

socialist standard

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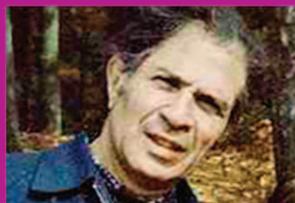
Taking the lid off



Russell's Brand New Revolution



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The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 4 January 2014** 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

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.



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DECEMBER 2013

Editorial

Revolution!

THE WORD *revolution* means different things to different people. There's the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution. It is even used by advertisers to give an impression of something new and different. This is a clue to its use in society, history and politics – to describe the complete replacement of the previously existing system. There is also the implication that this occurs fairly rapidly; otherwise it's *evolution*.

Some people, influenced by the perception of the French Revolution cultivated by those who didn't and don't like it, associate the word with violence. A social or political revolution can involve violence and many have. A revolution certainly involves force – this has to be the lever bringing about the change – as the beneficiaries of the old system have to be forced to give up their power and privileges, but this can take other forms than outright violence. It can take the form of mass popular pressure or of the use of the 'legitimate' force of the state machine.

When Russell Brand called, in his interview with Jeremy Paxman, for a revolution he clearly meant it in the sense of getting completely rid of the present system of elite rule and neglect of people's needs. Some interpreted him as calling for a repeat of the riots and looting of the summer of 2011 on a wider scale, but he himself later insisted that the revolution he envisaged should be non-violent.

The socialist of the Victorian era, William Morris, opens his pamphlet *How We Live and How We Might Live* with these words:

'The word Revolution, which we Socialists are so often forced to use, has a terrible sound in most people's ears,

even when we have explained to them that it does not necessarily mean a change accompanied by riot and all kinds of violence, and cannot mean a change made mechanically and in the teeth of opinion by a group of men who have somehow managed to seize on the executive power for the moment.'

Socialists, he went on, mean by it 'a change in the basis of society'.

This is the sense in which we too have always used the word. The revolution we envisage is a change in the basis of society from the present minority class ownership of the means of production to their common ownership and democratic control by all the people in their own interest.

We wholeheartedly endorse Morris's view that this change cannot be 'made mechanically and in the teeth of opinion by a group of men who have somehow managed to seize the executive power for the moment', as some 19th and 20th century self-styled revolutionaries have maintained.

For us, the social revolution from capitalism to socialism has to be carried out democratically, both in the sense of having majority support and in the sense of employing democratic means. This latter means organising without leaders. In the developed capitalist parts of the world this democratic self-organisation can – and we say should – also involve organising to win control of political power via the ballot box and parliament. In other words, forming a political party to challenge those Brand said he has (rightly) never voted for and never would. We shouldn't let them have a clear run or allow them to claim to be the 'legitimately elected representatives of the people'.

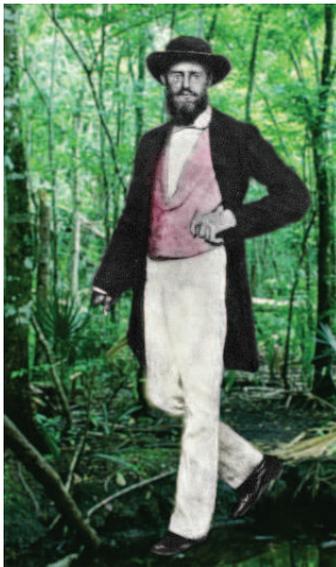
Alfred the Great

“YOU WOULD, if you’d had my leisure, have done the work just as well, perhaps better, than I have done it.” The speaker, famously modest and generous in sharing credit, was Charles Darwin. The addressee was Alfred Russel Wallace, the co-discoverer of evolution by natural selection, described by David Attenborough as ‘the most admirable character in the history of science’, and the centenary of whose death has been the recent subject of public fanfare.

Darwin was not exaggerating, at least on the subject of leisure, because the story of evolution, with him on one side of the world collecting specimens in the Americas, and Wallace on the other side, doing the same in Malaysia, is in part a story of Victorian class privilege. While Darwin, propertied, educated, part of the respectable scientific in-crowd, had no trouble funding his leisurely Beagle voyage, Wallace faced nothing but struggle. Lacking social status, money or a university degree, Wallace left school at 14 to become an apprentice surveyor, educated himself through local libraries, travelled the railways with his brother by third-class open cattle truck, and lodged in low-rent digs so damp and dirty that his brother died of pneumonia. It was perhaps no surprise that Wallace became interested in social reform, went to meetings organised by followers of Robert Owen, read the works of Edward Bellamy and William Morris and considered himself a socialist.

It was at one of these social reform meetings that he met a kindred spirit, a hosiery apprentice by the name of Henry Walter Bates, an equally passionate autodidact who had left school at 12. Both had developed a keen interest in naturalism and in particular entomology. Both had read Malthus on population, Hutton and Lyell on geology, and Darwin on the *Voyage of the Beagle* (1839). Bates at just 18 had already had a paper on beetles published in the scientific journal *Zoologist*. What excited them most was the pressing question of the day in naturalist circles, which was the precise mechanism behind the transmutation of species. The debate over this was fierce, and due in large part to the activities of a Scottish journalist recovering from a psychiatric illness, one Robert Chambers, who in 1844 published anonymously a book entitled *Vestiges of the History of Creation*. This book attempted to bring together various partial theories of evolution into an overall coherent narrative, at the same time attacking Lamarckism and outraging religious conventions by locating the agents of change in purely mechanical processes, in so doing relegating the role of God to first cause. Chambers’ fear of being ‘outed’ as an evolutionist contextualises Darwin’s own fear and hesitation in publishing his own work, but Chambers needn’t have worried. Scientifically speaking the book might have been amateurish and speculative, with a lack of any solid research data, but commercially it was a sensation, quickly becoming an international bestseller and so respectable that Prince Albert read portions of it every day for the intellectual edification of Queen Victoria.

Being both self-made men still on the make, and burning to contribute to this debate, Wallace and Bates hit upon the wheeze of borrowing money to go to the Amazon to collect specimens. The motive was, as Wallace put it in 1847, ‘to gather facts towards solving the problem of the origin of species’, but there was a hard-headed business angle too. Naturalism was not just a popular intellectual topic in drawing rooms. Victorian gentlemen with private incomes had a mania for collecting exotica of all descriptions, and would pay handsomely for novel species that would drive their peers insane with envy. To Wallace and Bates, the Amazon was if not a get-rich-quick



scheme then certainly a sustainable self-funding project. They managed to wring the money out of a commercial agent and set off for Brazil, where they worked indefatigably at building up prize collections, ruining their health in the process. Wallace went home after four years with his entire collection in order to secure further finance, but lost everything when his ship caught fire. Distraught, penniless, all his labours for nothing, he swore never to go to sea again. Bates meanwhile stayed in the Amazon and later became celebrated for his pioneering work on mimicry, bringing home after 11 years (by separate ships) nearly 15,000 species of which 8,000 were new to science.

For Wallace it might have ended there, but never is a long time and just a year later curiosity got the better of caution and he once again fought to get money for another expedition. This time he went to Borneo and

New Guinea, where he lived with head-hunters and suffered miserably from malaria. The motive was his reading of *Vestiges*, which proposed that humans were descended from an ancestor of the orang-utan found in Malaysia. His agent repeatedly told him to stop wasting time with such speculative nonsense, and keep the lucrative specimens coming. But Wallace couldn’t let it go. His conviction grew through his studies that the process of ‘transmutation’ was entirely automatic, triggered by nothing more complicated than relative fitness for survival in the face of competition of species. His agent wouldn’t listen, so Wallace decided to write to somebody who would. His letter dropped on Darwin’s doormat like an atom bomb, with results that are too famous to need repeating.

Why is this interesting for a socialist? Not especially because Wallace himself was a socialist, because he wasn’t, at least not in the sense we mean. He’d never heard of Marx or Engels, never entertained the notion of abolishing capitalism rather than palliating its effects, and in later years became closely associated with John Stuart Mill’s land nationalisation movement, a futile attempt to turn the clock back by reversing the dispossessions of the Great Enclosures Act. Nor is it especially remarkable that the story of Darwin and Wallace was a story of class differences, as the history of science is full of such tales.

What is significant about Wallace is that he was in a sense a living refutation of another popular idea that was circulating in his lifetime, and which continues to influence class ideologies into the modern day, to wit, the Great Man Theory of History. In his book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, Thomas Carlyle stated baldly that ‘the history of the world is but the biography of great men’. Simply put, there was no underlying pattern to history, no progression, no process, merely a succession of influential human drivers. Had Napoleon, for example, died in infancy, there would have been no empire, no retreat from Moscow, no Waterloo. The theory played well among respectable academics like Hegel, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and anyone who wished to emphasise the primacy of human will over natural forces, an essential component in the white colonialist intellectual justification for conquest and subjugation. Against this view stood Marx who argued that humans could choose to act but not in conditions of their own making, and that these conditions were driven by material processes that it was possible to comprehend scientifically. In short, great men did not make history, history made great men.

One dazzling illustration is the story of Alfred Russel Wallace. It shows that when the world was ready for the ideas of evolution, it did not all ultimately depend on Darwin. In the same way, when the world is ready for the ideas of socialist revolution, it will not all ultimately depend on us.

Pseudo-scientific?

Dear Editors

[Re Pathfinders, September]

It is of interest, but sadly only to see how many and deep the misunderstandings are that plague the pseudo-scientific literature. That is unfortunate because articles like these contribute to divisiveness and hostility rather than promoting a search for a caring, supportive world that protects people from being exposed to violence.

The notion that socialism and democracy are somehow dependent on proving that chimpanzees are as peaceful as bonobos (a fantastical concept to anyone who knows both species) is completely absurd. Freedom and democracy depend on reality, not on some lovely fantasy of how we wish apes or humans would behave

I cannot imagine where you would get the idea that if there are some biological tendencies towards aggression, no one should be found guilty of war crimes. Frankly to spread such ideas seems to me deeply irresponsible.

Can I recommend that you read my book with Dale Peterson, *Demonic Males: Apes and the Origins of Human Violence*? It would dispel many of the ideas that you report in your article.

Richard Wrangham



Innately aggressive?

Reply:

Professor Wrangham doesn't seem to have read the article very closely, since it doesn't say any of the things he thinks it says. It doesn't say or imply that socialism depends on proving that chimpanzees are as peaceful as bonobos. Instead it disputes the claim that chimpanzee violence is innate, on the grounds that the evidence is both weak and hotly disputed by other scientists. If it is 'pseudo-scientific' to quote scientists who disagree with this view then we plead guilty.

The article does not indulge in wishful thinking about how humans ought to behave. Instead it questions the assumptions of those who seem to be guilty of 'demonic' wishful thinking, that is the defenders of innate aggression. Professor Wrangham may profess himself shocked that alleged biological tendencies could ever be used as a get-out-of-jail-free card for war criminals, but such alibis are the inevitable subtext of the debate and to wish away that unpleasant

fact seems to us more irresponsible than highlighting it. Capitalism's rulers are always keen to justify their system and its warlike ways, and will seize hungrily on the pronouncements of Professors Wrangham, Pinker and others to that end, whatever the evidence really says. Socialists meanwhile cannot be accused of the opposite 'sin', because we don't claim that humans are innately peaceful, merely that we are innately adaptive. —Editors

Don't agree

Dear Editors

The editorial in the November issue of *Socialist Standard* mentions Le Guin's *Dispossessed* in a positive light. I am always astounded that otherwise intelligent people with impeccable views on everything else can be so brainless on this subject. It is a vile book, constituting, regardless of whatever the intentions of the author might have been, the very zenith of anti-socialist propaganda. It describes a society not unlike what Marx called

'barracks communism', with ideologised (through, for example, Odo's: 'excess is excrement') repressive egalitarianism. A ('free-market') Libertarian wanting to show that 'any attempt at socialism/communism can inevitably only result in' poverty and eradication of the individual could hardly do better than this for a masterpiece.

And there are logical problems. For example, if the syndics of Production and Distribution Coordination are chosen at fixed periods by lot, how is it possible that they constitute (as Le Guin through her characters say) a 'bureaucracy'? Or, another: how did Sabul's position come about? Was he elected by his fellows, or was he 'down-posted' from Production and Distribution Coordination? (Thus a sort of democratic centralism, or is it lottery-centralism?) And to those who think it's a great story, we might also ask: what kind of model is this in which the new society is one materially so limited as to eternally demand never ending sacrifice in consumption and work, like on some from-scratch 'intentional community', which even Kropotkin knew to oppose.

Opposite to this, a truly excellent socialist story is *Voyage from Yesteryear* by James P Hogan, which takes place in a stateless

free-access world, a story in which anarcho-communism (never called such) is victorious over the forces of Market and State. Unfortunately there are people who think with their knee reflex instead of their brains: they look up the author's name in Wikipedia, see that later in life he adopted non-popular positions in relation to the topics covered by the buzzwords 'Global Warming', 'HIV', 'Holocaust', assume that he was simply a rightwing crank, that anything written by him is untouchable, and will not go near this fine book.

Name and email address provided

Questions

Dear Editors

Here are one or two questions that come to mind that I would like answered.

1: What is the SPGB view on workers cooperatives?

2: What is the socialist response to the concept that this world is not just for we humans, but that we share it with other species. Is it their world too? Or are they there just to be used by humans?

3: I have some insurance policies and a bank account that pays me interest. Does that make me a capitalist?

4: There are many countries that call themselves "socialist". Is there a nation that truly *is* socialist ... or close to it?

Some of these questions may seem light hearted, but they are serious questions that came to me while reading your books and magazines.

Ian McRae, Dundee.

Reply:

Socialists have no problem with workers forming cooperatives if that's the best way they can survive under capitalism. However we

disagree with the sometimes-made claim that they can be a route to socialism because, aside from any political consideration, unless they are in a small market niche with no competition, they tend to be outcompeted by the brutal cost and wage-cutting tactics of conventional companies (for more on this, see our review of *The Co-operative Alternative to Capitalism*, page 21).

We are not unsympathetic to the plight of other animal species and we imagine that socialism would take a more responsible view of their welfare than does capitalism, however we don't have a

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Bombed with Bibles

NOTHING EXCITES a *Daily Mail* hack more than a story about 'Marxism'. And if they can fit in a bit about the erosion of Christian values too, so much the better.

'North Korea executes 80 people in public 'for viewing South Korean movies and owning bibles'' ran the headline in the *Mail Online* (11 November). And while nothing we hear about the treatment of the working class in the North Korean dictatorship would surprise us, perhaps we should take this with a pinch of salt. The *Mail* got the story from a South Korean newspaper, the *Joong Ang Ilbo*. But, they noted, this paper could not confirm the deaths, but said its source is familiar with the internal affairs of North Korea, and had recently visited the country. Oh well, it must be true then.

'Why the executions took place is difficult to ascertain', the *Mail* informs us, but 'they may have been carried out to quell unrest and stop capitalist ideology from growing, as they took place in areas of recent economic growth'.

Hmm, it's difficult to understand the logic in the *Mail's* thinking sometimes, but it's hardly likely that the state capitalist dictatorship of North Korea would want to discourage its own economic growth is it?

But by now the *Mail's* writer had the bit between his teeth, 'North Koreans are forced to adhere to the Juche ideology,' he went on, 'a doctrine which mixes Marxism with the worship of North Korea's founder Kim Il Sung and his descendants'. Eh, what was that again?

While we agree, the ideas of the North Korean dictatorship must be a nightmare to live under ('The Juche idea is the precious fruit of the leader's profound, widespread ideological and theoretical activities, and its creation is the most brilliant of his revolutionary achievements' for example), it has nothing to do with Marxism. (But if you'd like to wade through another 30 odd pages of the Great Leader's 'precious fruit', all in the same vein, take a look at http://www1.korea-np.co.jp/pk/062nd_

issue/98092410.htm).

It's no secret that state brutality and severe poverty are widespread in North Korea, so surely these downtrodden people are not putting their lives at risk by illegally importing bibles are they? Well no, as it happens, they are not. Here's another story from the *Mail* (10 November).

'Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's the New Testament: Christian group air-drops bibles over North Korea using 40-foot hydrogen balloons'.

Yes, despite Christianity being banned, and the death threats the North Koreans apparently face, one sanctimonious and arrogant bible thumper has so much faith in his own delusions that for the past seven years he has happily put these people at risk by inflicting bibles on them from the air, 50,000 of them last year alone. 'These are the most persecuted believers on earth' he said. Too bloody right they are.

'In sending the bibles over the border to North Korea, Pastor Foley hopes that North Koreans will read the scripture and see that the ideology they are forced to believe 'is all a fraud' reports the *Mail*.

And hopefully, if they get a chance to read this absurd religious humbug without being arrested, they will realise what a fraud religion is too.

NW



By the way...

Reform in Africa

LET'S HAVE a big round of applause for all those reformists who have been telling socialists, for a century or more, that they should ignore the fight for socialism, and instead agitate for 'here-and-now' reforms. In Africa, that meant dismantling the old empires, and setting up new 'independent' capitalist states. Socialists always said that the result of all that would be merely cosmetic. Instead of the ordinary Africans being plundered by an owning class with white skins, they would be plundered by an owning class with black skins.

Now we have two interesting bits of information from the *Times* (8 October).

Firstly – there are now fifty-five African billionaires: ie. individuals who are worth one thousand million pounds – a tidy old sum.

Secondly – in April the World Bank gave its opinion that Africa was the only area where 'the number of poor people has risen steadily and dramatically' during the past thirty years.

These two bits of news will surprise nobody – except, perhaps, the reformers who brought them about.

Progress

ANOTHER INTERESTING quote from the *Times* (6 November):

'In the past 30 years, the proportion of national income

taken as a reward in the form of wages has fallen while the proportion due to owners of capital has risen. And this has happened all over the world, pretty much regardless of what politicians have tried to do about it.'

The last sentence seems to indicate a belief that politicians get elected 'to do something about' capitalism. In fact they all get into power determined to uphold the capitalist system: so that's what they do. Why should a journalist raise his eyebrows at such news?

In the last thirty years there have been about fourteen years of Conservative governments, thirteen years of Labour governments, and three years of a Conservative-Liberal coalition. So all three major parties can take a bow.

Christmas is coming

ONE WAY you know Christmas is coming is the rash of adverts in the paper showing sad-faced teenagers, accompanied by an appeal for some kind charity that gives homeless people a dinner on Christmas day. So you can choose. You can support a political and economic system that gives homeless people a slap-up meal on one day in the year and then throws them on to the streets for the other 364 days, or you can work to bring about a socialist system where the human ingenuity and human skills and human control over industrial processes and raw materials – which already exist – are used to make homelessness a thing of the past. It's up to you.

ALWYN EDGAR



Is recovery under way?

IF YOU go by the official statistics the answer will be 'yes' since the quarterly figures for GDP (Gross Domestic Product) have shown a slight increase for a number of successive quarters now.

GDP, however, is made up of various elements – government spending, business spending and consumer spending – but it is only business spending that drives the economy, the other two being dependent on it and following the path it takes. So an increase in GDP due to one of the other two elements might not necessarily signify a recovery. So the relevant question is: is business investment increasing?

The government is anxious to play up the figures both to encourage business confidence, i. e. whistling in the dark, and to attribute them to its policies. 'I have been vindicated on economy, Osborne claims' was a headline in the *Times* (9 September) reporting his claim that critics who had advocated a different policy 'cannot explain why the UK recovery has strengthened rapidly over the last six months.'

We have not been advocates of a different policy (it's not the job of socialists to advise governments on how to run capitalism) but we can offer another explanation: that is something that has happened independently of government policy and was always eventually going to happen anyway.

Vince Cable, the Business Secretary, has been rather more cautious. According to the *Times* (11 September), he has spoken of the danger of 'complacency, generated by a few quarters of economic data' and said that 'the beginnings of a recovery will not become meaningful until there is a strong and sustained business investment, which remains well down on pre-crash levels.'

Indeed it is. According to other figures from the Office for National Statistics:

'From 1997 to 2008 GFCF was between 16 and 17 per cent of GDP. From 2009 onwards, this has fallen to between 14 and 15 per cent.'

GFCF is Gross Fixed Capital Formation which includes capital investment by the government as well as by businesses. Cable is right to point out that this will have to increase before there can be any talk of a recovery beginning.

Socialists accept that sooner or later there will be a recovery of business investment. As Marx pointed out, 'permanent crises do not exist' (*Theories of Surplus Value*, chapter XVII). Any more in fact that there can be a permanent boom. Capitalist production is a never-ending cycle of booms and slumps.

A slump eventually creates the conditions for a recovery of business investment (just as a boom eventually creates the condition for a slump). Stocks are cleared. Some businesses go under and their assets pass cheaply to their rivals (devaluation of capital). Real wages fall under the pressure of increased unemployment. Interest rates go down due to the supply of money-capital exceeding the demand for it.

With the possible exception of there still being room, even a need, for more business failures, these conditions have been met so the scene has been set for a recovery. But there is no telling how long it will take or whether it will be sustained. The slump won't be over till GDP and business investment reach pre-slump levels and there's a long way to go before that happens.

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Antarctica: end of the last wilderness?

ANTARCTICA IS our planet's last remaining wilderness – almost wholly uninhabited, in large part even unexplored by humans – a vast continent of snow-swept plains, icy mountains and cliffs swarming with penguins.

And yet Antarctica is highly vulnerable to human activity. Offshore, trawlers from several countries scoop up the fish that feed the seals and penguins and the krill that feed the fish. (The latest attempt to reach an agreement to ban commercial fishing off East Antarctica and in the Ross Sea failed.)

The krill are then fed to aquafarmed fish and marketed to health-conscious consumers as a superior source of omega-3 fatty acids, although it is unclear why krill should be preferred to other sources like walnuts, soybeans and quinoa.

Chunks of the melting West Antarctic ice sheet continue to break off and plunge into the sea. In Central Antarctica too global heating has an impact, but of a different kind – increased precipitation that still takes the form of snow.

Territorial claims

Antarctica was first sighted in 1820 by a Russian naval expedition, then again three days later by the crew of a British naval vessel. French explorers landed in 1840 and claimed the territory for France – a claim soon forgotten. Further discoveries were made in the late 19th and early 20th century by British, Norwegian, Belgian, German, Japanese, Australian and American explorers.

During the first half of the 20th century eight countries made claims to sections of Antarctica – some on the grounds that their explorers had got there first (Britain, France, Norway), others on grounds of geographical proximity (New Zealand, Chile, Argentina) or on both grounds (Australia). Several other countries (Russia, the US, South Africa, even Peru) 'reserved the right to make a claim'. Brazil announced a 'zone of interest' that it insisted was not a claim.

These claims were not taken very seriously. Even though some of them overlapped, the discrepancies did not generate conflict. Much of the continent remained unclaimed.

A unique international regime

In the second half of the 20th century a unique international regime took shape in Antarctica, known as the Antarctic Treaty System. The main Antarctic Treaty, which came into force in 1961, prohibited the use of Antarctica for military purposes. No new territorial claims were to be allowed; existing claims were neither annulled nor recognized.

Thus, the chief human activity in Antarctica is scientific research. Thirty different countries now operate 70 research stations, of which 50 function year round. There is also a little tourism – and a Russian church, served by two priests.

From the 1970s onward, the main treaty was supplemented by further agreements. Several deal with conservation of animal and plant life. The most important is the Protocol on Environmental Protection, which came into force in 1998 and prohibits non-scientific activity relating to mineral resources. Unfortunately, it does permit geological prospecting, which falls under the category of 'scientific activity'.

An arrangement of this kind was never on the cards in the Arctic. What made it possible in Antarctica was the clear separation of the continent from sovereign national territory and especially its remoteness from the great powers of the northern hemisphere. It was also generally assumed that whatever riches might lie under the icy wastes it would not be

feasible to extract them and transport them to world markets in the foreseeable future. (This assumption also explains the nonchalant approach taken to earlier claims.)

The treaty system in decline

In recent years there have been signs of diminishing confidence in the Antarctic Treaty System. More is known now about the continent's mineral resources – for instance, large iron ore deposits in the Prince Charles Mountains and extensive coal deposits in the Transantarctic Mountains. Gold, manganese, chromium, nickel, cobalt, tin, uranium and titanium have also been located. Moreover, as the ice starts to melt and mining technology advances the possibility of extraction no longer seems so remote.

The position taken by each government involved in Antarctica goes like this: 'We shall not be the first to violate the treaties by staking new claims or moving beyond prospecting. But we must plan how to react as soon as some other country breaks out of the current international regime.'

Professor Guo Peiqing from the Ocean University of China likens the situation to preparing for a global game of chess: 'We don't know when play will happen, but it's necessary to have a foothold' (*Guardian*, 8 October).

A plausible date for the start of play is 2048, when the Protocol on Environmental Protection comes up for review. Of course, play could start before then, perhaps triggered by a dispute over whether some action crosses the line separating scientific research from commercial exploitation.

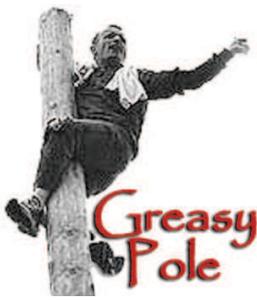
Chess and gō

When it does start, the game will actually be rather more complicated than chess. The number of players will clearly far exceed two.

Although countries may still refer to the nationality of early explorers when staking claims and contesting the claims of rivals, they will base claims mainly on the locations of their research stations. The preparatory maneuvers already underway are more like the Japanese game of gō, in which a player places counters (in this case, research stations) anywhere on the board with the aim of surrounding coveted spaces and blocking the opponent's efforts to do the same.

The Antarctic Treaty System demonstrates that in the absence of strong commercial pressures even capitalist governments are capable of moving beyond the constraints of state sovereignty. In some ways the Antarctic model of human cooperation prefigures the unity of world socialism.

STEFAN



Doing the Hokey Cokey

Bad News is he also thinks ‘...if you want to improve something, get stuck in and get your hands dirty’. These comments were a response to Jeremy Paxman when he recently hinted at some sympathy with Russell Brand over his disillusionment with politics and his refusal to join in what he sees as ‘...a political hokey cokey where every four years we get to choose what colour tie the liar who leads us wears’.

Whether Clegg can properly claim that during his time as Deputy Prime Minister he has actually ‘improved’ anything – other than perhaps the colour of his tie – is very much in dispute. Whether he himself is confident on the matter may be judged by the recent appointment, as his Director of Communications, of Emma Gilpin-Jacobs. Anyone responding ‘Emma Gilpin-Who?’ should be aware that during some twenty years she has acquired what one observer noted as a ‘stellar’ reputation in the rituals which lurk behind such arcana as ‘Brand Communications’, ‘Corporate Reputations’, ‘Public Profiling...’ If these activities caused her to get her hands dirty it will have been through working to reconcile those who are obsessively known as ‘ordinary people’ to their position on the scale of social poverty. Now she is committed to cleansing the blemished reputation of the LibDem Party– which will test the reward, after her spell as Global Communications Director at the *Financial Times*, of a place among the ranks of the Power Mums.

IF THAT’S what you want there is some Good News: in spite of his past, Nick Clegg now thinks that ‘...politics is not perfect’. But then the



Right hand in... Nick Clegg

Controversy

Another woman in Russell Brand’s hokey cokey, of a similar age to Gilpin-Jacobs but with a record in a different sector of the ‘communications’ business is Esther McVey, Conservative MP for Wirral West. She made her name as a producer/presenter for Children’s TV and programmes such as *Nothing But The Truth*, *The Heaven And Earth Show*. At another level there was also an appearance at the Liverpool Empire Theatre in *The Vagina Monologues*. And during 1999 a flood of publicity photographs – the work of an anonymous cameraman who remembered her as ‘charm personified’ – drawing attention to parts of her anatomy which are not usually considered essential for exposure on TV. A career change seemed to be advisable and in the 2005 election McVey, now robed more suitably for a constituency such as West Wirral, was narrowly beaten by Labour’s Stephen Hesford but she did better in 2010, winning by 2436 votes. From the beginning she was, apart from those other matters, a subject of controversy; she had to pay Hesford £6,500 in damages and costs after her team had copied a blog about him going on a ‘junket’ test match tour in Australia and New Zealand. After a couple of early scrabbles up the Greasy Pole she got lucky in one of Cameron’s re-shuffles, finding herself as Minister for

Welfare at the Department of Work and Pensions under Iain Duncan Smith (IDS).

Tears

This was an intriguing combination. A long-standing rumour has it that in 2002, when he was in opposition, IDS was reduced to tears by what he saw of the ghastly decay in the Easterhouse estate in Glasgow. So much so that he accepted an invitation to address Labour’s 2005 conference and told the delegates that their treatment for poverty was inadequate because ‘everyone should have enough money to live properly in their community’ (he did not discuss how this applied to the Cameron family in their ‘community’ at Chipping Norton). But since then IDS has had to undergo a change of heart, as an important minister in a government devoted to imposing cuts which ensure that thousands of families have barely ‘enough’ of that money to get by.

One of the government’s measures is the ‘bedroom tax’, so called because it is imposed on those living in social housing which has more rooms than they strictly need. This has led to many people having problems paying their rent; in a recent debate on the issue Labour MP Steve Pound told of his brother who is threatened with eviction because he has a ‘spare’ room which is used to accommodate his dialysis equipment. In October McVey was unwise enough to propose that the homes in question should be modified to reduce the number of rooms – a ‘solution’ which was greeted with a mixture of bewilderment and scorn.

Chaos

Presumably because she is a practised TV operator, McVey was put up to defend the plans for Universal Credit, which IDS introduced to the 2010 Tory conference as a ‘vital reform’ which would simplify the benefits system and reduce its cost by merging six of the available benefits. The situation at present is that the measure is a hugely expensive chaos showing little prospect of changing anything let alone making it cheaper. The Commons Public Accounts Committee has said that much of the £425 million spent so far may have to be written off. McVey’s ‘defence’ was little more than empty assurances that all was well with the scheme, which was working within the time scale as planned. It was not a convincing performance among the ‘considerable challenges’ facing the scheme – not to mention for those whose everyday life is so crucially dependent on those ‘benefits’ and how they are allowed to ‘claim’ them.

Liars

Jacobs and McVey each had a long and detailed training in their chosen sphere, followed by years of experience, which provided them with an opportunity to show how effective it had all been. In the event they have qualified for nothing more noteworthy than a place in that hokey-cokey where at the closing of a ballroom dance revellers are too far gone to continue with the rituals of waltz, quickstep...But as applied by Russell Brand the words could have some relevance for voters hesitating at the door of the polling booth. Which is not to argue that anyone with such insight should refuse to vote. To express our anger and contempt for those liars on that same ballot paper can be the start of something big.

IVAN



Russell Brand Attacks Capitalism

...and its ideological guard dogs come running

When Russell Brand was invited to guest edit the *New Statesman* at the end of October, he took the opportunity to write a long feature article on a subject which he deemed important enough to devote his whole piece to. He did not choose to write about his work as a comedian or actor, or his current worldwide live tour which had already almost sold out. He did not write about his sexual reputation as a ladies' man, or about which toothpaste he uses. He wrote with passion about how the world is organised and how all main stream politics serves the same global economic elite. He made a great number of insightful, thought-provoking observations.

A few days later he further

elaborated on several of these points when interviewed by Jeremy Paxman on BBC TV's *Newsnight*. He certainly succeeded in stimulating debate, and since then there has been a frequently heated exchange of views, both with and about Brand himself, but also further afield, with the YouTube video of that interview having had millions of hits even by early November.

What Did Brand Actually Write?

There was a lot of distorting of the things that Brand actually wrote and said, so let's start by setting out clearly and accurately what he actually expressed. The feature article, 'We no longer have the luxury of tradition. But before we change the world, we need to change the

"I have never voted. Like most people I am utterly disenchanted by politics"

way we think' (*New Statesman*, 25-31 October), started out with one statement which was later seized on in particular by many of his opponents as a terrible sacrilege:

'I have never voted. Like most people I am utterly disenchanted by politics. Like most people I regard politicians as frauds and liars and the current political system as nothing more than a bureaucratic means for furthering the augmentation and advantages of economic elites.'

He says those who 'fought in two world wars' to protect the right to vote 'were conned', adding that 'total revolution of consciousness and our entire social, political and economic system is what interests me, but that's not on the ballot.' But rather than the focus on voting, his main and far more important theme was the fundamental inability of our present social system to meet the needs of the majority of people.

His written piece claimed, first, that the majority of ('non-rich') people have become disaffected from the whole political process and lost all interest in politics, as the main parties and politicians are virtually indistinguishable from one another. They are all dishonest and self-serving and all stand to represent and run a system in which human needs always take second place to the further accumulation of financial surpluses by a tiny minority who already have huge wealth and power. The apathy of the oppressed majority is an understandable reflection of the apathy of the social order about meeting our needs. But for society's problems to be solved, this apathy must first be challenged and replaced with a passion for real change. All these points were argued in detail and eloquently by Brand in his article.

The Goal: A Co-operative Society
He rightly takes the Left to task

for being so po-faced and urges a spirit of fun and excitement in the movement for social change. He thoughtfully bemoans the way in which defenders of capitalism have taken the ideological advantage by tying their cause to the selfish instinct for individual survival. But, as he explains very clearly, we have now reached a stage in human history where our success and survival as individuals is more connected than ever before to ensuring our survival as a whole community or species:

'Fear and desire are the twin engines of human survival, but with most of our basic needs met these instincts are being engaged to imprison us in an obsolete fragment of our consciousness.'

At this point Brand departs momentarily from this rational extrapolation of the social, political and economic roots of human suffering, to argue that the solution is 'part spiritual and part political'. He defines spiritual as 'the acknowledgement that our connection to one another and the planet must be prioritised'. He then states very clearly his goal, paraphrasing Buckminster Fuller: 'to make the world work for 100 per cent of humanity...through spontaneous co-operation without ecological offence or the disadvantage of anyone'.

Brand does not mention it, but in fact there is one precondition for this rational and democratic use of the world's resources to serve the needs of all. The 'one percent' who monopolise all the natural resources and productive machinery of society have to be legitimately dispossessed, so that the world and all that is in it can become at last the common heritage of all. Without doing that, we do not even have access to the resources we seek to co-operatively manage. And for this we do indeed have to organise political and democratic action, including voting, which will be a lot more exciting and far-reaching than the mere choice between Tweedledum and Tweedledee just twice each decade.

The Contradictions of Capitalism

Those of us who complain about there being a small class of billionaires and multi-millionaires for whom, directly or indirectly, the rest of us work as waged or salaried servants of capital, do not do so out of some hate-filled jealousy. Like Brand, we recognise that this is a global system which has outlived its usefulness. That the problem is

systemic and not merely a question of attitude or of clearing away just the worst excesses of greed. In the words of William Morris, 'there are rich and there are poor, and the rich are rich because they rob the poor'. Yes we do begrudge the fact that shareholders (or bureaucrats, in the misnamed 'socialist' countries which run state capitalism) own and control the productive resources of the world, because that is what stops the other 99 percent of us from accessing those resources and turning them over to production for need rather than profit. There is a profusion of research reports from the World Health Organisation and others, showing that without the artificial limits placed on production by the billionaires' need to be sure of a market before production is permitted, then the actual global resources would be sufficient to feed, clothe and house several times the current world population.

Meanwhile, in the social system which currently exists throughout the planet, in Brand's words,

'The price of privilege is poverty.

David Cameron said in his conference speech that profit is "not a dirty word". Profit is the most profane word we have. In its pursuit we have forgotten that while individual interests are being met, we as a whole are being annihilated. The reality, when not fragmented through the corrupting lens of elitism, is we are all on one planet.'

A 'Total Social Shift'

Brand condemns the ways in which scapegoats are constructed and people turned against each other, so that 'the wrath is directed to the symptom, not the problem'. He describes revolution as not violent rioting or misdirected fury, but a dignified and complete withdrawal of consent, a mass refusal to accept the current social relationships of production and ownership, which are inherently exploitative. Whilst not denying that human behaviour has elements of greed or insecurity as well as co-operation and common interest, he asks why should we continue to base our entire social fabric on the worst traits rather than the best aspirations of humanity?

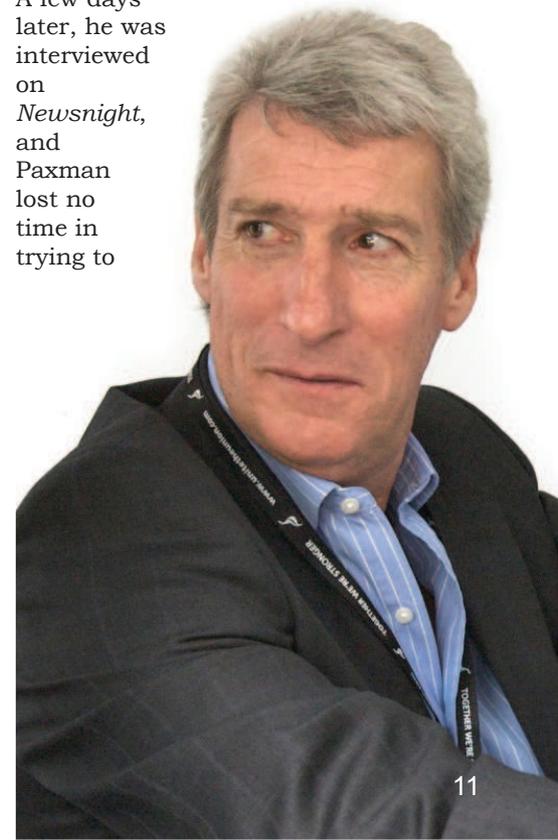
'My optimism comes entirely from the knowledge that this total social shift is actually the shared responsibility of six billion individuals who ultimately have the same interests. Self-preservation and the survival of the planet. This is a better idea than the sustenance of an elite.'

He writes that he does not have a precise or perfect blueprint for the future, but seeks nevertheless to emphasise that 'the only systems we can afford to employ are those that rationally serve the planet first, then all humanity'. By this measure, clearly, capitalism in all its forms must be ended. 'We cannot afford... old-fashioned notions like nation, capitalism and consumerism simply because it's convenient for the tiny, greedy, myopic sliver of the population that those outmoded ideas serve.'

At this point his prescription for change does become slightly vague and somewhat romantic, advocating that we meditate, love indiscriminately, reserve our condemnation exclusively for those with power, and revolt spontaneously in whatever way we want; though he is careful to specify 'without harming anyone'. He calls for a revival of the old values of the working class movement typified by the Tolpuddle martyrs, so that today's young people might realise that there is 'a culture, a strong, broad, union, that they can belong to, that is potent, virile and alive'. He makes a final call for a 'revolution of consciousness' and makes the optimistic observation that we are far from impotent, as proved by the huge twin efforts of propaganda and repression which have to be used to contain dissent around the world, the 'institutions that have to be fastidiously kept in place to maintain this duplicitous order'.

The Paxman interview

A few days later, he was interviewed on *Newsnight*, and Paxman lost no time in trying to





ridicule and belittle all of this radicalism. He set the tone for other critics to follow, by arguing quite illogically that, because Brand declines to choose between the virtually indistinguishable brands of capitalism which we are offered to vote for once every five years, that therefore he has no 'right' to voice any opinion about how human society should be organised in the world. Brand dealt with this admirably, arguing right from the start that we can at least state what human society should not do: 'Shouldn't destroy the planet. Shouldn't create massive economic disparity. Shouldn't ignore the needs of the people.'

He explained that he does not set himself up as a political or technological expert, and that he defers to others who are more equipped than he is to fill in the gaps as to how we can best use our planetary resources to feed, clothe and house our several billion members of this human community. What he needed to point out, however, is that the current global system of minority ownership and control of resources cannot ever do that. But he did make the excellent point to Paxman that it is those who do defend the present social order who must be called on to answer for it. 'The burden of proof is on the people with power.' The system we have is indeed indefensible. The debate then is not whether to have a complete change of social system, but how best to quickly enact this urgent and obvious need, before capitalism causes even more carnage both socially and climatically.

When pressurised by Paxman to come up with a specific plan of how the alternative would work, Brand suggests:

'A socialist egalitarian system based on the massive redistribution of wealth, [with] heavy taxation of corporations...I think the very concept of profit should be hugely

reduced...I say profit is a filthy word, because wherever there is a profit there is also a deficit.'

He goes on to say that there would have to be a democratic central administration rather than a government. When pressed further, he urges Paxman

not to ask him to 'sit here and devise a global utopian system...I am calling for change'. And he was absolutely right to say this. No great social change has ever come from constructing an ideal 'doll's house' society, with a rule-book full of minutiae, and imposing it on the future. We need urgently and democratically to replace minority ownership with common ownership, and production for profit with production for needs.

This will not involve the 'redistribution of wealth', however, as that implies there would still be owners and non-owners. The only alternative to capitalism is to have common ownership of all productive resources, across the world community. All of those billionaire shareholders, plus the stony-faced bureaucrats of the state-capitalist regimes, have to be legitimately dispossessed by a conscious, determined, educated, peaceful majority. Then and only then can we start to produce for need, not profit. And this also has nothing to do with 'heavy taxation', as taxation is a levy on profits and therefore is a mechanism only relevant to capitalism itself.

Brand then explains what it would take for him to want to vote, telling Paxman that people are bored with politics because what's on offer is not a radical enough change, hence the frequent eruption of rioting and civil unrest. But 'when there is a genuine alternative... then, vote for that...but until then, why be complicit in this ridiculous illusion?'. He praises the Occupy movement for at least introducing into the popular lexicon the idea of the one percent versus the ninety-nine per cent, and making large numbers of people aware of vast

economic corporate exploitation. He also turns the argument around on to Paxman, pointing out that he of all people must see through the charade of politics, since he has spent thirty years in interviews berating politicians of all parties for their lies and their failed promises.

How was all this received?

The responses to Brand's comments were replete with distortion, misrepresentation and personal attack, showing just how much venom is often trained against the merest whisper of dissent from the assumptions of the present world order. In the *Guardian's* weekly politics podcast on 31 October, associate editor Michael White unleashed a torrent of venomous, spluttering, reactionary bile against Brand, without even having read or heard what he had said:

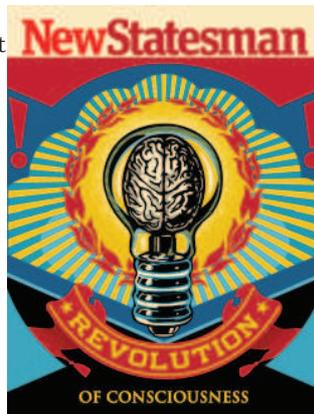
'I listen to him and I think, what a turd he is. I have made it the two principles of my working life not to read the *Sun* or watch *Newsnight*, they're both up themselves too far, so I *didn't* see this interview, but I know what he's like...'

White went on to accuse Brand of 'proto-fascism' and of wanting to have a revolution 'in which probably he can do a lot of screwing around, because that seems to be one of his more important priorities. Pass the sick bag'. White has revealed more about himself than anything else in this misinformed and vindictive response. Reporter Shiv Malik on the same podcast, again with breathtaking disregard for the most fundamental journalistic principle of reporting what people say rather than what you would like them to have said, asserted that '[in his

article] Brand dropped in 'non-violent'; but really I think he meant 'violent', and just go out and riot!'

Other reactions also came thick and fast. Simon Kellner acknowledged in the *Independent* on 24 October that 'Russell Brand is far from trivial. On *Newsnight*, he made Paxman look ridiculous. This

was the old guard against the new, and the new came out on top.' Paxman himself had the decency and intellectual honesty a few days later to concede that Brand had been right about 'the whole green-bench pantomime in Westminster'. Writing in the *Radio Times* he agreed



that people are disgusted by the 'tawdry pretences' of politics, and even admitted that he had himself not voted in a recent election, as the choice of candidates was 'so unappetizing'. Nick Clegg responded to this on LBC Radio, setting himself up as a sitting duck by whining illogically that Paxman was 'sneering about politics' despite making a good living from Westminster, and that he treated all politicians as 'rogues and charlatans'. With Clegg's party holding the dubious honour of being amongst the biggest liars in recent political history (student fee rises ring a bell, Nick?), one has to ask, what else should Paxman treat them as.

Fellow comedian Robert Webb patronizingly took Brand to task via an 'open letter' in the following issue of the *New Statesman*, in which he sings the praises of the last Labour Party government (how short is his memory?) compared with the current Coalition, and bemoans Brand's call for social revolution, since 'We tried that again and again, and we know that it ends in death camps, gulags, repression and murder...please read some fucking Orwell.' Brand in turn responded to this in a long interview with the *Huffington Post*:

'Just for the record, in case anyone else from Peep Show is worried, I'm definitely against death camps... definitely no killing. I'm against that; I'm a vegetarian, I think we're all equal. I'm not saying smash people's stuff up, and definitely no killing.'

Most of the criticisms blatantly ignored all of Brand's points about present day society and what is wrong with it, and focussed purely on the supposed 'crime' of refusing to vote in elections. But in this respect, he is hardly alone. In recent UK elections, well over a third of voters could not find the motivation to go and choose between the options on offer. And what of the sham elections conducted by dictatorial regimes elsewhere, do these critics condemn those brave enough to abstain? The voting process is important, and socialists have long had a policy of writing 'world socialism' across their ballot paper in the absence of any genuine socialist candidate. Again, this is something which Brand has also mentioned. In a follow-up piece for the *Guardian* (5 November) he mentions his friend's 15-year-old son who, he says, prefers the idea of spoiling ballots rather than not voting, 'to show we care', and Brand adds, 'maybe he's right, I don't know'.

In the same piece he also writes movingly of an encounter whilst on

tour with his show, at Watford, with some soldiers and some Muslim women. It led to thoughts about the insanity and legalised murder of warfare and the hugely important recognition that: 'The reality is we have more in common with the people we're bombing than the people we're bombing them for.'

He does go on to propose that the billions being used to bail out banks, or the unpaid tax of tycoons like Sir Philip Green, should be used to 'create one million jobs at fifty grand a year'. However, this would not be a lasting solution since it would leave intact the same root cause which has led to all of this in the first place: the existence of capitalism. We must go further and end the institution of working for wages or salaries itself as it is this, the wages/profits system, which is causing all of the social contradictions from which we suffer.

Let us all take up Russell Brand's proposition. The need to get rid of

capitalism is urgent. We do need to think outside of the constraints of the profit system. The solution is very clear. Common ownership of all productive resources. Democratic control of society. Production for need, not profit. This needs to happen *now*, and the only remaining missing ingredient is a conscious and well-informed majority determined to take democratic action to make it happen.

Brand acknowledges movements like Occupy for putting on the public agenda the idea of the power of the one per cent which prevents the freedom of the ninety-nine per cent. We owe Russell Brand some thanks now for helping to put the idea of revolution back into public discussion too, at a time when a complete change of social system is more urgent than ever.

CLIFFORD SLAPPER

Brocialism and Manarchism

ate October saw a few incidents which 'feminists' criticised. The Anarchist Bookfair in London saw a transwoman abused and an outdoor Catholic (not a religion known for being pro-women) called Ciaran O'Reilly heckled by 'feminists' (Sam Ambreen samambreen.wordpress.com) shouting "kill all men". At a meeting about Wikileaks in Liverpool, the same speaker was apparently harassed on account of rape apologism in respect of allegations against Julian Assange. Meanwhile Laurie Penny criticised Russell Brand (2 Nov 2013) for sexism after he wrote his views on revolution in the *New Statesman*.

The issue of feminism raises many questions. Do women bear the brunt of sexism?



Generally, yes. Are women more likely to be victims of rape and domestic violence? Yes. Are allegations made by women less likely to even be investigated when reporting rape? Yes. Some have been surprised to find attitudes of sexism from 'socialists' and in the labour movement, (see Women in the Labour Movement statement: <http://womeninthelabourmovement.wordpress.com/>) and even negative attitudes to disability (see <http://loonylefty.wordpress.com/2013/04/09/trade-union-colleague-has-a-mental-health-condition-dont-panic-some-useful-guidelines-on-how-to-cope/>).

Feminists have characterised these problems as ones dismissed by socialists or relegated to the future, accusing sexist men of 'brocialism' (a portmanteau of brother and socialism) or manarchism (man and anarchism), but they must be speaking to the wrong so-called 'socialists'. These observations are not ones dismissed by genuine socialists, as these problems have solutions that genuine socialists want and act to implement now. 'Socialists' perpetuating sexism only expose themselves as non-socialists. 'Intersectionality' is a modern term for different forms of oppression intersecting – for example, sexism intersecting with class society – but these types of concepts and connections were observations writers like Engels made way back in the nineteenth century.

Our socialism is in a sense 'feminist' (although a better term would be egalitarian) as it is the socialism of the pioneering anti-sexist works of Lewis H. Morgan, Friedrich Engels, August Bebel and Eleanor Marx.

DJW

Grangemouth and the limits of trade union action

The recent conflict at the Scottish oil refinery shows who holds the whip hand under capitalism.

Grangemouth oil refinery and petrochemicals plant on a 1,700-acre estate on the Firth of Forth 25 miles from Edinburgh is owned by INEOS, the world's fourth largest chemicals conglomerate, and also the largest privately owned company in Britain. The Grangemouth plant is Scotland's only oil refinery providing 85 percent of Scotland's petrol, processing about 200,000 barrels of oil per day, it also powers the Forties pipeline which supplies a third of Britain's North Sea oil. INEOS, launched in 1998 is owned by its management, headed by chairman and chemicals industry veteran Jim Ratcliffe, and now has a turnover of \$43 billion (27 billion). PetroChina bought a stake in Grangemouth in 2011 in a deal that was meant to secure its future.

INEOS repeatedly stated that Grangemouth was financially 'distressed' and that without more investment it would close in 2017. INEOS director Tom Crotty stated 'We have a business that's losing £10 million every month. We've put £1 billion into that business. We need to put another £300 million into it to get it sorted out, to build a new terminal that will allow us to bring new sources of gas in, because the gas in the North Sea is running out' (*Guardian* 18 October).

The trade union UNITE released an analysis of Grangemouth's finances by tax consultant Richard Murphy. He disputed INEOS's claims and said Grangemouth Chemicals made a profit in 2012 and was expecting £117 million of tax gains that could only occur if the company earned £500 million over the next few years. Murphy said total labour costs, including exceptional pension expenses, were 16.9 percent of revenue and total labour costs 'should not be a critical cause for concern' (*Guardian* 16 October).

In 2008 INEOS production was subject to adverse economic conditions and in an effort to increase profits entered into dispute with the trade union UNITE over the pension entitlements of the workforce at its Grangemouth plant. INEOS decided to close the final salary pension scheme to new employees. UNITE stated that Grangemouth workers were paid £6,000 less than those at comparable facilities. A 48-hour strike that followed caused panic buying of petrol throughout the country and the Forties production pipeline was closed. INEOS has been accused by some of buying assets then cutting costs through the introduction of new working practices, lower wages, and terminating pension

schemes. According to Ratcliffe, some 65 percent of salary costs at Grangemouth related to pensions.

Suspended

In the summer of this year Stephen Deans, convener for UNITE at the Grangemouth plant, and also head of the Falkirk branch of the Labour Party, was suspended from his employment at Grangemouth by INEOS while they investigated what they said were accusations that he had been using company resources for political campaigning; this was related to recruitment of UNITE members in the INEOS workforce to the local Labour branch, where the selection of a new parliamentary candidate was taking place after a de-selection. This had nothing to do with proper trade union activity.

However, the Deans dispute became conflated with the production demands of the INEOS company and an industrial dispute developed with UNITE over changes to terms and conditions for nearly 1,400 workers at Grangemouth refinery. INEOS demanded abolishing the final salary pension scheme, freezing wages and scrapping bonuses until 2017, reducing shift allowances, overtime pay, holidays, redundancy terms, and new agreements with UNITE to have only part-time conveners.



Grangemouth oil refinery

Workers were given three working days to agree to what has been called a 'sign-or-be-sacked' ultimatum if they wanted to secure the one-off compensation payments for the concessions. It is important to remember that unions cannot push wages up to a level that prevents profits being made and can only work with labour market forces, pushing them up quicker than they otherwise would or slowing down any falls.

Unions arise out of the wage-relation that is at the basis of capitalism. The working class are forced to sell their mental and physical labour in order to live. The wage which workers receive is the price of their labour-power and the price of this commodity fluctuates, like that of all commodities, around its value as determined by the amount of socially-necessary labour incorporated in it. The strike weapon is the only defence the organised working class has against the capitalist class. Strikes are necessary if the working class are to prevent themselves from being driven into the ground by the never-satisfied demands of profit. The working class must organise to defend and improve our wages and conditions of work. The strike is a weapon that can limit the capitalists' aims.

INEOS shut down the Grangemouth plant on supposed safety grounds in the face of threatened industrial action by UNITE. UNITE attacked INEOS for going ahead with a 'cold shut-down' that would put Grangemouth out of action for a month even after the plant was reopened. The union had called for a partial 'warm' shut-down during its strike to allow the plant to tick over and resume operation quickly. A strike at the plant requires an orderly shut-down for safety reasons. INEOS could have used a 'hot' shut-down where the plant is on standby so that operations can be quickly restarted. The closure could also disrupt the flow of North Sea oil into Scotland because BP's giant Kinneil processing terminal next door relies on Grangemouth for its power. But despite the union's decision to cancel its strike, INEOS went ahead with its shut-down and upped the stakes by raising the prospect of permanent closure putting 800 jobs on the line by declaring the permanent closure of Grangemouth's petrochemicals site.

INEOS director Tom Crotty said the company would be ready to reopen Grangemouth if it received formal assurances from UNITE that there would be no strike between now and the end of December

2013. Grangemouth's Labour MP Michael Connarty said 'This isn't 1970s management; this is 1920s management. Big companies shouldn't be able to hold our country to ransom. Major national assets shouldn't be left to the whim of a couple of hard men from the chemicals industry. INEOS acquired the plant when the economy was booming, enjoyed a year or two of bumper business and then suffered as demand fell in the global recession. They made the mistake of buying these things when the world economy was turning down and now they blame the workforce' (*Guardian* 16 October).

UNITE official Pat Rafferty said the union was willing to abandon the working class strike weapon; 'We would happily sign up to having no more strikes until the end of the year. We will enter happily into an agreement right now that will take



A PetroChina filling station

us to Christmas, where we will have no industrial action and no ballots. In return for that, all we ask the company to do is sit down with us at the negotiating table over the next 45 days and look to try and seek agreement. The plant should be turned on. There's no reason right now why that plant shouldn't be turned on, because there's no industrial action' (*Guardian* 18 October).

Scottish First Minister, Alex Salmond agreed with Rafferty and urged INEOS to 'fire up the plant and do it now. I think UNITE should give a no strike without strings guarantee. Once that is done INEOS should fire up the plant and then the various discussions, negotiations, consultations on terms and conditions, should take place against the background of a working plant, not a plant that is lying cold' (*Guardian* 20 October).

INEOS said that Grangemouth was losing £10m a month and the workforce would have to accept changes for a planned £300m investment plan to be viable. INEOS

rescinded their decision to close Grangemouth when the trade union UNITE hurriedly acceded to INEOS's demands. INEOS will now make a £300 million investment after UNITE agreed a three-year no-strike pledge and pensions overhaul linked to a three-year pay freeze, moving to a 'modern' pension scheme and changes to union agreements on the site including no full-time union conveners. Stephen Deans, the UNITE official at the centre of the Grangemouth industrial dispute quit his job rather than face dismissal over his political activities at the plant.

Defensive struggle

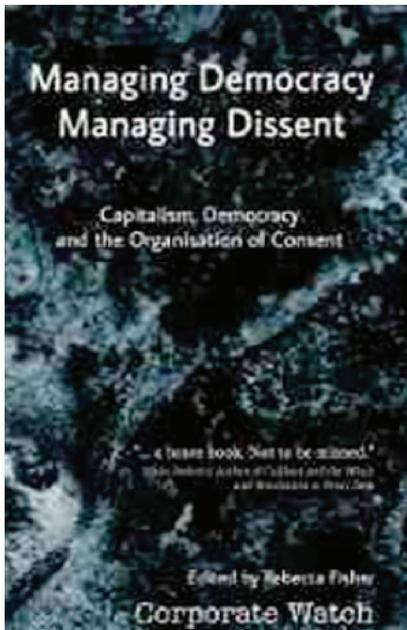
Trade unions are defensive organisations of the working class with the limited role of protecting wages and working conditions and it is by this criterion that the actions of UNITE at Grangemouth and their effectiveness or otherwise ought to be judged. Trade unions are open to criticism when they depart from the principle of an antagonism of interests between the working class and the capitalist class; when they collaborate with the capitalist class, the state or political parties notably the Labour Party in the running of capitalism or support the interests of a particular section of working class above that of the general interest of the working class as a whole.

Marx argued that 'Trade Unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerrilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organized forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say the ultimate abolition of the wages system.'

Capitalism cannot be made to operate in the interests of the working class as is very evident by events at Grangemouth. Unions can achieve limited victories for the working class in capitalism. They can and do generally enable the working class to get the best available price for their labour-power, but they cannot stop the exploitation of the working class. This exploitation is inherent in the wages system and can only be abolished along with it through the conversion of the means of production into common ownership under the democratic control of the whole community. And that requires political action.

STEVE CLAYTON

Rebutting capitalism's apologists



Managing Democracy *Managing Dissent*, subtitled 'Capitalism, Democracy and the Organisation of Consent', published by Corporate Watch, consists of a collection of essays mostly authored by academics from sociology and related departments working in a variety of British and American Universities. From the nature and scholarly style of the writing, the target audience is expected to come from a similar background and it seems unlikely that the book will become a left-wing popular classic.

As with any work, consisting of 20 separate pieces from more than ten different authors, the result is quite mixed. However, the four page foreword by Gerald Sussman is succinct and excellent and in many respects the reader will get the gist of the book from this alone. He neatly summarises developments in capitalism over the past 20 years and discusses the resulting ever increasing alienation of the working class from the system. Unfortunately from a socialist viewpoint, this alienation manifests itself in a widespread apathy rather than any active oppositional politics.

Regarding the main body of the book, there are some interesting observations amongst a voluminous mass of left-wing sociological jargon and analysis. A major part of it is an examination of the evolution of capitalism over the last hundred years though really the focus is a critique, specifically on American and to a lesser extent British capitalism. This gives the whole book a decidedly 'anti-imperialist' flavour in terms of politics and culture. The book is laden with clichéd terminology and the time-honoured denunciation of neo-liberalism, neo-colonialism, globalisation, ruling-class hegemony, etc. The usual villains in works of this sort are well represented and receive the customary castigation: the Pentagon and CIA, the World Bank, Wall Street, The City, Rupert Murdoch, the Freedom Association, Messrs' F. Hayek & M. Friedman, etc. Some of the well-known incidents of

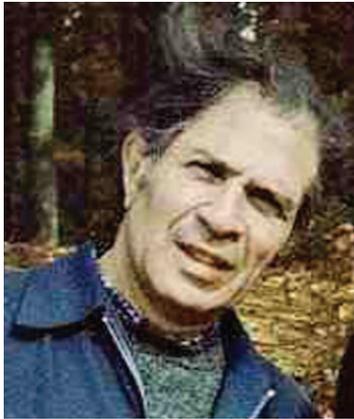
American foreign interference since World War Two are retold; the CIA's role in the overthrow of Mossaddegh (Iran, 1953) and Allende (Chile, 1973), the attempted suppression of the Viet Cong in the 1960s and later the Sandinistas in the 1980s.

The problem with this analysis is that global capitalism is conflated and confused with American imperialism and the implication is that if America could be changed or reined in by some means, a better global society and socialism would naturally evolve. This ignores the fact that the workings of capitalism are independent of whatever country happens to be pre-eminent at any time in world history. As an aside, that man of the moment, Ralph Miliband, puts in an appearance too and there is a good quote from him where he states that as capitalism produces great inequality in the distribution of wealth then inevitably great inequality in political power results, irrespective of any egalitarian claims of the governments that administer the system.

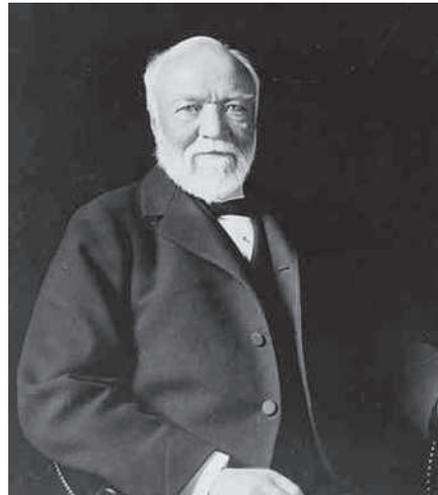
The book is better where it explores the mechanisms by which the elite (the capitalist class or in contemporary parlance the 1 percent) control society. There is detailed analysis of the role of the media, the advertising and entertainment industries, in promoting acceptance of the status quo. Most of this is true but is old news. More interesting is the exploration of celebrity philanthropy (Bob Geldof, Bono, and so on), the role of western NGO's in the developing world and their connection with the activities of the large charitable foundations (Ford, Carnegie, Rockefeller and more recently the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation). The book claims that by choosing which reformist movements to fund at home and abroad, these foundations act to marginalize what they deem to be movements dangerous to world order while sustaining safe and non-threatening movements for social change. The history of the various protest movements that have arisen over the past 50 years or so around

“Global capitalism is conflated and confused with American imperialism and the implication is that if America could be changed or reined in by some means, a better global society and socialism would naturally evolve”

the world is discussed and how these have either fizzled out or been co-opted into the mainstream. So in this context the book examines the recent Occupy Movement and the Arab Spring and more locally in England, the Student Demonstrations of Winter 2010 and inner city riots of Summer 2011.



Clockwise from top: man of the moment Ralph Miliband. Usual villain Rupert Murdoch. Charity founder Carnegie, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation



Concentration of power

The book does have useful information on how power in capitalism is much more concentrated than people might generally think and the enormous influence that very wealthy individuals such as the Koch Brothers and alternatively George Soros can yield in the political system. It examines how the same people can hold senior positions in western governments and when their political careers are over move seamlessly into heading up large multi-national businesses or significant NGOs and think-tanks to continue their defence of capitalism. There is also discussion of the criminalisation of direct action movements against certain unpopular manifestations of capitalism; nuclear energy, field sports, animal testing, the arms



trade, environmental pollution and the legal response by governments and resulting police tactics (surveillance, infiltration, etc. of the groups involved). The activities of bodies including the American National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the British government

supported Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) are explored. These non-profit organisations have stated aims such as the promotion of democracy and western values around the world but who the critics claim impose a soft, western oriented neo-colonialism in the countries that they operate in.

Whatever its drawbacks, the book is motivated by a fundamental question that real socialists have faced and debated amongst themselves for many years. According to our view, society is based on capitalism which is inimical to the interests of the vast majority of the people of the world (who are the working class). However, in large parts of the world, workers have access to political power through the democratic structures (parliamentary elections based on an almost universal adult franchise) that exist in many countries. Of course this ‘democracy’ is limited and partial, to greater or lesser degree depending on the country. But nonetheless in principle workers in many countries have the option of replacing capitalism with socialism.

This clearly hasn’t happened so the question is why not? Apologists for capitalism will claim that workers are in fact broadly happy with their lot, identify themselves more by gender, race and nationality than class and do not ‘buy into’ the socialist analysis. Supporters of socialism (in the many ways that is defined, meaningfully or not) have a harder task rebutting this thesis and this book is one attempt, if not a very good one. We in the Socialist Party do not claim to have a definitive answer to this conundrum either. All that can be said is that when a majority of the world’s workers understand the nature of current society and realize that a much better society is possible, that dissent will produce real and fundamental change rather than more tinkering with the existing system.

KEVIN CRONIN

No Glory: Remembering World War One in music and poetry

The launch of the *No Glory in War 1914-1918* campaign took place in October 2013 at St James's church, Piccadilly in London. Robert Graves was married in this church in 1918 and his wedding was attended by Wilfred Owen shortly before his death on the Western Front. *Good-bye To All That* was Graves's autobiographical work on his experiences in the trenches of the western front. Owen was famous for his war poetry such as *Anthem for Doomed Youth* and the condemnatory *Dulce et Decorum est*.

David Cameron's speech of October 2012 at the Imperial War Museum (see *Socialist Standard* January 2013) about commemorations to mark the anniversary of the First World War inspired the open letter to *The Guardian* of 22 May 2013 where the signatories stated 'this was a war driven by big powers' competition for influence around the globe' and the campaign wants 'to ensure this anniversary is used to promote peace and international co-operation'.

The *I Maestri* orchestra conducted by John Landor with solo violin by George Hlawiczka performed Ralph Vaughan Williams *The Lark Ascending* written in 1914 just prior to the First World War. Although in his forties Vaughan Williams served as a stretcher bearer on the Western Front.

Actress Kika Markham, memorable in the Francois Truffaut film *Les deux Anglaises et le continent*

read the poem *Last Post* by Carol Ann Duffy and the poem *A War Film* by Teresa Hooley who had been inspired by seeing a documentary on the Battle of Mons. Scottish slam poet Elvis McGonagall read the poems *Strange Meeting* by Wilfred Owen, and *Matey* by Patrick MacGill who was wounded at the 1915 Battle of Loos. McGonagall read three of his own poems about the Black Watch Regiment in Fallujah Iraq, the war in Afghanistan, and an indictment of warmonger Tony Blair called *No Regrets*.

There was unaccompanied singing by Sally Davies, Matthew Crampton, Abbie Coppard and Tim Coppard who performed the poem *The Bridge* by Edward Thomas who was killed at the 1917 Battle of Arras then a sung version arranged by Sally Davies. The story *My Dad and My Uncle* by Heathcote Williams was read out detailing the author's remembrances of his father and uncle's experiences in the First World War.

The poet and dramatist Jehane Markham read her poem *Inheritance*, and then spoke of her and Kika's father, actor David Markham who joined the Peace Pledge Union in 1937, and was a conscientious objector in the Second World War. Jehane read her father's written statement of May 1940 where he stated his 'pacifism was the affirmation of the dignity of mankind and the ultimate aim of brotherhood'.

The 'bard of Barking' Billy Bragg concluded the evening with a performance of songs that included

Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream by Paul Simon, *My Youngest Son Came Home Today* by Eric Bogle, *The Man He Killed*, a sung version of a poem by Thomas Hardy, his own *Between the Wars* and *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?* by Pete Seeger.

Dr Neil Faulkner's booklet *No Glory: The Real History of the First World War* accompanies the campaign and is a good account of the First World War. Faulkner writes that 'The First World War was caused by military competition between opposing alliances of nation-states. These nation-states represented the interests of rival blocs of capital competing in world markets... to carve-up the world in pursuit of profit and power. The First World War was an imperialist war'.

SPC

Co-operatives can't escape capitalism

THOSE CRITICS of capitalism who argue that the way-out is for workers to form co-operatives would have been shocked by the headline in the *Times* (23 October) 'Stricken Co-op Bank falls into hands of American investors.'

Most people will associate co-operatives with the retail shops that compete against the supermarkets. Co-operatives have in fact a long association with attempts by workers to improve their lot under capitalism. The original co-operatives were set up to try to stop workers being ripped off by local shopkeepers. The Co-operative Bank was established in 1872 as a bank for these stores and later for trade unions and the Labour Party and their branches. There is even a Co-operative Party registered with the Electoral Commission but it is indistinguishable from the Labour Party.

Co-operatives were popular with radical workers in Marx's day. Some (such as Proudhon and the anarchists) saw them as a way of eventually out-competing and replacing private capitalist enterprises. Others (such as Lassalle and the German Social Democrats) wanted them to be financed by loans from the state.

Marx was expressing some sympathy for the viewpoint of the German Social Democrats when he wrote in Volume III of *Capital*:

'The credit system is not only the principal basis for the gradual transformation of capitalist private enterprises into capitalist stock companies, but equally offers the means for the gradual extension of co-operative enterprises on a more or less national scale. The capitalist stock companies, as much as the co-operative factories, should be considered as transitional forms from the capitalist mode of production to the associated one, with the only distinction that the antagonism is resolved negatively in the one and positively in the other' (chapter 27).

He would presumably have envisaged this 'gradual extension of co-operative enterprises' taking place after the capture of political power by the working class at a time when socialism was not yet immediately possible, as earlier he had pointed to their limitations under capitalism:

'The co-operative factories of the labourers themselves represent within the old form the first sprouts of the new, although they naturally reproduce, and must reproduce, everywhere in their actual organisation all the shortcomings of the prevailing system.'

The Co-operative Bank promoted itself as different from other banks by being 'ethical.' But, in seeking to expand its business, it took over a building society which had indulged in sub-prime mortgages and the like. This proved its undoing as it had to go to the stock market to raise more capital to cover the losses and got eaten alive by the vulture capitalists there.

The fate of the Co-operative Bank shows that cooperatives operate within the context of the capitalist economy and that if they are to survive they have to play by its rules, in particular to make a profit. And, again in response to market forces, most of this profit has to be reinvested in cost-saving machinery and methods of production. In other words, they cannot be used to improve the wages of those working for them or to benefit their customers by reducing prices. That would be the road to ruin.

Workers in cooperatives have in effect to organise their own exploitation for profit to be accumulated as more capital. They are not the way-out. As Marx pointed out, co-operatives 'must reproduce everywhere in their actual organisation all the shortcomings of the prevailing system.' And they do.

THE MILL

THE CHANNEL Four drama *The Mill* set at the time of the 1833 Factory Act in the Quarry Bank cotton mill owned by the Greg family near Manchester is reminiscent of chapter ten *The Working Day* in Marx's *Capital*: 'there followed on the birth of machinism and modern industry a violent encroachment like that of an avalanche in its intensity and extent. All bounds of morals and nature, age and sex, day and night, were broken down'.

In *The Mill* the employers are called 'masters', and the workers in *The Mill* are child apprentices who are indentured 'property of Greg and Sons until 21, food, lodgings, work provided' and the employers explain that 'children toil in a mill rather than starve by the roadside' or live in the Workhouse, 'bastilles of the proletariat' (Marx). The children wake at 6am, finishing work at 8pm, completing a 12 hour working day, and are locked in their dormitories at night leading one visitor to question 'is this a factory or a prison?' to which the Gregs reply 'for apprentices it is home'. The Greg family oppose improvements to workers' conditions by citing William Senior, the bourgeois economist who argued that the last hour of work produced the profits for the capitalist 'the whole net profit is derived from the last hour' known as Senior's last hour.

Marx wrote 'The House of Terror... realised a few years later in the shape of a gigantic Workhouse for the industrial worker... called the Factory.' *The Mill* is set at the time when 'the working-class, stunned at first by the noise and turmoil of the new system of production, recovered, in some measure, its senses, its resistance began'. *The Mill* includes an account of John Doherty, Irish trade unionist active in the Ten Hours Movement and who with Robert Owen established the Society for Promoting National Regeneration. Doherty published the story of Robert Blincoe, a former child labourer which is changed to the character of Esther Price in *The Mill*. A mass meeting of 100,000 workers at Wibsey Moor in Yorkshire as part of the Ten Hour Bill movement is also dramatised. The 1833 Factory Act was a Whig compromise which did not achieve the 10 hours working day and children aged 13 to 18 could still work a maximum of 12 hours.

The Mill is a breath of TV fresh air with its portrayal of working class struggles in capitalism in contrast to the bourgeois class drama of *Downton Abbey*.



Love is a Bourgeois Construct – The Pet Shop Boys

THE PET Shop Boys single *Love is a Bourgeois Construct* was released in September, and it is not too often that Karl Marx gets a mention in a pop song or we hear the word 'bourgeois'.

The new single is reminiscent of the boys at the peak of their popularity and success with their songs about life in capitalism in Thatcher's Britain such as *Opportunités (Let's Make Lots of Money)*. In the new single they sing about 'searching for the soul of England, drinking tea like Tony Benn'.

They sing 'love is a bourgeois construct, it's a blatant fallacy' which is

derived from a character saying of love 'it's a bourgeois fallacy' in the 1988 novel *Nice Work* by David Lodge which is



about the relationship between a feminist university lecturer and an engineering firm manager. The novel is a pastiche of Elizabeth Gaskell's Victorian 'industrial' novel of strikes in a cotton town, *North and South*.

The boys further add that 'you won't see me with a bunch of roses promising fidelity, love doesn't mean a thing to me'. Alexandra Kollontai stated that 'proletarian ideology cannot accept sexual exclusiveness and all-embracing love', and that new socialist sexual relations would be 'purified of all material elements, of all money consideration'.

They sing about 'flicking through Karl Marx again' which could be the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* by Marx and Engels where they write: 'the bourgeois sees his wife a mere instrument of production'.

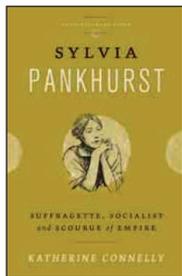
They also borrow the melody line of *Chasing Sheep Is Best Left to Shepherds* by Michael Nyman which in turn is based on the ground bass from Henry Purcell's 1691 opera *King Arthur*. Nyman's music was for the 1982 Peter Greenaway film *The Draughtsman's Contract* which was a Lockean conspiracy thriller about class, sex, property and landscape set in the post 1688 bourgeois 'glorious revolution'. John Locke's 1689 *Two Treatises of Government* are the philosophical grounding of bourgeois capitalism: 'master and servant are names as old as history, for a freeman makes himself a servant to another, by selling him, for a certain time, the service he undertakes to do, in exchange for wages he is to receive in the contract between them in civil society; the chief end whereof is the preservation of property.' Later Greenaway dissected capitalism in Thatcher's Britain in his 1989 *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*.

The Pet Shop Boys clearly see the links between capitalism and the ideology of relationships, singing 'while the bankers all get their bonuses, I've given up on the bourgeoisie, like all their aspirations, it's a fantasy, you made me see reality'.

STEVE CLAYTON

For communism – but what else . . . ?

Sylvia Pankhurst: Suffragette, Socialist and Scourge of Empire.
By Katherine Connelly, Pluto Press



Author Katherine Connelly admires Sylvia Pankhurst for her radical but reformist political struggles, her opposition to the First World War and support for the Bolshevik revolution.

Sylvia Pankhurst was brought up in the political world of the SDF, Socialist League and ILP and raised on the radical poetry of Shelley, and *A Dream of John Ball* by William Morris. Sylvia was much more than a Suffragette, she wanted to link the struggle for women's suffrage to universal suffrage and to industrial struggles by the organised working class. Whereas Sylvia was a 'socialist' in the ILP mould and had a love affair with the married Keir Hardie, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst were bourgeois feminists who wanted the vote on the same property qualification as men.

She worked in London's East End, establishing the East London Federation of the Suffragettes which later became the Workers' Socialist Federation. She organised and spoke at the solidarity meeting with workers from the Dublin Lockout at the Albert Hall in 1913 at which James Connolly spoke of the common struggle 'against the domination of nation over nation, class over class, and sex over sex'.

After the First World War there was leftist internecine wrangling over the creation of the Communist Party of Great Britain, in which she took part, becoming a subject of Lenin's criticism in his book *Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. She opposed reformism in November 1920 when she wrote 'Although I have been a Socialist all my life, I have tried to palliate this capitalist system... but all my experience showed that it was useless trying to palliate an impossible system'. She had no time for the Poplar Labour councillors who went to prison for a rates strike. Author Katherine Connelly writes that she 'dismissed the councillor's efforts' and was expelled from the newly formed CPGB in 1921.

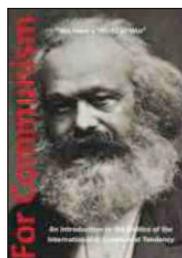
Connelly, as a Leninist, sees Sylvia Pankhurst as a 'left wing communist' and says she 'was not and never claimed to be a socialist theorist', a

way of dismissing anything she wrote about Leninism, the state capitalism in the Soviet Union or socialism. Pankhurst wrote 'The words Socialism and Communism have the same meaning. They indicate a condition of society in which the wealth of the community: the land and the means of production, distribution and transport are held in common, production being for use and not for profit.' She drew attention in January 1922 to 'Russia's new economic policy of reversion to capitalism' and in May 1924 remarked that 'the Russian workers remain wage slaves' and of 'the NEP and the advocates of State capitalisation'.

We can appreciate what she wrote about the future society in July 1923 'Since production will be for use, not profit, the people will be freely supplied on application. There will be no buying and selling, no money, no barter or exchange of commodities', and in August 1923: 'Full and complete Socialism entails the total abolition of money, buying and selling, and the wages system.'

SPC

For Communism – An Introduction to the Politics of the Internationalist Communist Tendency. ICT. £3



The ICT sounds just like one of the myriad Trotskyist sects which mix and match a dozen or so radical-sounding words ('workers', 'international', 'communist', etc) to create a formulaic

name. In fact, they are not, but are instead one of the main groupings of the left communist political tradition. This was the political tendency criticized by Lenin in his 'Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder' in 1920, mainly for their alleged sectarianism. The UK section of the ICT is the Communist Workers' Organisation (CWO) who have debated with us on a number of occasions this last 30 years or so.

This pamphlet is well-structured and there is much for socialists to agree with, such as this:

'Socialism or communism (for Marx these concepts were synonyms) is not a condition or programme which can be put into practice by a party or state decree, but a social movement for the conscious overcoming of the capital relation, the doing away of the state, commodity production and

the law of value . . . Communism will destroy the capitalist state and end national borders. It will overcome money, wage labour and commodity production. Communism means doing away with the power of control of a special class. For this reason, communism is synonymous with the liberation of the working class from all forms of exploitation. This liberation can only be the work of the working class itself' (p.11).

The CWO also agree that the so-called socialist countries were really a form of state capitalism, that attempts to reform capitalism won't work and that left-wing parties offer no way forward. They also take the same view as us on wars, the futility of 'national liberation' struggles and terrorism.

So far, so good. But the CWO (like other left communists) also believe that trade unions are an intrinsic part of the repressive apparatus of capitalism and that socialists cannot use conventional 'bourgeois' democracy as part of the revolutionary process, but must create 'workers' councils' instead. More seriously still, the CWO – like other left communist groups – have a broadly Leninist conception of revolution which turns the revolutionary process upside down.

Heavily influenced by a particular interpretation of sections of Marx's *German Ideology*, where he wrote that the ruling ideas in any epoch are the ideas of the ruling class, the CWO take the view that a majority socialist revolution is impossible because the mass of the working class in capitalism is always going to be inculcated with ruling class ideas about the system. This leads them to the equally Leninist view that a revolution with only a minority of socialists is all that is possible and that only after this will the working class be able to shake off capitalist ideas.

One of the many problems with this view is that this effectively constitutes having the pregnancy after the birth. Another is that the CWO have made it more explicit here than they normally do that after the minority revolution they will be aiming to set up a workers' state, which for us is a contradiction in terms. Its role will be to run capitalism while attempting to spread socialist consciousness and move society in some sort of vaguely socialistic direction:

'A so-called 'workers' state' or the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is, in the first instance, a political category. Nevertheless, a 'workers' state' will take measures for the improvement

of the conditions of life of the working class (reduction in the working-day, free access to the health and education system, etc) and try to direct production for the needs of society . . . [but] as long as capitalist commodity production in the rest of the world continues to exist, the diktat of the law of value holds' (p.38).

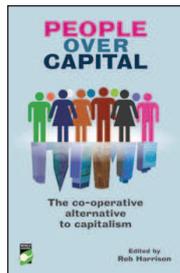
Sadly, these were exactly the kind of ideas that lead to the state capitalist dictatorships in Russia, China and elsewhere and the CWO seem to have learnt nothing from these events that goes beyond a romanticist fascination with them. A so-called workers' state running state capitalism (nationalisation of industry, attempts to plan the market, etc) is no more likely to lead to increased socialist consciousness among the working class now than it was in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution in 1917, when it ended up setting the cause of socialism back by decades.

It is a great shame that the CWO and others like them have yet to assimilate this fundamental lesson from the history of capitalism. A shame because some of their ideas are sound enough, but are rendered impotent because of their left communist failure to break completely with Lenin, even if Lenin conversely had no trouble breaking with left communism.

DAP

Is This an Alternative?

People over Capital: The Co-operative Alternative to Capitalism. Rob Harrison, ed. New Internationalist. £9.99.



To mark the International Year of Co-operatives in 2012, the organisation Ethical Consumer held an essay competition on the topic 'Is there a co-operative alternative to capitalism?'. Most of the chapters in this collection were entries in that contest.

Co-ops are described by Ed Mayo as 'member-owned businesses with some distinctive characteristics in terms of form and ethos'. The general theme of contributions is that co-operatives do indeed represent an alternative to capitalism, though there are some dissenting voices, as we'll see. Co-ops apparently employ 100 million people worldwide, and account for 21 percent of GDP in Finland, for instance. There are various suggestions here for expanding their role, such as creating a parallel currency or establishing peer-to-peer lending.

It is also pointed out that much open-source activity is co-operative-based. Nic Wistreich imagines a pitch on *Dragons' Den* for a system where

millions of people would contribute their ideas, opinions and videos free: it would surely have been laughed out of court, but in fact Twitter works pretty well. Wikipedia is another example of a massive co-operative venture.

An initial reaction to the view that co-ops really represent an alternative to capitalism might be that they involve wage labour and the production of commodities, just as any capitalist business does, so they can hardly constitute an alternative. They also necessarily involve profit-making but not, some would claim, profit maximisation. One point often made is to do with pay: Cheryl Lans notes that in the Mondragon co-op in Spain the highest-paid employee earns just 6.5 times what the lowest-paid gets. But this is still a sizeable disparity, and not all co-ops are so 'egalitarian' as, according to Chris Tomlinson, the CEO of the Co-operative Group in the UK was paid over £2m in 2010.

Tomlinson's is the most critical of the chapters here, and he argues that being a co-operative is not a shield against recessions. The recent travails of the Co-operative Bank certainly demonstrate this, as the Co-op Group has lost control of it to hedge funds and other bondholders. He also refers to American Crystal Sugar, an agricultural co-operative that locked out 1300 workers in 2011 for the best part of two years (see www.startribune.com/local/209279061.html). ACS gave



Fish In The Net

NORMALLY, YOU'D only call a relationship counsellor after you've met your partner, become irritated by their once-endearing foibles and then rowed with them about whose turn it is to wash up. But who do you call

if you've got doubts about your relationship and you haven't even met the other person yet? This gap in the market has been filled by Nev and Max, who then spew it out of the screen as *Catfish* (MTV, Viva). Their clients' relationships spawned on facebook or a dating website, and then floundered when the other half started making excuses why they can't meet or videochat. The show follows Nev and Max angling for the truth behind the online persona of each client's budding beau. When they've hooked something fishy, Nev and Max arrange for their client to finally meet the online lover. Will their tale be watertight, and are they really a prime catch? Instead, the net snares a 'catfish', someone who uses a fake persona, compensating for failings or problems in their life. Their desperation,

and the upset they cause, is drowned in strummy guitar songs, also advertised by annoying pop-ups on the screen. There's even an off-the-scale bizarre reunion spin-off, where the catfish and their victim are paraded in front of a wailing studio audience and quizzed about their humiliating 'relationship'.

Appropriately for a show about deception, the programme makes themselves dupe the viewer. Usually, it's the catfish who first contacts Nev and Max (for some unfathomable reason), but the editing gives the impression that the sceptical catfish approached them.

There's nothing new about basing a relationship on porky-pies; cynics would say that it's common, deep down. What is new is the extent to which we can create and investigate our online personas, and TV's thirst for turning this into a spectacle like *Catfish*. You can see the same trend in mind-polluting programmes like the paedo-entrapment equivalent *To Catch A Predator* and trashfest *Cheaters*. *Catfish* and its ilk plumb new depths to regurgitate alienation into entertainment. Fin.

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/>

London

Clapham

Sunday 1 December 3.00pm
'Hip-Hop and the Class Struggle'
Speaker: Ed Mann.
Socialist Party Head Office,
52 Clapham High Street,
London SW4 7UN.

Oxford

Thursday 5 December 7.30pm
'Revolution the only solution'
Speaker: Adam Buick.
The Wig and Pen public house.
9-13 George Street, Oxford OX1 2AU.

Doncaster

Saturday 7 December 2.00pm
'Being Human in Socialism: Karl Marx,
William Morris and Oscar Wilde'.
Speaker: Steve Clayton.
The Ukrainian Centre, 48 Beckett Road,
Doncaster, DN2 4AD.

West London

Tuesday 17 December 8.00pm
West London Branch Seasonal Social.
The William Morris public house,
Swan Island, 2-4 King Street,
Hammersmith, London W6 0QA.

SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX FOR 2012

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Declaration of Principles

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

Object

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

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as

Letters continued

think that our first concern needs to be the human population, many of whom suffer worse than animals.

Your bank account would only make you a capitalist if you were able to live on it without working. Even then, this wouldn't mean that you were a 'bad person'. The distinction between worker and capitalist is economic, not moral.

There are no countries even close to socialism, since all have market systems, money, hierarchical state regimes and nationalist politics. –
Editors.

SOCIALISM OR YOUR MONEY BACK

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page 7**

Book reviews continued

over \$2m in political contributions in 2012, to both Democrat and Republican candidates.

With a fair amount of imagination, it is possible to imagine a world of co-operatives, where pay differentials are far smaller than today and there is some semblance of democratic control by workers (and maybe also consumers). But it would still be a world of wages, prices and profits. Why not strive for socialism instead?
PB

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a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

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

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of

the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

50 Years Ago

Labour and the TSR-2

ONE OF the latest babies of British capitalism, proudly wheeled out by its dotting parents, is the TSR-2.

This aircraft, it is claimed, can do almost anything by way of airborne destruction. In its ability to perform the most horrifying deeds, in the range of its destructive power, in its diabolical versatility, the TSR-2 is something like a precocious, delinquent child.

These horrors are going to cost something like a couple of million pounds each. Commenting on this, Mr. Denis Healey, the Labour M.P. (who put the cost at £20 million each), asked what this sum represented in terms of schools, hospitals, and so on. This is a common complaint, whenever the amount of



The Eagle's take on the TSR-2

money which capitalism spends upon weapons is discussed. Yet what do the Healeys expect? Capitalism has a list of priorities to which it allocates its resources and human comfort is not near the top of it. This was as true under the Labour government which Mr. Healey supported as under the Tory one which he attacks.

Indeed, Mr. Healey showed how small are the differences between his own party and the Tories on the issue of armaments when he went on to say that the TSR-2 is a waste of money, which could better be spent on military helicopters and other transport aircraft and on the Buccaneer, a naval strike plane which is already in service

The best, then, that the Labour Party offers us on the matter of armaments policy is to look after the purse strings more carefully than the Conservatives have done. They will try to make sure that every penny the British ruling class spend on their weapons gets value for money.

(from 'News in Review', *Socialist Standard*, December 1963)

ACTION REPLAY

Winter Wonderland

YOU WOULD probably expect the Winter Olympics, involving skiing, bobsleigh and so on, to be held somewhere quite chilly. But the Games next February will be in Sochi, a Russian city on the Black Sea, where the average temperature that month is about the same as in Manchester.

Climate is not the only controversial point about the choice of venue. Another relates to the notorious Russian law that prohibits 'propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations' among minors, which has been used to stop people speaking in defence of gay rights or holding gay pride events. The International Olympic Committee has apparently been assured that the law will not affect participants or spectators at the Games, but not everyone is convinced by this, and no Pride House dedicated to gay athletes will be permitted.

Environmental problems are prominent too. There have been claims that the building of massive new transport infrastructure was done without proper study of the local geology, and in 2010 a storm washed away a cargo port that was in the process of being built.

And the cost is enormous, at \$50bn as much as five times the original budget. The workers who do the actual construction are treated appallingly: 'Low-skilled migrants get \$500 a month, working 12-hour shifts with no contracts, safety training or insurance... Some employers withhold workers' passports, so they cannot leave the site. Last year at least 25 people died in accidents and many more were injured' (*Economist*, 13 July).

Moreover, this being Putin's Russia, there are plenty of question marks surrounding the award of construction contracts, many of which have gone to companies owned by the president's mates. A company owned by one Arkady Rotenberg, often described as an old friend and former judo partner of Putin, has won contracts worth over \$7bn. Rotenberg's wealth is \$3.3bn, according to Forbes, and he is the 30th richest person in Russia.

Lastly, there are reports that the Russian security service will be monitoring all communications during the Games. This goes well beyond the Prism system used by the National Security Agency in the US, and could be used against anyone discussing political views, including gay rights, or business details.

According to the Olympic Charter, 'The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.' **PB**

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Voice from the Back

The Need For Socialism

For the best part of 50 years Christia Freeland worked at the *Financial Times* and *Reuters*, so when she writes a book entitled *Plutocrats: The Rise of the New Global Super-Rich* she has a fair idea of the subject. According to a book review by John Arlidge she has some revealing facts about the rich. 'These people have become richer. Not just a bit richer. But profanely richer. The top 10% of Americans, for instance receive half the nation's income. Freeland shows that inequality in Europe is rising sharply too, and points out how the rules of the economic game have been rigged to favour the rich' (*Sunday Times*, 27 October). The reviewer points out the book is stronger on the whos, hows and whys of the rise of the new global super-rich than it is on whether we should (or can) do anything about this inequality. From a socialist perspective we can, we should and we will do something. We will abolish it.

A Heartless Society

With gas and electricity prices rising a survey for Age UK found that 28 percent of pensioners said their main concern for the coming cold months was ensuring they could heat their homes. 'The charity said the figures suggested the problems

could affect as many as three million older people across the UK. Age UK also raised the alarm over the health dangers to the elderly people, warning that cold weather and poorly heated homes increased



the risk not only of influenza but also of heart attack and stroke. There are about 24,000 excess deaths in a typical British winter, many of them preventable'

(*Independent*, 28 October). Britain is one of the most developed countries in the world yet it condemns millions of old workers to this health hazard.

A Pathetic Existence

The number of people who are paid less than a 'living wage' has leapt by more than 400,000 in a year to over 5.2 million, amid mounting evidence that the so-called economic recovery is failing to help millions of working families. 'A report for the international tax and auditing firm KPMG also shows that nearly three-quarters of 18-to-21-year-olds now earn below this level - a voluntary rate of pay regarded as the minimum to meet the cost of living in the UK. ... According to the report, women are disproportionately stuck on pay below the living wage rate, currently £8.55 in London and £7.45 elsewhere. Some 27% of women are not paid the living wage, compared with 16% of men. Part-time workers are also far more likely to receive low pay than full-time workers, with 43% paid below living-wage rates compared with 12% of full-timers' (*Observer*, 3 November). This so-called 'living wage' condemns millions to a pathetic existence inside capitalist society.

Queuing For Handouts

Academics were commissioned by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to carry out an evaluation of the evidence on the use of food banks and soup kitchens in England. 'The study, by a team based at Warwick University, was completed in March. It is understood to show a surge in food bank use with twice as many people turning to them for free food in 2012 as in 2011. The report is expected to

blame the soaring cost of food; prices have risen by an average of 30% in the past five years, while average incomes have remained frozen' (*Sunday Times*, 3 November). Users of these facilities are typically given three day's worth of nutritionally balanced, non-perishable food. They must be referred by doctors, social workers or some other officials. This is the plight of a growing number of workers. Cap in hand, begging for food in a so-called advanced economy. Capitalism stinks.

Poisoned By Profit

One of the most rapid examples of the industrialised advance of modern capitalism is China. However, the Chinese workers must pay a terrible price for this advancing industrialisation. 'The number of lung cancer cases in the Chinese capital Beijing has soared over the last decade. According to figures published by the state-run Xinhua news agency, they have increased by more than 50%. Beijing health officials say smoking is still the number one cause of lung cancer, but they admit air pollution is also a factor. The World Health Organization (WHO) recently estimated that polluted air kills millions of people every year' (*BBC News*, 9 November). In their smog-polluted cities the advance of lung cancer is the inevitable outcome of the mad drive for more and more profits.



FREE LUNCH

