficient to zero. It's fifty years since Italian statistician Corrado Gini devised his index for measuring inequality, which charts the distribution of income in any given society, deriving a number between zero, where everybody earns the same, and one, where all the income is earned by just one person (*BBC Online*, 12 March). The zero figure is entirely putative, since no capitalist society would or could ever fix all incomes as equal, and in fact the only real way to achieve this ultimate equality would be to abolish incomes and the wages system altogether – which is one definition of socialism. Capitalism's logical end point is similarly obvious, whether any capitalists care to admit it or not: to set the Gini coefficient to 1. That such an outcome is not only undesirable and unsustainable but in fact globally suicidal ought to be glaringly obvious to any schoolchild, and never mind the political sophistries. **PJS**

# Let's stand together for a better world

Ever felt voting was a waste of time?

Usually, this is true, because the big parties support the current system. They change a few laws, shift money around; but in the end profits always come first and those on top stay on top.

Is this the only way? We can put space probes onto comets, restore sight to the blind and perform triple heart bypass operations: we have the brains to sort out a better system, one where we will be producing to satisfy people's needs not for profit, where no one has to live in poverty while an elite are wealthy beyond imagining.

The Socialist Party believes in a society of cooperation, in helping each other, not exploiting our neighbours. We believe that power should be shared, not in the hands of a greedy few.

Who controls how much you are paid, where you work, when you work or even if you work? Who decides how much it costs you to live

where you are? You probably have almost no say in any of these issues which have a big effect on you. But what can you do about it?



Those who benefit from the present system would have you believe there is no alternative. It helps them if you believe it – although it does nothing for you.

You don't have to believe you are powerless. If you choose not to support this any more and vote socialist you will be one of an increasing number questioning the system. You will be signalling your consent to a world cooperative society where wealth is produced and owned in common and freely shared according to need. A truly democratic society where decisions are made for the common good rather than for the gain of vested business interests. Where you have as much say as the next person regardless of position in life or occupation.

We have seen the world over that when an idea has the support of the majority of the population, nothing can stop it. To send a signal that you want this, vote for the Socialist Party candidate, and then come and join us, not to mend the current system but to build a movement strong enough to end it.

## Our General Election campaign

The Socialist Party will be standing ten candidates in the coming general election, more than we have ever put up before. Half a million leaflets will be distributed in total in the chosen constituencies, which are:

**Brighton Kemptown:** Jacqueline Shodeke  
**Brighton Pavilion:** Howard Pilott  
**Canterbury:** Robert Cox  
**Easington:** Steve Colborn  
**Folkestone & Hythe:** Andy Thomas

**Islington North:** Bill Martin  
**Oxford East:** Kevin Parkin  
**Oxford West & Abingdon:** Mike Foster  
**Swansea West:** Brian Johnson  
**Vauxhall:** Danny Lambert

If you wish to help out in the campaign email us at [spgb@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb@worldsocialism.org) or phone **0207 622 3811** or text (only) **07732 831 192**. We will put you in touch with the local branch election committee.

If you wish to help financially please make any cheque out to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain' and send to **52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN**. Alternatively, you can use Paypal (go to our website [www.worldsocialism.org](http://www.worldsocialism.org) and scroll down to the bottom). Electoral law compels us to check and record any donations of over £50 but not for those of £50 or less.



Megachurch Pastor Tells Oprah the Church Is "Moments Away" From Embracing Gay Marriage'. ... '3 Reasons You Must Not See *Fifty Shades Of Grey*'. ... 'I Witnessed Men With Size 13 and 14 Shoes Kissing Each Other'.

A selection of well-balanced articles there, clearly making the point that Jesus loves you. Now, what can the *Charisma News* add to that?

How about –'Evil Empire: The 10 Plagues, Islam and the Judgement of God'. ... 'Psychopathic Porn: The X-Rated Path of Destruction'. ... '9 Prophetic Keys For Binding the Homosexual Spirit'. ... 'Have You Committed the Unpardonable Sin? ... 'Pop Evil Rocker Casts Demon Out of Brother'. ... 'Sex Trafficking Expert Has 5 Alarming Concerns About 'Fifty Shades of Grey'. ... 'Franklin Graham Speaks Bluntly About Transgender Bathrooms'.

Having digested these, and now safely in the arms of Jesus, you may now like to add: 'Jeb Bush to Make Case for Stronger U.S. Role in World'. And don't miss 'Dilemma for Jeb: How Bush 3 Would Deal With Iraq'.

Ah well, it could be worse. At least it's not just pointless tabloid sex and violence is it? Oh, hang on ...

NW

## Born in Sin ... or Living in Fantasy?

THERE'S ONLY one thing worse than being cornered in the pub by a drunk *Sun* reader who insists on explaining, in detail, his personal analysis of the weakness in the defence at Arsenal's last away game, together with the meaning of life and his recommendations for dealing with ISIS; and that's being cornered by a bible thumper who recognises you as someone who needs, urgently, to be assured that Jesus is your Lord and Saviour.

At least with the *Sun* reader it's obvious, right from the start, what he is. He doesn't kick off by exchanging pleasantries about the weather and then start introducing Jesus into each sentence after twenty seconds. With the *Sun* reader you make allowance for the fact that the images tumbling around in his brain, formed by years of exposure to page 3 and lurid accounts of the private lives of footballers and models, will transform themselves into a stream of verbiage which can then be gushed out to explain any topic under discussion.

With the born-again believer it's more difficult. What explanation is there for their surreal view of the world? OK, they may also be *Sun* readers which won't help, but what other nightmares shape the fantasies of the self-confessed 'sinner'? What is it that makes them ashamed of being human, convinced that their only purpose in life is to prepare for another, future one, in which an invisible tyrant will reward, or punish them, for every thought or action taken now?

This month we're taking you on a guided tour of a bible-thumper's brain, or rather the ideas on which it is fed, courtesy of a couple of religious websites. Fasten your seat belts and hold on tight: First, the titles of a selection of articles showing what's important to *Christian Post* readers:

'Muslims Will Continue Behaving Non-Believers Until Jesus Slays the Antichrist'. ... 'If Islamic Terrorists Are Devout Muslims, Why Are They Hooked On Porn?'. ... 'This Pastor Chose Against Acting on His Same-Sex Attractions'. ... 'Former



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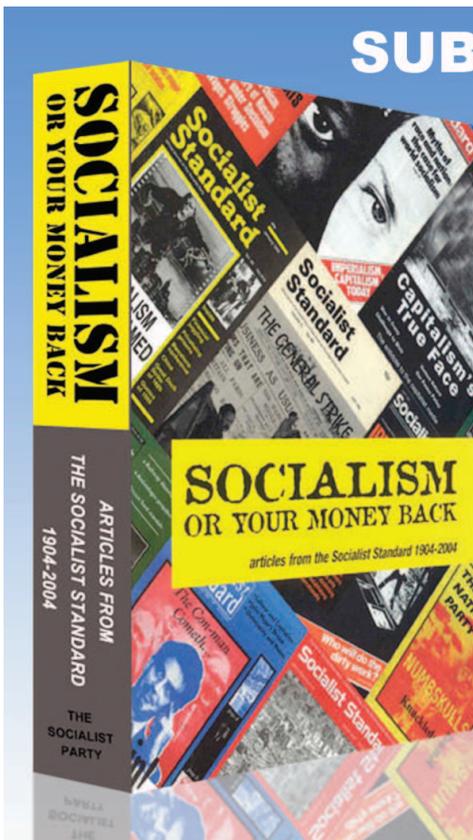
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THE INDEPENDENT





## Squeeze the rich?

'TAX THE Rich' is a popular slogan on the populist Left. 'For progressive tax on rich corporations and individuals and an end to tax avoidance' is one of the promises in the Trotskyist front organisation TUSC's election manifesto. Further down the pyramid at constituency level this is simplified to 'Stop the cuts: tax the super-rich' and 'Tax the 1%'. Another Left populist candidate, Nick Long, standing for the Lewisham People Before Profit party, wrote to the Morning Star (4 February):

'Taxing the super rich and getting tax-dodging corporations to pay their taxes can bring about an end to austerity.'

But would it? Could it . . . ?

The rich, especially the super-rich, can certainly afford to pay more tax. Even the arguments put by their apologists don't deny this. They concentrate on arguing that they shouldn't be taxed too much, that if they were they'd move abroad or would no longer be prepared to work for capitalist firms in Britain. This would happen to some extent but confirms that capitalism is a world system and that any solution to the problem is not to be found at national level. But the fact remains that the rich are rich enough to pay more tax out of their huge incomes and piles of accumulated wealth.

Would making them pay more tax end austerity? Austerity is the government cutting back on its spending so as to reduce the burden of taxation on profits in a slump as a way to help a profit-led recovery (the only way a recovery can come about). Increasing taxes on 'rich corporations and individuals' would allow the government not to have to cut its spending so much, but if more than a one-off would prove to be counter-productive.

The incomes of the rich come in the end, one way or the other, out of profits. Not all of it is spent on conspicuous consumption (in fact that's against the logic of capital accumulation, which is what capitalism is all about). Most is saved and so comes to be re-invested in production to make further profits, a part of which will provide their future unearned incomes.

So taxing the rich is in the end a tax on profits. This is obvious in the case of taxes on 'rich corporations'. Corporation tax used to be called 'profits tax' and that's what it still is: a direct tax on profits. As capitalism is a profit-driven system anything that reduces profits or makes profit-making more difficult will bring about an economic downturn. In a slump, as at present, it would delay any recovery.

Since you can't tax the rich unless the rich continue to exist and continue to draw a taxable unearned income, i.e. unless capitalism continues to exist, TUSC and the other Left populists who chant 'Tax the Rich' are proposing the old failed reformist policy that the Labour Party used to espouse of redistributing income from profits to workers, but not even to try to improve workers' conditions but merely to try to stop them getting worse.

It won't work. In promoting the idea that it could, they are peddling the same sort of empty and unrealisable promises as the conventional politicians. The fact is that capitalism cannot be reformed to work in the interests of the wage and salary-earning working class and their dependants. The only way out is to replace capitalism – with its division into rich and the rest – altogether.

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*Lambs to the slaughter...*

IN CAPITALISM, anything can be sold for a profit, including human beings. The sickening trades in humans whether as bonded labour or sex slaves is still prevalent. Selling body parts is now a normal everyday business. *Organs Watch* conservatively estimates that at least 10,000 kidneys are sold each year and generates an illicit profit of around a billion dollars a year. Organ trafficking is the commercialisation of medicine: more transplants mean more profit. Everything that is happening is a 'donation', but in real life, it is selling and buying.

This buying and selling transplant organs is illegal almost everywhere yet the trade persists, as a result of two major flaws in the transplant system, according to experts. First, the law does not prohibit anyone from billing for the services involved in transplanting organs. This provides doctors and hospitals with a financial incentive to perform transplants, while the costs of the organ are absorbed into the larger transaction and easily hidden from view. The second flaw is the practice of making organ donation anonymous. You can buy an organ without knowing where it came from, and it thus becomes mere tissue rather than part of a human being. Anonymity does not merely dehumanise donors; it also endangers them by making it easier for buyers and brokers to escape accountability for deaths and injuries.

The organ trade follows a clear pattern: rich people buy the organs, and poor people sell them. Organ trafficking depends on several factors. One is people in distress. They are economically disadvantaged. On the demand side are people who could die if they don't receive an organ transplant. Then there are the well-connected organ brokers, who arrange the deals between sellers and buyers. Well-equipped clinics and medical staff are needed. Unlike other forms of trafficking, the organ trade unites the respectable from the highest levels of society, such as laboratory technicians and the surgeons with the disreputable of the lowest strata of society – con-men and criminals, those brutal enforcers who make sure that 'willing' sellers actually lie on the operating table once it is realised by them what is actually entailed and they begin to understand how they have been cheated.

Few are informed or educated enough to give consent. They do not comprehend the seriousness of the surgery or what

they are likely to face in respect to the possible incapacity to resume their normally physically demanding jobs. Organ brokers have told them the fairy tale of 'the sleeping kidney': one kidney sleeps, the other kidney works, so people don't need two kidneys. Doctors wake up the sleeping kidney and take away the old kidney to give it to the recipient. Those selling their kidneys often receive more invasive surgery than necessary because buyers want to avoid extra expense. Many donors will have unnecessarily long scars of about 15 to 20 inches on their bodies, not knowing that if the brokers or recipients paid just a little bit more, the surgeons could have used laparoscopic surgery, which requires an incision as small as 3 or 4 inches.

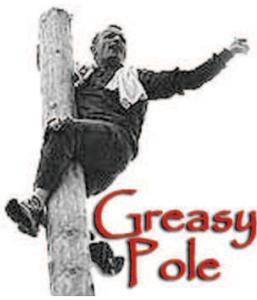
Doctors say a kidney operation is a routine procedure; it saves a life and there is no harm to the donors. The whole recruitment of donors is a package of deception, manipulating the uneducated poor. The middlemen beyond taking large profits, encourage the trade by assuring buyers that the transaction is conducted ethically and that the medical benefits justify what would otherwise be seen as exploitation.

'The crimes are covered up,' Scott Carney writes in his book *The Red Market* 'in a veil of altruistic ideals.' Carney estimates he is personally worth \$250,000 if he was sold for body parts. '... bodies are unquestionably commodities . . . As a product, bodies aren't assembled new in factories filled with sterile suited workers; rather they are harvested like used cars at scrap markets. Before you can write a check and pick up human tissue, someone needs to transform it from a tiny piece of humanity into something with a market value . . .'

There are those who will say 'so what?' And in a world where money can buy anything, and everything is fair game for profit-makers, what's to stop people from turning human parts into another commodity? In a world that is governed by the principle of supply and demand, where those with money can buy anything, the inevitable result is a world in which rich recipients look for markets where they can buy body parts. The sad reality is that some poor person somewhere in the world will be forced to sell.

Capitalism can indeed be described as being vampire-like, sucking the life out of the poor, imagery often used by Marx.

**ALJO**



## Goodbye (?) to all these

WE ARE close now to that minute or two at the ballot boxes when we have an opportunity to state what we think of the capitalist social

system and its wars, famine, and diseases amidst its class privileges. Nationally the voting papers will be missing some famous names. Like Sir Peter ('my biggest mistake in politics was to listen to Mrs Thatcher') Tapsell, the Father Of The House. And like Austin ('... even if we selected a raving alcoholic sex paedophile we wouldn't lose Grimsby') Mitchell. So where, among this confusion, can we find Aidan Burley (pictured) the MP (for a short while yet) for Cannock Chase where in 2010 he clocked up the country's biggest swing — of 14 percent — to the Tories and who is such good pals with David Cameron that they are compelled to greet each other with a High Five whenever they meet to discuss how they are straightening out the kinks in British capitalism. Burley is 36 and since arrival in the Commons he has been a member of the Home Affairs Select Committee and Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Ministry of Transport. But it has not been all easy going for him.

### Nazi Chants

During his time as a student at Oxford he managed to fit in his studies of theology with involvement in an 'incident' on a dance floor which led to his being ejected from his St. John's College accommodation. Another event contributed to his decision — or perhaps his surrender to pressure from outside — to stand down from Parliament. In December 2011 he organised a stag party for a friend — Old Etonian Mark Fournier — at a crowded posh restaurant in a French ski resort. The slim chances that this would be a happy, peaceable celebration were not realized when Fournier arrived in a black Nazi SS uniform — arranged by Burley — which he flaunted full face to the camera. The guests enlivened the evening with Nazi salutes and chants of 'Mein Fuhrer, Himmler, Eichmann'. When it was time for toasts Burley was among those raising a glass to '... and if we're perfectly honest, to the ideology and thought process of the Third Reich'. Unluckily for him and his gruesome mates their behaviour was reported in *The Mail On Sunday*. There was an internal enquiry by the Tory Party at which Burley denied his active participation but the evidence proved otherwise. Cameron had to face the inevitable and remove his incautious friend from the job as a PPS. A French Court fined Fournier the equivalent of £1250.

### St. Helens

Aidan Burley's fragmented political career is not typical of the MPs who are leaving the Commons this May. Shaun Woodward was first elected in 1997, at



first as a Conservative in the safest of seats at Witney (now represented by none other than David Cameron) and then, after being sacked from the Front Bench for voting against instructions on Clause 28, as a Labour MP. It might have been expected that he would do what in the Commons is regarded as the decent thing and resign to fight a by-election under his new colours (like the two recent defectors to UKIP) but he chose to ignore the pressures from his former colleagues and was rewarded by Labour's leadership with the candidature for St. Helens South in the 2001 election. This was rather different from Witney, for St. Helens was still suffering from the closure of its coal mines and regularly ran up Labour majorities of well over 20,000. For Woodward in 2001 it fell to under 9,000. But Tony Blair was delighted, regarding this recruit as evidence of New Labour's appeal, a kind of paragon '...clever, articulate...economically and socially liberal...genuine' (he did not mention that he was also very rich). The lower benches were less exuberant; Chris Mullen, representing a Sunderland seat, was pretty blunt: '...one of New Labour's vilest stitch-ups ... made my flesh creep' and on another occasion 'The awful Shaun Woodward, his every word a sneer' while on the opposite benches Michael Heseltine forecast that Woodward would '... soon become a dot on the horizon'. Among this passion of outrage and mockery in 2007 Gordon Brown elevated Woodward to Northern Ireland Secretary.

### Sainsbury

Now that Woodward is leaving the Commons, he will probably have to sell his modest house in St Helens, leaving him with the choice of six other homes in places such as the Hamptons and Mustique, which vary in price up to about £7 million. He is married to Camilla Davan Sainsbury from the family who have made their fortune through flogging supermarket food to the wage class in society. Sainsburys are unlikely to be supplying refreshments to the monthly meetings of the Sybil Club of which Woodward is a founder member. The club was set up with the objective of its members gorging themselves on food and drink in honour of 'interesting' MPs. As an example of a particularly 'interesting' meeting, one member described an evening at one of Woodward's London houses closing with them all 'completely stupefied' but relieved that Woodward had a butler who would feed the parking meter in the morning.

Not all of the MPs leave the Commons willingly, congratulating themselves on a job well done. Two of them — Ann MacIntosh (Thirsk and Malton) and Tim Yeo (South Suffolk) have been deselected — a polite word for kicked out — by the popular vote of their constituency members. Eric Joyce (Falkirk) transformed himself from Labour to Independent after initiating some drunken punch-ups in the House of Commons bar. Then there are those whose motives we may speculate about because they are The Disappointed Ones, who once nursed an ambition to be their Party Leader. Like Andrew Lansley (South Cambridgeshire) and Hazel Blears (Salford and Eccles). In this company William Hague is best left unremarked. All of them endured by virtue of the delusion that they represented a remedy for the chaos and vanity of capitalist politics. Like all those who by some means remain as our Parliamentary rulers. None of them will be missed.

**IVAN**

# Sugar - Sweet for Some

‘A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down’, sang the angelic Julie Andrews to a pair of wide-eyed children in the movie *Mary Poppins*. Julie’s advice must have enthralled the sugar industry, and set the hearts of marketers everywhere fluttering. Children as consumers represent a massive global market, and spearheading capitalism’s drive for the minds and money of children is the sugar and related sweeteners industry. At stake is an estimated global market projected for 2017 at \$97.2 billion. A large slice of the forthcoming profits will be pocketed by the Fanjul Brothers, owners of Fanjul Corp, ‘which in 2010 comprised four raw sugar mills and 10 refineries in six countries, making them the world’s largest refiner of cane sugar, producing 6 million tons of sugar annually’ (en.wikipedia.org/).

Perhaps even *Mary Poppins* would have balked at administering 20 spoonfuls of sugar in one go, but not Sainsburys. Their Orange Energy Drink has, ‘5.9g per 100 ml of sugar – which is the equivalent of 20 teaspoons for every 500ml’. As ever there are reformers demanding activity. In February, Action on Sugar, ‘has called for the sale of ‘energy’ and sports drinks to youngsters to be banned. They also ‘warned that children were being duped into thinking that the products would boost their performance on the sports field or at school’ and that, ‘The products served no purpose whatsoever except to make children addicted to caffeine and habituated to sugars, it claimed, while in the longer term they were fuelling the obesity epidemic’ (theguardian.com/26 February).

Even doting parent and thoughtful Prime Minister David Cameron disclosed to Parliament how he was ‘trying to stop ‘excessive’ amounts of Coca-Cola being consumed in the Cameron household’ (*Daily Mail.co.uk*, 16 January, 2013). This admission, albeit two years later, seemed to resonate with Tory MP Sarah Wollaston, chair of the Health Select Committee, when she confided to BuzzFeed News that she and her committee wanted to ask experts if it would, ‘work if we had a price differential between sugary carbonated drinks and unsugary ones, low sugar? So if you’re



there at a supermarket shelf and one product is 10p cheaper than the other, would it help you to think – Well, I’ll go for the non-sugary one?’ Wollaston, a onetime GP, also posed an ideological question in a sugarcoated *Mary Poppins*-like way when she asked: ‘Are there ways we can take calories out of children’s diets in ways that doesn’t feel like a big nanny bossy state coming in with a big stick’ (3 February)? Something tells me that the naughty corporations aren’t going to have to take any nasty medicine, even from those who supposedly wield a big stick.

The *Guardian* reported that, ‘an investigation by the *British Medical Journal* revealed that health officials and ministers had 130 meetings with alcohol and supermarket lobbyists while they were considering imposing a minimum price per unit of alcohol. The proposal was dropped in July, allegedly because of a lack of concrete evidence’. Protecting corporate profits through political connections is nothing new. ‘In 1979, Margaret Thatcher set up the National Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education, chaired by Professor Philip James, a powerhouse in the drive to improve diet. It produced a seminal report, suppressed until it was leaked in 1983, that warned the British diet was connected to the major diseases of our time. Its targets to reduce sugar, fat and salt were ignored’ (12 February, 2014).

And in the U.S *Bloomberg*’s reported that, ‘Hawaii lawmakers killed a proposed tax that would have added 17 cents to a single-serve bottle of soda. It was the second failed attempt, even

though Governor Neil Abercrombie had pushed the proposed levy... PepsiCo Inc., Coca-Cola Co. and the American Beverage Association have spent as much as \$70 million on lobbying and issuing ads... Efforts to enact such levies have foundered in 30 states’. Judith Phillips, a Mississippi State University research analyst who studied the issue for lawmakers, summed up how things generally work under capitalism: ‘Whoever is loudest tends to control the discussion and, generally speaking, you buy your microphone with money’ (13 March, 2012).

## Addictive

Action on Sugar suggests that sugar could be addictive. Dr. David Reuben, author of *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Nutrition* agrees: ‘White refined sugar is not a food. It is a pure chemical extracted from plant sources, purer in fact than cocaine, which it resembles in many ways. Its true name is sucrose and its chemical formula is C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>22</sub>O<sub>11</sub>... The chemical formula for cocaine is C<sub>17</sub>H<sub>21</sub>NO<sub>4</sub>... For all practical purposes, the difference is that sugar is missing the ‘N’, or nitrogen atom... Through heating and mechanical and chemical processing, all vitamins, minerals, proteins, fats, enzymes and indeed every nutrient is removed until only the sugar remains... During the refining process, 64 food elements are destroyed. All the potassium, magnesium, calcium, iron, manganese, phosphate, and sulfate are removed. The A, D, and B, vitamins are destroyed. Amino acids, vital enzymes, unsaturated fats, and all

fiber are gone. To a lesser or greater degree, all refined sweeteners such as corn syrup, maple syrup, etc., undergo similar destructive processes... Studies show that 'sugar' is just as habit-forming as any narcotic; and its use, misuse, and abuse is our nation's number one disaster' (macrobiotics.co.uk/ 3 March).

So too thinks Robert Lustig, the University of California's professor of paediatrics who is, 'well-known for his research into the effects of dietary sugar. He believes that sugar is addictive. In a recent interview he said: 'There are five tastes on your tongue: sweet, salty, sour, bitter and umami. Sugar covers up the other four, so you can't taste the negative aspects of foods. You can make dog poop taste good with enough sugar'. Lustig goes on to reveal that, 'table sugar known as sucrose, which is a made of two sugars (glucose and fructose) chemically bound to each other, is identical to high fructose corn syrup – which he describes as a chronic toxin' (*Independent*, 4 October 2014).

Like the wolf eying the lambs, children are viewed as a primary target for the sugar industry. Spinning lies to them is accomplished by just a few multi-billion dollar advertising corporations. As Juliet Schor writes, 'These corporations not only have enormous economic power, but their political influence has never been greater. They have funneled unprecedented sums of money to political parties and officials... The power wielded by these corporations is evident in many ways, from their ability to eliminate competitors to their ability to mobilize

state power in their interest'. Straight from an asshole's mouth comes this truism: 'No one's really worrying about what it [advertising to children] is teaching impressionable youth. Hey, I'm in the business of convincing people to buy things they don't need' – an advertising executive, in *Business Week*, August 11, 1997, quoted by Richard Robbins' (www.globalissues.org/article/237).

### Enough is not enough

Advertisers are simply the unimaginative lackeys for an elite that includes people such as the Fanjul brothers. They're fourth generation sugar capitalists. Their great grandfather was reportedly the wealthiest man in Cuba. Under Batista's dictatorship life was uncomplicated for the family. The profits built off of the backs of their workers rolled in. Extravagant parties were thrown for other parasites like the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, but in 1958 Castro overthrew Batista's dictatorship under the guise of socialism. The Fanjul's sugar empire was seized and Castro now luxuriates in one of the family's palatial mansions in Havana. Under capitalism the narrative repeats ad nauseam: The old king's dead – long live the new king.

Palm Beach, Florida, welcomed the Fanjuls and their money which was quickly re-invested in land, plant and labour enabling a speedy return to capital accumulation. Hungry labour usually returns fatter profits so the Fanjul brothers were quick to exploit the US governments H-2 foreign worker programme, enabling, 'the Fanjuls to

bring in thousands of migrant workers, mostly from Jamaica, to cut their cane... Only the desperately poor cut cane and, without the farmworkers program, the Fanjuls may not have been able to harvest their fields. In the Fanjul fields, workers who did not cut fast enough were labeled 'Code One', which means 'refused to work – do not rehire'. Code One workers were sent home'.

In 1974, sugar prices rocketed and, inevitably, overproduction resulted. But, help was at hand for the kings of sugar: 'The government rushed to their aid, and the current sugar program of government subsidies and price supports took hold. The government guaranteed to sugar farmers a price double that of the world market and placed quotas on sugar imports. Such a policy produces a windfall for the Fanjuls at the expense of American taxpayers' (eyeonmiami.blogspot.co.uk, 29 May, 2010).

For capitalists 'enough' doesn't exist in their vocabulary. 'According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2010), sugar is produced with forced labor in Bolivia, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Myanmar (Burma) and Pakistan and with child labor in Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Kenya, Mexico, Myanmar, Pakistan, Panama, the Philippines and Uganda'.

How much medicine you, your children and grandchildren have to swallow from the Fanjuls and their class is up to you. Life couldn't be sweeter for them – and it's at your expense.

**ANDY MATTHEWS**



Sugar cane plant, Madagascar

# The Roots of Islam

*Groups of Islamic proselytes with trestle tables piled with books and pamphlets is a common sight on our streets these days. They join the ranks of those trying to win workers over to their ideas. Occasionally, they might even maintain that Islam is an anti-capitalist idea. They are right, it is, but not in a good way.*



Aerial view of Mecca

Islam as an idea traces its roots back to the specific social relations of 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabia. At that time the Arabian peninsula was in the shadow of two great monotheistic empires: Rome and Persia. Monotheistic ideas had suited their social arrangements, since by their nature these empires dissolved local tribal bonds, and subordinated everyone to an emperor far away.

Both the deserts of Arabia, and its position between the two empires meant that neither completely dominated it. At this time, as in Europe with Goths, Vandals and Germans, the nomadic Arabs had wandered to the borders of the Roman Empire, and in some cases settled and been assimilated, or used as mercenary troops for the

Empire. Within Arabia proper, most people lived lives dominated by clan and tribes, without a central state, where custom and the threat of vendetta regulated social life.

There was a basic division between groups of sedentary Arabs, who practised agriculture (usually herding animals or growing dates), and the Bedouin, who moved across the desert either raiding or offering protection to the agriculturalists. Often relations between groups were managed by the prestige of holy men, at sites of sanctuary, known as haram, often on the borders of rival territories. The city of Mecca was founded at such a site, and the market there grew up under the auspices of the neutral territory. Within these spaces, the holy man might also be called upon to settle disputes, and this gave him power.

This status could be passed on through a family line, though it still required the requisite religious achievements in order to maintain it. Other groups could muscle their way in, and take the prestigious site and office over. A man named Qusayy, and his tribe, the Quraysh took over the haram of Mecca in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and it was under their control, largely, that the city grew up. This city thus was not based on natural resources, and was entirely dependent on trade and its position on trade routes for its existence.

Muhammad was born into this tribe, and thus into its religious prestige, albeit through a clan, the Hashims, which was in declining status within the tribe. This marginalised status was compounded in his case, when he was orphaned at an early age, leaving him dependent upon his uncle, and the clan at large. He managed to marry well, to a wealthy widow older than himself, and spent many years in trade. It is almost certain that he encountered Christians and Jews as part of his travels, and may have learned some of their ideas.

He earned a reputation for probity, and he must have been possessed of a degree of piety, going into the desert to pray. It was there, when he was in his forties, that he first heard God speaking to him. His voice of god is a matter of dispute. His sternest critics accuse him of madness, or hucksterism. This seems unlikely. Certainly those around him were convinced he was sincere, and there was a tradition of divinely inspired revelation within his community already. It seems most likely that he genuinely believed that he was hearing the voice of God, and that his own thoughts and expressions manifested themselves to him in that way. Certainly, as time went on, some of his revelations appear to be distinctly self-serving (especially over the question of his many young wives). That, however, is not so unusual.

The Arabs practised polytheism at that time, and Mecca was full of shrines to various gods. Allah was one amongst them, but the chief deity. Muhammad simply began to affirm that Allah was the only god. This affirmation, though, was a threat to the revenues of the various shrines, and to the dignity of the groups who followed the other gods. He drew a select group of followers around him, chiefly composed of second sons and members of minor clans. From this time comes much of Islam's rhetoric of fairness and oppositionalism. Naturally, the



**Pre-Islamic Sphinx — part of Arabian mythology, c 1st - 2nd century CE, Jordan**

established dominant groups reacted by trying to suppress his movement. There had been a recent (failed) bid to establish a man as king, so clearly there was political instability, and the growing city was undermining the old clan-based system.

Muhammad must have had a substantial reputation as a wise head, since he was invited to another city, Medina, where he was asked to function as a mediator. He emigrated there, taking his followers with him. Medina was a city composed of various groups, including Jewish tribes, and he may have been hoping to recruit his fellow monotheists to his cause (however they rejected his religious advances). Having no means of subsistence in Medina, the Muslims fell to robbing Meccan desert caravans. This was a substantial threat to Mecca (because

of Medina's strategic location), and this led to a series of battles in which Muhammad proved (generally) triumphant, and demonstrated that he and his inner circle were competent military commanders.

Muhammad also began a process of taking control of Medina, through a series of strategic strikes against other clans and factions in the city, and through the assassination of political enemies. The significant change that Islam made was that the Muslims would protect each other across clan and tribal lines. This was its attraction to members of weaker clans, and part of its success in Medina, as none dare retaliate against the targeted killing.

Additionally, he instituted a principle of charity among the Muslim community. All members were expected to contribute, and Muhammad administered the fund to support poorer members. Non-Muslims were taxed. The society that the Muslims established did not have a state: indeed, it was close to some anarchist utopias: a "natural leader" mediated disputes, while individuals owned their own property and were free to do as they pleased. Muhammad acted as chief, persuading followers to join him in war, and showing largess with the wealth he accumulated through his one fifth share of the booty.

The Islam of Medina took up existing Arab religious practices, such as praying at sun down and



sun up. It also had to negotiate and control the existing customs on marriage and vendetta. Muhammad put a premium on limiting vendetta among Muslims (restricting vengeance to the direct malefactor, and sometimes paying the blood price to stop the feud himself).

Eventually, Muhammad became reconciled with the ruling elite of Mecca. After a show of Muslim force, the Quraysh allowed him into Mecca on pilgrimage. In return, Muhammad allowed Mecca to continue as a place of pilgrimage, so long as Allah was the only god worshipped. The Quraysh leaders retained their positions, and indeed flourished as the Islamic empire spread.

Muhammad had to mount expeditions to defeat rival prophets who had united different Arab tribes in the deserts. Whether they were imitators or had come to the same place as him independently doesn't matter as much as the fact that the time was clearly ripe for a unifying leader of some sort. Of course, once the Arabs were unified, this meant they could no longer raid against

fellow Muslims, and so outward expansion became necessary.

Whereas the kings of Roman successor tribes in Europe found Christianity a ready-made tool for helping take over the Empire, for the Arabs in the south the fact that they were taking over both Persian and Roman lands (as well as encountering Jewish and Christian groups under Persian domination) meant they were exposed to ideas from different sources, and so developed a unifying religion of their own. The abstraction of a universal god allowed them to absorb clans and tribes without racial distinction, and the policy of tolerance of other religious communities allowed them to both collect the taxes and find willing subjects in rival empires.

The achievements of Muhammad were in synthesising an Arab religion that unified and overcame tribal divisions, as well as creating an expression for individualism in terms of a personal relation with God. Further, in insisting on writing down his revelations, he ensured their permanence and durability: even as this came round to bite him as he

had later to revise pronouncements to overcome inconvenient rulings. That, and the clear strength of the team around him allowed his religion and state to go on smoothly, even after his death. As the Islamic state spread, and became more complex, it required new rules, interpretations of rules and ideas.

Islam might represent a form of romantic anti-capitalism, and be able to draw upon its oppositional rhetoric and a form of egalitarianism and mutuality under a divinely ordained destiny. It is, though, harking back to an age before associated production, where the question was of distribution of surplus rather than the direct application of labour to transform the world. It is an idea that socialists must oppose, not in the name of rationalism, but through the need to promote instead ideas that can aid the class struggle. The materialist method allows us to understand both how humans come to create the ideas they hold, and how to change the world for ourselves.

**PIK SMEET**



*Mosque of Muhammad, Medina*

# Why just fight austerity?

Consider the following:

- The world has a million or so multimillionaires, with disposable wealth of over \$7 million each
- About 100,000 people have assets of over \$50 million
- A fifth of the UK population say they can barely get by financially
- One family in three in Britain has a member who suffers from depression or chronic anxiety disorder
- Life expectancy in Britain can vary by as much as twelve years depending on where you live
- There is no difficulty in producing enough food for everyone on the planet, and bad harvests are not the reason people go hungry



The above points are taken from the writings of Danny Dorling, Professor of Geography at Oxford University (pictured). So he clearly sees that there is much wrong with the current social system in terms of inequality of wealth and health and the pressure it places on so many people. In a recent letter to the local press, however, he has recommended merely voting for the National Health Action Party, as a way of expressing support for the NHS.

Why just fight against the attacks of austerity and cutbacks which are continual and relentless given the present way of organising society? Instead let's fight for a totally new system, one where the resources of the planet belong to everyone rather than to a tiny class of super-rich (the one percent as they're often called nowadays). Where production takes place to meet human need rather than the profits of the few. Where effort is put into producing food, housing, clothing and the other things and services we need, rather than wasted on advertising, armed forces and the paraphernalia of the money system, such as credit cards, banks and insurance. Where people are free of the oppression and exploitation caused by class and state.

Don't be satisfied with reforms. If you think the arguments above show that the present system, capitalism, does not serve the interests of the vast majority, consider supporting the Socialist Party and the World Socialist Movement in our fight to replace capitalism with a global socialist society. Danny Dorling should be a socialist – and so should you.

Our local candidates will be Mike Foster in Oxford West & Abingdon and Kevin Parkin in Oxford East.

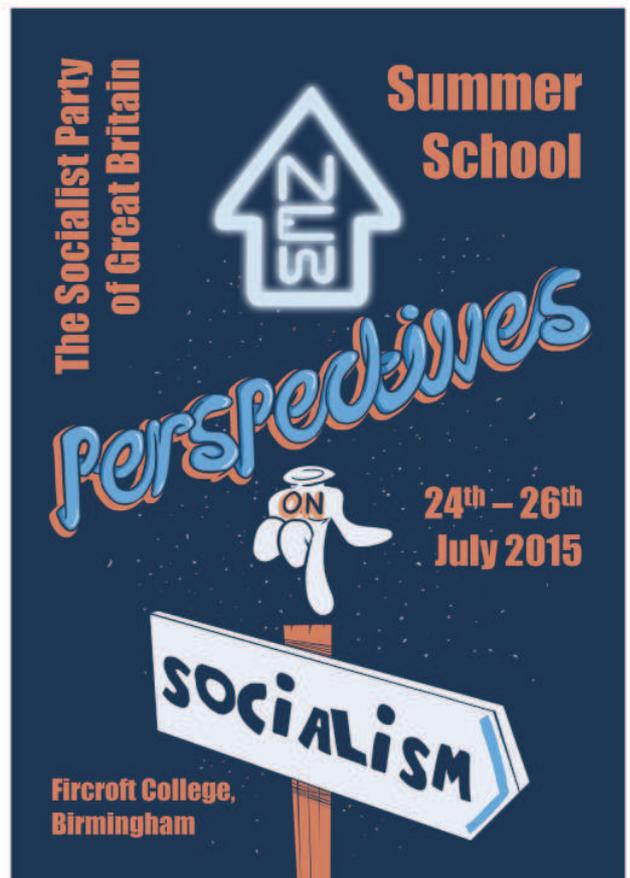
*General election leaflet issued in Oxford.*

The principles of revolutionary socialism were formed over a hundred years ago. Then, capitalist growth was being fuelled by the technological and logistical developments following the Industrial Revolution. Since then, the history of capitalism has been marked by economic peaks and troughs, two World Wars, the rise and fall of state capitalism, massive advances in science, and widespread shifts in culture and beliefs. The Socialist Party of Great Britain argues that its original principles are still valid despite all these changes. This is because the basic structure of capitalism persists, regardless of differences in the way it is organised.

But is this right? Has society changed so much that class structure and the role of the state are significantly different now compared to previous centuries? What effects have these changes had on class consciousness and the likelihood of revolution? And how should revolutionary socialists respond through their theory and activity? It's always healthy to re-examine our beliefs, to see if they still apply to our ever-changing world. This weekend of talks and discussion will be an opportunity to take a fresh look at several important aspects of the socialist viewpoint.

Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £80. The concessionary rate is £40. Day visitors are welcome, but please book in advance.

To book a place, send a cheque (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) to Summer School, Sutton Farm, Aldborough, Boroughbridge, York, YO51 9ER, or book online through the QR code or at <http://spgb.net/summerschool2015>. E-mail enquiries to [spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk)





then, vitally important to challenge these pervasive icons and the irrational political narratives that they represent. But when indulging in such iconoclasm are we in danger of alienating those with whom we seek to communicate? And, in the light of recent murderous violence, are we willing to put ourselves in danger by doing so?

Although somewhat devalued by journalistic overkill it is still possible to identify something 'iconic' in the results of nearly every human endeavour. In the arts, architecture, technology, science etc there arises a consensus that recognises a cultural/historic significance to something, or indeed, someone who or which is created as a result. Sometimes these are intentional (propaganda) or unintentional (cult status) but all, at least for a time, capture the zeitgeist of a cultural moment. It doesn't have to be of a contemporary nature as, for example, artists from the past can be 'rediscovered'.

The political significance is always present but varies in its importance. The twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York were once icons of the US dominance of the global economic system but are now, as a result of the success of that iconic status, monuments to the terrifyingly potential murderous focus they presented to America's enemies. 'A building is a symbol, as is the act of destroying it. Symbols are given power by people. Alone, a symbol is meaningless, but with enough people, blowing up a building can change the world'. Some may recognise that quote from the film 'V for Vendetta'. In that narrative the Houses of Parliament were destroyed without the killing of anyone within, which renders the act one of pure iconoclasm in contrast to 9/11 where those who died (the victims not the perpetrators) were transformed into martyrs. It may well have 'changed the world' but not, most would argue, for the better. The original 'gunpowder plot' which 'V' seeks to recreate was, of course, just as murderous in its intent as was 9/11. But does iconoclasm have to be violent and destructive? Can the political deconstruction of an icon be ideologically constructive? In its reformulation perhaps the underlying meaning and source of its power can be revealed, thus exposing the irrational nature of political symbolism?

It is sometimes said that 'a picture

# Iconoclasm

**H**umanity has always been in danger of being seduced by the creations of its imagination. The gods and monsters that have haunted us still wield enormous power over many. The symbols and images that represent these creations are considered sacred and 'iconic' by millions throughout the world. In a sadly familiar ontology the symbols become the very incarnation of what they represent. Representations of gods, saints and prophets, in the original iconic meaning, share some of the power that is presumed to be owned by what is represented. A nation's flag is thought, by many, to be a symbol of who and what they are. It is this political identification rather than being derived from any supernatural or innate cultural superiority, that is at the heart of iconographic power. An individual's desire to

identify with his family, clan, tribe or nation is an essentially social instinct which, due to any given cultural context, is directed at those whom they love and respect; or more problematically, those whom they fear. Authoritarian cultures thrive on the need of the isolated and alienated individual to identify with the powerful - even if, or possibly because, this power derives from the exploitation and subjugation of that individual!

When a group identifies with a symbol of political power, which in capitalism invariably implies a militaristic power, it is the climax of sometimes decades or even centuries of propaganda and can generate immense irrational emotional destructive energy. Historically it has been partly the manipulation of this negative energy that has made wars possible. It is,

is worth a thousand words' and an icon is testament to the power of the image. Undoubtedly any deconstruction of such images will anger and alienate some people but others might well be inspired by the unflinching moral and

and frustrate our opponents. We continue to use the 'iconic' images of Karl Marx in our publicity but this is mainly because those images gained their fame from their usage by his opponents (the left & right) independently of our use of them;

it is his ideas, not his image that inspires us. Someone once asked me, only half jokingly and because of my militant atheism, if I would be ready to swear an oath on a copy of Das Kapital instead of the bible. The idea struck me as amusing, as I'm sure it would have done to its writer, because at the very heart of that work is the essential need to subject everything you think you know and believe to a constant process of critique - a rather different approach than the one recommended by the contents of the Bible!

Anyone who doubts the continued irrational power of iconography only has to witness the candidates in the upcoming election draping themselves in the Union flag. This is the symbol of capitalist power and political ignorance in the UK; anyone kissing its hem to gain votes is either a hypocrite or a fool. Some years ago I was asked, in my capacity as a graphic designer, to design a symbol for the Socialist Party. Having produced many logos in the past I was surprised how difficult I found this commission. I realise now, in the light of this analysis, why I found it so difficult - in some ways socialism needs no symbols, just as it needs no leaders. Consciousness of the world as it really is makes transparent the once opaqueness of capitalist ideology and its symbols.

Socialism does not depend on marketing or advertising, because, like the revolution itself, it depends on the individuals' struggle with their own cultural and political conditioning - we can only provide a catalyst for the human need for involvement in the community. We may use the globe as a universal symbol to distance ourselves from the prosaic and insular icons of our opponents, but only as a signpost for the individual to aid his personal struggle and then the inevitable involvement in the class struggle itself. Would we like to destroy the buildings of 'the mother of parliaments' as in the climax of the film mentioned above? Perhaps we could preserve it as the museum it really is, where the mannequins (MPs) are replaced by waxworks. These will then serve much more purpose as icons of the past. A past, of course, where they were slavish puppets of their capitalist masters. **WEZ**



Above: members of the 'murderous' Gunpowder Plot. Below: the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth!

political analysis that can motivate such iconoclasm. Socialists seek to do just this, we do not destroy images but we hope to render them impotent through their subversion. We will never flinch from exposing wickedness, especially when it's draped in a flag or motivated by religious symbols of intolerance. But what of socialist iconography?

**Hammers and sickles**

The Socialist Party has never been attached to symbolism; the stars and hammers and sickles of the Leftist totalitarian states have increased our distaste for such icons of ideological/nationalistic power. We do perhaps have a slightly romantic regard for the red flag and its historical association with the Paris Commune and the blood shed in the class struggle by the workers during and since that time. If anyone was to subject it to contempt and iconoclasm a socialist's response would typically be analytical in terms of the ideas represented by this essay rather than by any emotional distress; something that continues to perplex



## Obituary: Dick Donnelly

Many members of the World Socialist Movement will be saddened by the passing of Dick Donnelly. For 58 years he was speaker, organiser and writer for the party and was contributing to the *Socialist Standard* to the very end, last month 'Voice from the Back' column.

He was only a teenager when he was introduced to socialism by the family lodger who was, luckily for us, a party member.



When Dick finished National Service in 1957 he joined the party. This was at a time when the party and Glasgow branch were at a low ebb. After WW2 public interest in politics had never been greater but the brighter, secure post-war promised by the politicians failed to appear and the public's

interest in politics turned into apathy.

However, Dick's determination not only revived the party in Glasgow but he got it involved in more activity than ever before. Three parliamentary and numerous city council elections were contested, huge amounts of party literature were sold door to door, many more outdoor and indoor meetings were held and Dick was the driving force behind it all.

He soon became a first-class speaker, especially outdoors where he was in his element. Even people who may not have been much interested in politics came to hear him because they liked his quick wit and caustic humour. Dick was as much an entertainer as a propagandist. This quick wit gave him the ability to drub hecklers, especially political opponents. An example of this was at an outdoor meeting in Glasgow when a large number of aggressive Communists were in the audience. Dick ridiculed and exposed their party to such an extent that by the end of the meeting the aggression had turned into sullen silence.

During the 1960s and 70s Dick's speaking made him so well known in Glasgow that people recognised him in streets and pubs. It was the same in Edinburgh where he had often spoke at meetings at The Mound. This was a large open space in the very heart of the city and was Edinburgh's equivalent of Speakers Corner at Hyde Park in London. Dick addressed big crowds at The Mound, especially during the Edinburgh Festival when many overseas visitors could hear the case for socialism and it always got a sympathetic hearing. He made a big enough impression to be interviewed at The Mound for BBC TV and when it was screened Dick performed like a seasoned professional.

Dick spoke at meetings the length and breadth of Britain. Nowhere was too far and he even travelled from Glasgow to the deepest south west of England to represent the party in a debate with a local MP.

Dick's entire political life was devoted to the party and he talked about socialism wherever he could, even in his British Rail workplace where he made many friends and even a few party members. He kept in close touch with them. Incidentally, they were known as "The Railway Children" and a large number of them were present at the funeral.

Over the years Dick visited comrades in New Zealand, Australia, America and attended the founding in Calcutta of our companion party in India. He just couldn't stop doing what he could for the World Socialist Movement.

The SPGB has never had any use for leaders, but what it has always had are members who made outstanding contributions to the party and Dick Donnelly was certainly among them. His passing has left a huge gap in our ranks and he will be a hard act to follow. We extend our deepest condolences to his daughters Paula and Laura.

V.V.



### A thirst for profits

A STUDY has confirmed that you can bring a horse to water but you can't make it drink. Or, rather, its modern equivalent that you can reduce interest rates but you can't make capitalist firms invest.

The study, published last year by three US business studies academics, found that over the period from 1952 to 2010 there was no consistent relationship between interest rates and corporate investment. Corporate investment did not go up when interest rates were low and did not go down when interest rates were high ([mitsloan.mit.edu/newsroom/2014-corporate-investment.php](http://mitsloan.mit.edu/newsroom/2014-corporate-investment.php)).

So, what did influence business investment? 'It turns out' said the press release on the study, 'that healthy profits and stock prices are the strongest predictors of corporate investment.' To Marxian socialists this is rather obvious: the capitalist economy is driven by the quest for profits; so capitalist firms invest when they consider that their investment will bring them a profitable return; an indication that good profitable investment opportunities exist will be that the economy is growing and that firms are already making good profits. Or, as the press statement reported the lead author saying:

"What corporations really respond to is what sort of profit outlook they face, and the general environment for growth," Kothari says, noting that investment also closely correlates with gross domestic product growth. Practically speaking, the results make sense in that companies have more money to invest, more investment opportunities, and more pressure to spend from investors when things are good; all those factors dry up when the economy slows down.'

But there is a downside to this, as the study also found. When the profitable investment outlook is good, capitalist firms act as if this is not going to stop, with the result that they come to invest too much in relation to market demand, so provoking an economic downturn and a consequent fall in profits and profitable investment opportunities:

'The research reveals that corporate executives have their own foibles, including a propensity to overinvest at exactly the worst time in the economic cycle. While profits and stock prices rise before a spike in corporate investment, both decline almost immediately afterward.'

The authors are at a loss to explain this apparently irrational behaviour:

'The main reason for the negative relationship between capital expenditure spikes and business performance, Kothari believes, is a behavioural one: irrational exuberance. "As stocks and profits go up, corporations keep investing," he says. "But rather than stopping at an appropriate point in time, they go a bit too far. If they had stopped at the right point, it could have been great."

But is this behaviour – keeping on investing while the prospects for profit-making are good – really irrational? Capitalist firms are all competing against each other for profits. For one firm to stop investing when the profit-making outlook is good would be to risk letting its rivals take a share of its potential market. It is that that would be irrational.

In any event, how could capitalist firms know when to stop investing and, if they did, how could they reach a collective decision to all do this. Given the anarchy of capitalism they can't do either. Once a capitalist horse has started drinking you can't stop it.



## The Pajama Game

*THE PAJAMA Game*, a Broadway musical comedy was produced last year at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London's West End directed by Richard Eyre. The musical originally opened in 1954 and is based on the 1953 novel *7½ Cents* by Richard Bissell, who had worked as a manager in the family's pajama factory in Dubuque, Ohio.

The musical is set at the *Sleep-Tite* Pajama Factory in 1950s Mid-West America where the majority of the workers are women. In this period 35 percent of the American workforce belonged to a Union, and 29 percent of the workforce were women while in 1952 unemployment stood at only 3 percent (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics).

It is a story of Capital and Labor where the workers in the pajama factory demand a 7½ cents an hour pay-rise. Bissell described the shop floor: 'the sewing machines are working out themes by Stravinsky: it's warm and lively: the blonde table tops gleam; the needles are punching their way to glory, 4,500 stitches a minute. Telephones are ringing, the elevator gate is banging.' (*7½ Cents*) In *The Pajama Game* the new factory Superintendent Sid Sorokin falls in love with his adversary, Union representative 'Babe' Williams (Joanna Riding). Babe is a proto-feminist heroine declaring 'If I needed a man to look after me, I'd kill myself.'

Capital is represented by such numbers as *Racing with the Clock* where we see factory work and the insistence on 'Time is Money', and *Think of the Time I Save* by Hines, the Time and Motion manager. The 1950s saw Time and Motion studies introduced to industry based on a business efficiency technique combining the Time Study work of Frederick Winslow Taylor with the Motion Study work of Frank and Lillian Gilbreth. Taylor and his colleagues placed emphasis on the content of a fair day's work, and sought to maximize productivity irrespective of the physiological cost to the worker. The capitalist boss Hasler speaks of 'profit levels are perniciously low', and refuses the workers' demands saying '7½ cents will price us out of the market.'



The pajama workers are organised in the Amalgamated Shirt and Pajama Workers of America, and the antagonism between the workers and the bosses is evident in Babe's words to Sid: 'your the Superintendent and I'm the Grievance Committee', and 'Don't listen to this man. He's management.' The Union say that '7½ cents an hour pay-rise is standard in the industry' and that 'business is doing well' so the workers engage in a slow down, and 'new ways of jamming things up', it is 7½ cents or a strike. Then it is discovered that 7½ cents had been added to the operating costs six months

previously, and Hasler had pocketed the difference.

The pajama workers win their 7½ cents per hour increase in wages and the climax of the musical is the number *Seven and a half Cents*: 'Seven and a half cents doesn't buy a hell of a lot, Seven and a half cents doesn't mean a thing! But give it to me every hour, forty hours every week, and that's enough for me to be living like a king! That's enough for me to get an automatic washing machine, a year's supply of gasoline, carpeting for the living room, a vacuum instead of a blasted broom, not to mention a forty inch television set! I'll have myself a buying spree.'

In the 1950s the working class are bought off in capitalism with consumerism. John Bugas, Ford Motor Company boss coined the term 'consumerism' as a substitute for 'capitalism' to better describe the American economy in a 1955 speech: 'The term 'consumerism' would pin the tag where it actually belongs - on Mr. Consumer, the real boss and beneficiary of the American system. It would pull the rug right out from under our unfriendly critics who have blasted away so long and loud at capitalism. Somehow, I just can't picture them shouting: 'Down with the consumers!'

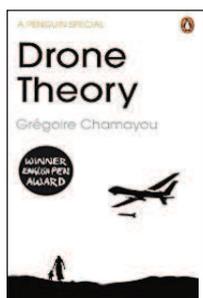
Consumerism in capitalism was critiqued early on when economist Victor Lebow wrote in 1955 'Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfaction and our ego satisfaction in consumption. We need things consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced and discarded at an ever-increasing rate' (*Journal of Retailing*), and in Vance Packard's 1960 book *The Waste Makers*, 'consumerism' is changed from a positive word about consumer practices to a negative word meaning excessive materialism and waste.

For socialists, modern capitalism manufactures false desires with advertising, the glorification of accumulated capital, and the abstraction and reification of experiences of authentic life into commodities and passivity which become the concrete manufacture of alienation.

**STEVE CLAYTON**

## Cameras with Bombs

**Grégoire Chamayou: *Drone Theory*. Penguin £6.99.**



A drone is an unmanned aerial combat vehicle or, in an alternative formulation, a flying video camera armed with missiles. They have been used in Afghanistan, Pakistan and

Yemen, among other places, and in the five years to January 2014 US drones alone are estimated to have killed at least 2,400 people. In this book (translated from French by Janet Lloyd) Grégoire Chamayou looks at various issues related to the use of drones, from military to more philosophical questions.

Drones were originally deployed just as cameras, and the US military made use of software developed for sports broadcasting to track individuals. The result can be a kind of persistent surveillance, with eyes in the sky always watching people, so there is no escape for either combatants or civilians on the ground. And this is not just in war zones as the concept of a 'zone of armed conflict' is no longer purely geographic.

But with missiles added to them drones allow the remote-controlled hunting down of humans. The operator may sit in comfort in an air force base in Nevada, attempting to identify acceptable targets several thousand miles away and then releasing missiles at them. Air force pilots regard killing by means of drones as cowardice, as the operators are in no danger themselves. There have been claims that drone operators suffer from trauma as a result of their work, as it involves the invulnerable killing the defenceless, but Chamayou argues that there is no actual evidence for this.

Drones effectively abolish combat, as there is no way to fight against them. This creates a problem for those who see killing in war as justified on the basis that it is a matter of self-defence, with both sides at risk and liable to be killed. But if one side is more or less defenceless and the other side's soldiers are thousands of miles away from the death zone, where is the justification for the killing? Apologists for US power have come to the rescue here, arguing that the drone is a humanitarian means of killing (for an example, see [www.theguardian.com/](http://www.theguardian.com/)

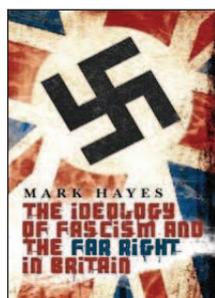
world/2012/aug/02/philosopher-moral-case-drones). This is because the use of drones conforms to the principle of avoiding unnecessary risk, removing any chance of the operator being killed or injured. Never mind that it often leads to the deaths of non-combatants and, as noted above, can result in people being permanently observed and harassed and so living in a kind of psychological prison. As Chamayou says, drones 'constitute the weapons of state terrorism'.

This book provides an instructive picture of the use of drones and how this barbaric weapon is transforming warfare in both theory and practice.

**PB**

## Left Right, Left Right

***The Ideology of Fascism and the Far Right in Britain*, by Mark Hayes. Red Quill Books. 2014.**



Here, Mark Hayes examines the ideological basis of fascism in Britain, seeking to learn the lessons of how it arises and how to combat it. There is much detailed discussion about

the key defining categories of fascism and its variants, the genesis of fascism in the UK, and how political activists and academics alike have sought to interpret it.

Written from a particular leftist perspective the book attacks the Trotskyists who have often used 'anti-fascism' as a means for recruitment, and Hayes argues that anti-fascist campaigns have often been shorn of their class element, rarely addressing the underlying concerns of those who might be attracted towards fascism in the first place. In many respects he has a point here of course and there is plenty to like about this book as it takes a genuinely serious, in-depth look at the issues. However, there are deficiencies here too and they tend to stem from the same particular source. In one section, he argues that the mass murder carried out in Russia by the brutal Stalinist regime was somehow clearly and qualitatively different to that carried out by the Nazis:

'Death was often a by-product of malevolent mistreatment in the former, while it was the inevitable consequence of the latter's

inexorable, ideologically motivated desire to eliminate whole categories of people in the name of Aryan supremacy' (p.368).

This won't do. Not only because a great many of the deaths in the Holocaust were caused by brutal treatment in forced labour camps just as they were in Stalinist Russia, but also because Stalinism did indeed attempt to eradicate entire categories of people, mainly its ideological and political opponents. There is nothing to be gained by such sophistry – each brutal regime killed people on a mass scale, both in a calculated fashion and as a product of general neglect and mistreatment.

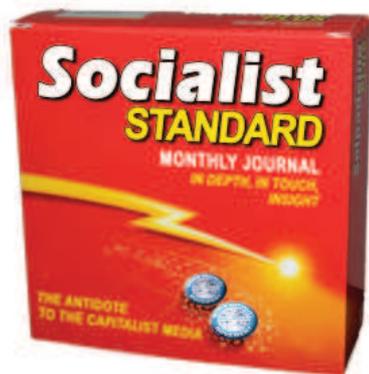
Hayes also claims that the attempts to link the regimes using the concept of 'totalitarianism' was a politically-motivated product of the Cold War, seeking to discredit one by association with the other, and ignoring 'some remarkable social advances' by the so-called Communist regimes. In what appears to be a partial apology for repression in Soviet Russia he claims the 'case for an identity between communist and fascist systems is very weak. Much as it might offend assiduously cultivated liberal sensitivities, it is entirely legitimate and indeed desirable to distinguish between a forced or necessary repression and a voluntary or inherent coercion' (p.367).

It is this sort of attempted defence of the Stalinist regimes – half-hearted in some ways but noticeable enough – which undermines the credibility of the other arguments put forward here. Indeed, in line with the Communist Party's views before the Russian regime did a deal with Hitler and signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939, the main argument appears to be that 'active resistance' to fascists is the only way forward, implying physical force. As such, Hayes claims that for years anti-fascists have been 'far too preoccupied with the idea of free speech and the idea that fascism should be exposed to the penetrating light of democratic debate in the hope that sensible, rational people will see through the lies and half-truths of fascist discourse' (p.438). While he doesn't entirely dismiss democratic and educational activities, it is odd indeed to think that this has somehow been the dominant approach on the radical left. On the contrary, most leftist organisations have long argued for 'no platform' for the fascists and have spent much of their time plotting to disrupt their meetings and block their marches.

In truth, few in Britain and most

other advanced economies have been attracted to fascist ideas in recent decades – even the now riven BNP was a hardcore of fascists that developed a political orientation and support base that was more akin to the sort of right-wing populism now associated with UKIP. When fascist ideas have been put to the serious test in democratic debate they have always been found wanting soon enough and the defenders of authoritarian revolution on the far left have often not had much to coherently add beyond the shouting. After all – and despite all their undoubted efforts – it is difficult to meaningfully oppose authoritarian barbarity of one sort if you support (or are prepared to apologise for it) in other circumstances. That is one of the main reasons why fascist organisations may come and go, but the self-styled anti-fascists of the Stalinist and Trotskyist left remain as distrusted now as they ever have been.

DAP



## Guns before needs

NORMALLY UNDER capitalism it's profits before needs but sometimes, since capitalism can't exist without the state, something else is granted priority. Not meeting any of people's needs of course but a state's need to have armed force at its disposal. This, not just to protect



sources of raw materials, trade routes, markets and investment outlets for its capitalist firms but also because, in the diplomatic jockeying between states for power and influence on the world stage, "might is right".

The US government is concerned that austerity in Britain has gone too far as the war (or, in Orwellian, the "defence") budget has also been cut. The US government knows that Britain, thanks to its imperial(ist) past, has in its armed forces a highly efficient killing machine that it can rely on to back up its own killing machine. The militarist lobby in Britain has wheeled out retired generals and admirals to support more money for the killing machine they once

commanded.

And the attitude of the Labour Party? "Labour has pledged to outspend the Conservatives on defence in the next parliament, heaping pressure on David Cameron as he faces a growing rebellion over armed forces expenditure.

Ed Balls promised yesterday that Labour would go "nowhere near the huge scale of defence cuts you are going to see under the Conservatives".

After a speech in London, the shadow chancellor said that he would prioritise defence in the spending review after

the election, adding: "I think that it's really important that we live up to our international responsibilities."

Mr Balls added: "A Labour Treasury will want to back the defence of our country at a critical time, and that's why I am refusing point-blank to sign up to the extreme plans that George Osborne has set out before us as his election manifesto." (*Times*, 10 March).

Not that we should be – or are – surprised. The Labour Party has always supported the war preparations of the British state and the wars in which has been engaged. And yet there are some who still see it as the lesser of two evils. But how do you tell the difference?



## Putting Protest To The Test

UNFORTUNATELY, 'growing up' usually means swapping your youthful enthusiasm for the decades-long sentence of stress and boredom we've learnt to call adulthood. Hopefully this won't

happen to the five young activists featured on BBC3's *Fighting The System*. Showing enviable amounts of passion for their beliefs, animal rights campaigners Phoebe and Jayne protest at shops selling angora rabbit fur, and hand out leaflets reminding people in burger joints what they're eating. Danielle is part of a group of climate change protestors who occupy power stations, bravely not letting the consequences of getting a criminal record stop them. Yaz is an 18 year old feminist taking a stand outside the Sun newspaper's headquarters against topless models on page three. Sarah joins in with the occupation of empty-but-useable council houses in Newham, London by the Focus E15 Mothers group. All appreciate the strong friendships, new skills, and rushes of adrenaline they've found through their protests.

Direct action like this only comes about because the vast majority of us have little say in the important decisions which affect us. People end up going to extreme lengths such as jumping out in front of Rupert Murdoch's limousine or climbing power station chimneys because they don't have much influence otherwise. And why should they? Corporations and institutions are owned by a distant minority with their own interests to protect. They only take on board the wishes of protestors when it becomes advantageous for them to do so. Direct action hasn't been able to make changes to the basic way society is structured to exploit and restrict us, and therefore new causes to protest about keep springing up. So, *Fighting The System* has a misleading title. The young activists it features aren't fighting the system as much as fighting against some effects of the system, but that doesn't sound quite so snappy. Hopefully, the activists will turn their energy to making real, fundamental changes to society.

MIKE FOSTER

## Meetings

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

### General Election 2015 Hustings/ Meetings/Events

#### Brighton Pavilion, Brighton Kemptown

LGBT Election Hustings

Queens Hotel, 1-3 Kings Road, Brighton BN1 1NS

Monday, **13 April, 7.00pm**

'One Church' Election Hustings

Gloucester Place Baptist

Church, Gloucester Place, Brighton BN1 4AA

Sunday, **19 April, 7.00pm**

#### Canterbury

Socialist Party Election Stall

The Parade, Canterbury

Saturday, **4 April, from 12 noon**

Canterbury Election Hustings

Gulbenkian Theatre, University of Kent at Canterbury CT2 7NB

Monday, **20 April, 7.00pm**

Socialist Party Election Stall

The Parade, Canterbury

Saturday, **25 April, from 12 noon**

Canterbury and Whitstable Magna Carta 800 Hustings

Westgate Hall, Westgate Hall Road, Canterbury CT1 2BT

Tuesday, **28 April, 7.30pm**

Whitstable Election Hustings

St Alphage Church, Oxford Street, Whitstable CT5 1AY

Thursday, **30 April, 7.00pm**

Socialist Party Election Stall

The Parade, Canterbury

Saturday, **2 May, from 12 noon**

#### Folkestone and Hythe

Folkestone Election Hustings

St John's Church Hall, St John's Church Road, Folkestone CT19 5BQ

Wednesday, **8 April, 2.00pm**

Socialist Party Election Stall

Folkestone Town Hall, junction of Sandgate Road and Guildhall Street,

Folkestone CT20 1DY

Saturday, **11 April, from 12 noon**

Socialist Party Election Stall

Folkestone Town Hall, junction of Sandgate Road and Guildhall Street,

Folkestone CT20 1DY

Saturday, **18 April, from 12 noon**

#### Islington North

Islington Election Hustings

Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1 2UD

Wednesday, **15 April, 7.00pm**

#### Oxford East, Oxford West and Abingdon

CPRE Oxfordshire Election Hustings

St Barnabas Church, Cardigan Street, Oxford OX2 6BG

Thursday, **9 April, 7.00pm**

'Any Questions' Churches Together in Marston and Northway Election Hustings

Venue TBC

Tuesday, **14 April, 7.30pm**

Brookes University Election Hustings

Union Hall, Gipsy Lane Campus, Oxford

Wednesday, **15 April, 6.00pm**

Abingdon Election Hustings

The Guildhall, Abbey Close, Abingdon OX14 3JD

Wednesday, **15 April, 7.00pm**

Botley (Oxfordshire) Election Hustings

St Peter and St Paul Church, Westway, Botley OX2 9LS

Friday, **17 April, 7.00pm**

Affordable Housing Oxford Election Hustings

Oxford Town Hall, St Aldates, Oxford OX1 1BX

Monday, **20 April, 7.30pm**

Cheney School (Oxfordshire) Election Hustings, Cheney School, Cheney Lane, Headington, Oxford OX3 0BP

Tuesday, **21 April, 7.00pm**

Oxford East Election Hustings

Assembly Room, Oxford Town Hall,

St Aldates, Oxford OX1 1BX

Wednesday, **22 April, 7.30pm**

Oxford West and Abingdon Environment Election Hustings

Assembly Room, Oxford Town Hall, St Aldates, Oxford OX1 1BX

Tuesday, **28 April, 7.30pm**

#### Swansea West

'Which Way Forward for Britain?'

Debate between the Socialist Party and UKIP

Unitarian Church, High Street, Swansea SA1 1NZ

Monday, **13 April, 7.00pm**

#### Vauxhall

Socialist Party Election Stall

52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

Saturday, **4 April, from 12 noon**

Socialist Party Election Stall

52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

Saturday, **11 April, from 12 noon**

Socialist Party Election Stall

52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

Saturday, **18 April, from 12 noon**

Socialist Party Election Stall

52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

Saturday, **25 April, from 12 noon**

Socialist Party Election Rally,

52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

Speaker: Danny Lambert, Socialist Party candidate for Vauxhall

Sunday, **26 April, 3.00pm**

Socialist Party Election Stall

52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

Saturday, **2 May, from 12 noon.**

Socialist Party candidate for Vauxhall

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# 50 Years Ago

## Malcolm X

ACCORDING TO his autobiography, Malcolm X expected to die violently, but probably most people expected that, if this happened, it would be by the hand of a white man.

The assassination provoked an outburst of hysteria and apprehension—even regret from people who were only recently denouncing the doctrines which Malcolm X had expounded.



The murdered man moved in a world of violence. His mother, he said, was conceived after a white man had raped his grandmother. His father was also murdered, his skull smashed in and his body flung

under the wheels of a street car.

It was only after the seemingly inevitable career of crime and drug addiction that Malcolm X became interested in the Black Muslims—an event which, he wrote, gave him “a little feeling of self-respect.”

He soon became prominent in the movement, attracting a lot of publicity with his teachings that the Negro should be strong, disciplined and ready to answer violence with violence. A few months ago he came to the Oxford Union to defend his own interpretation of Barry Goldwater’s famous remarks on extremism.

It is perhaps surprising that there was not a Malcolm X before. The oppressions and indignities to which the American Negro are subjected are so extreme that it was predictable they should develop their own, counter-extremist, organisation.

If history is any guide, it was also predictable that this organisation should split, and that the struggle between the two factions (the Black Muslims and Malcolm X’s Organisation of Afro-American Unity) should be as bitter and as ruthless as that against their common adversary.

We have seen this before. We have seen it in Cyprus and in Algeria and many, many times before that. We saw it in Ireland, in the days when Michael Collins was shot down on the far South road from Skibbereen to Cork.

In many ways, the United States today is a cauldron of savagery and hatred. In an ugly situation, the Negroes themselves offer scant hope. The summit of their ambition is in fact to be exploited on equal terms with the white wage slaves who now stand just a little above them on the social scale.

(from ‘News in Review’, Socialist Standard, April 1965)

# How we could live

ALREADY, WORKING together, we produce a great deal of wealth. But most of us don’t get to see or benefit much from it. Imagine how much more needed things could be produced and useful services provided if the 200 million unemployed people in the world were allowed to work.

It is not laziness stopping them. The barrier is profit. The people who own the world’s factories, machines and tools must make a profit or they won’t hire. If we owned these resources together, we could use the fruits of our labour for our own benefit. We could share out the wealth we create together.

We wouldn’t need markets and the waste that goes with them. We could directly produce enough for all. We could save all the work and effort that goes with buying and selling and shuffling money around and instead create more of what we need. No more tax collectors, benefit officers or bankers. It would be more efficient to simply share out our produce freely and according to need.

Working together, we can free up our time so we can take control of the communities where we live. We could have democracy at work too. We would be able to control the real decisions that affect all our lives. There

would be no privileged, rich elite able to buy their way to influence and power

We need to organise ourselves to demand common ownership and democratic control of the productive wealth of the world. It will take all of us, standing together, debating, discussing and planning in order to make the change possible. It can be done.

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### Once as history, twice as farce

Caroline Lucas, now 54, says the Greens' most popular policy today is to bring the railways back into public ownership when the franchises expire (*Guardian*, 28 February). A fare dodger who was caught forging his own first class train tickets has been ordered to pay back £17,000 (*Daily Mail*, 5 March). The not so Artful Dodger, Mark Mason, 44, is old enough to recall that one had to buy tickets in order to travel on the nationalised trains. Some socialists at the time took to wearing a badge with the apposite question: if the railways are ours, why do we have to pay?

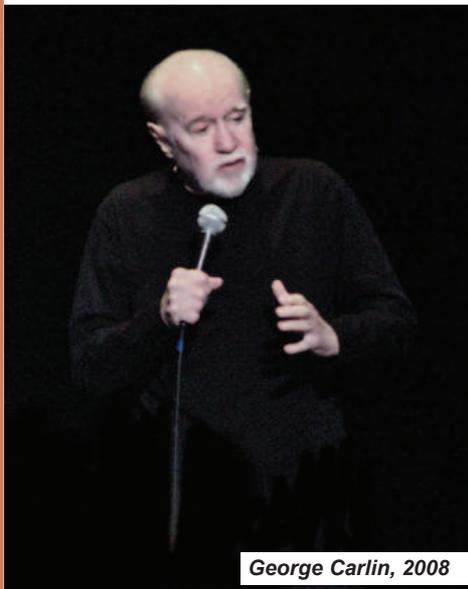
### Shit sandwich

There are 41 million people who do not have access to a toilet in Pakistan and as a result they are defecating in the open. And open defecation has significant health and nutritional consequences. Pakistan is the third-largest country when it comes to people doing this in the open, behind India and Indonesia (AP, 8 March). The farms generate so much waste that it would be too expensive to transport via pipeline or a truck, Wing said. So manure is dispersed via big pumps and sprayers . . . The sprayers shower hundreds of gallons per minute (household lawn sprinklers average about two or three gallons per minute) . . . Of 187 samples, 40 percent exceeded state and federal water guidelines for fecal coliforms, harmful bacteria from animal faeces (*Truthout*, 6 March). The problem here is not a shortage of money – Pakistan and India are nuclear armed, the latter has even entered the space race – and the water contamination in the US (and elsewhere) could be eliminated were it not for capitalism and its never-ending pursuit of profit.

### Barking mad

At least 95 families were evicted every day in Spain in 2014, fresh statistics say as Spaniards struggle to meet mortgage payments. Home foreclosures have become a stark symbol of the 7-year

economic crisis, with 2014 seeing a further rise in numbers (RT, 6 March). Alaska Republican Rep. Don Young has kindly come forward with a possible solution to this worldwide 'problem'. He said that if he let loose wolves in some congressional districts, they 'wouldn't have a homeless problem anymore' (*Washington Post*, 5 March).



George Carlin, 2008

### Telling it straight

George Carlin had something to say about Young and his ilk: 'Good honest hard-working people continue, these are people of modest means, continue to elect these rich cock suckers who don't give a fuck about you . . . they don't give a fuck about you . . . they don't give a FUCK about you. They don't care about you at all . . . at all . . . AT ALL. And nobody seems to notice. Nobody seems to care. That's what the owners count on. The fact that Americans will probably remain willfully ignorant of the big red, white and blue dick that's being jammed up their assholes everyday, because the owners of this country know the truth. It's called the American Dream, because you have to be asleep to believe it' (*shoqvalue*, 25 September 2010).

### UN Utopia

The USA, for all its faults, has to be seen as an improvement on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where a 'Saudi woman who had fallen victim to a violent gang-rape has been sentenced to 200 lashes and six months in jail after being found guilty of speaking to the media about the crime and indecency' (*PressTV* 7 March). UN Women executive director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka said gender equality must be reached before 2030, because until currently, not a single country has achieved gender equality (*Ahram Online*, 3 March). Gender equality in 15 years? Only in a socialist world.

### Three key reasons for war

Russia's president knows exactly what he wants, and it's not eastern Ukraine. His interests are all about oil and gas and supply routes. The rest is smoke and mirrors (*The Daily Beast*, 1 March). Correct: states compete over natural resources, trade routes and areas of domination.

### And finally some good news

More than 1,700 bargain copies of *The Communist Manifesto* have sold in the last week, in the form of an 80p edition of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's call to the working classes to revolt (*Guardian*, 4 March).

### RS

*Communist Manifesto original cover, 1848*



### FREE LUNCH

