

socialist standard

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Let Trump have his wall

PLUS

**The Last Trump?
Bankrupt Ideologies**

A Costly Illness

The Gig Economy



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Contents December 2016

Features

10 **When ideologies run out of ideas**

What went wrong in the US elections

12 **The last Trump?**

We examine the forthcoming Trump presidency

14 **Gigs and Umbrellas**

We look at the changes that have led to new forms of work

16 **A very costly illness**

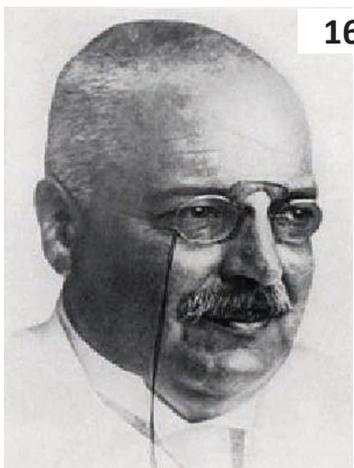
A personal account of the effects of Alzheimer's Disease

17 **Religion and culture**

Is anti-religion Eurocentric?



14



Regulars

4 **Pathfinders**

6 **Cooking the Books 1**

7 **Greasy Pole**

9 **Material World**

18 **Cooking the Books 2**

19 **Proper Gander**

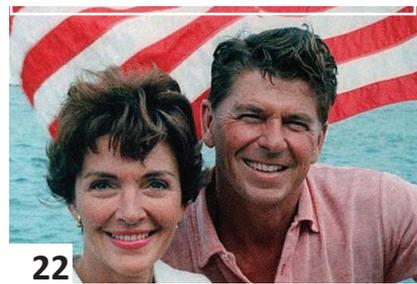
20 **Reviews**

22 **50 Years Ago**

23 **Meetings**

24 **Rear View**

24 **Free Lunch**



Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism.

Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.



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

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

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

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Life after Trump

Most political pundits predicted that Donald Trump would face defeat in the Presidential Elections. Likewise with the European Referendum in June, they were confident that the Remain side would win. On both counts, they were wrong.

In next year's French Presidential elections the Front National, led by Marine Le Pen, is expected to make major gains. In Germany, the Alternative für Deutschland, a far right populist group, may be in a position to challenge the ruling Christian Democrats. The Freedom Party of Austria gained most votes in the first round of the Austrian Presidential elections in April 2016.

Clearly, there is a surge in support for populist parties and politicians across Europe and in the USA who peddle nationalism, xenophobia and racism and pose as champions of the people against the establishment. Widespread disaffection with and mistrust of the mainstream political parties have emerged. It is not too difficult to see why this discontent has come about.

Over the years, due to the deregulation by governments of financial markets, capital has been able to flow more freely around the globe. Thus many relatively well-paid jobs in manufacturing and

in industry have moved from richer to poorer countries where the labour costs are lower. At the same time, we have witnessed the erosion of trade union power. There has been increased impoverishment in former industrial areas, such as the 'rustbelts' in the USA. Impersonal market forces have penetrated into the everyday lives of working class people resulting in a feeling of powerlessness. Governments of whatever persuasion appear at best set against these forces or at worst conniving with them. Supranational institutions, that embody these impersonal market forces, like the European Union, have become increasingly unpopular.

Concomitant with this process of 'globalisation' has been increasing immigration of workers to the richer countries. This has fostered unease among local workers who fear increased competition for jobs and scarce resources. Populists, like Donald Trump, UKIP and the Front National, exploit these anxieties for their electoral gain.

Over this period, there has been a rise in Islamophobia resulting from terrorist attacks such as the September 11 attacks, the London bombings and more recently the attacks in France and

Belgium. Populists have not been slow in latching onto this fear of Islamic terrorism. Banning Muslims from entering the US was a central plank of Trump's electoral platform.

There is no doubt that the social and economic effects of the 2008 financial crash have increased the discontent of the working class. While workers have had to endure austerity imposed on them, the rich minority continue to become richer. Governments are seen to be complicit in this increasing inequality.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellites and the failure of social democratic parties like the Labour Party to reform capitalism, socialism and communism have been seen by many workers to have failed. Therefore, when workers become angry with the effects of capitalism, many of them turn to right-wing populist parties. Ironically these parties usually champion the same free market capitalism which ultimately lies behind working class discontent. They offer no solution to working class problems, and like the Social Democratic Parties before them, will inevitably fail in their efforts to transform capitalism should they come to power. Socialism is the only solution to working class problems.

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A Seasoning of Goodwill

RATHER THAN festive, people are getting restive. In the western world post-Brexit and Trump - and doesn't that sound like a comedy duo, like Cannon and Ball or Hinge and Bracket? - liberals have lately sensed a gut-wrenching lurch towards lunacy.

But look on the bright side. People are talking about politics again because it's not boring anymore. Even kids in school are doing it. Ok, they're talking about it in a bad way, because they're appalled by the bare-faced dishonesty of it all, but at least they're *engaged*.

So now is when we should be stepping up our own efforts to popularise the socialist revolution. And we should do it in a way that acknowledges, in the aftermath of Brexit and Trump, that whatever intellectual debate is taking place on the surface it is the deep and visceral fears underneath that we really need to address.

Crime in socialism is a big fear we should discuss, and the breakdown of social order. But even deeper than that is the fear of famine.

Why famine? To take the UK as a local example, with apologies to overseas readers, a non-socialist will certainly ask why, in a world where money and trade have just been abolished, foreign farmers will agree to donate food, and foreign drivers transport it to ports, and foreign sailors ship it across to us, using vast amounts of polluting marine diesel also donated for our benefit? And if they don't do all that, then given the high density of population in these islands, won't we face immediate famine?

Well, let's find out, using some basic assumptions and back-of-the-envelope calculations.

A little enquiry among farming types will turn up an oft-cited piece of country wisdom, which is that you can feed a family of four on an acre of land, more or less, give or take. How big is an acre? Well, not very big, in fact just 220 by 22 yards. If you allow 4 people per acre, this gives you 988 people per square kilometre. So if you find the maximum cultivable or productive area of a given country, and multiply that by 988, you can get an approximation of the maximum sustainable population (MSP) of that country.

The maximum cultivable area of the UK - meaning land good for annual crops like wheat or permanent crops like fruit trees - is just 23 percent of total land area, or around 56,600km². This might not sound like much, however when you times this by 988, you get an MSP of 55,924,752. This is rather more impressive, though still shy of the current UK population estimate of 65 million.

However we have not included pasture land, currently used for dairy and beef cattle, sheep and goats. The main thing wrong with this land, from an arable point of view, is that it's not flat enough for tractors and combine harvesters. Given that pastured beef consumes around 20 times the energy it produces (grain-fed beef is around 40:1, see <http://ajcn.nutrition.org/content/78/3/660S.full>), it could make sense to convert this pasture to intensive allotments which would yield on average 20 times more food. If you include this land, the total farmable land area goes from 23 percent to 75 percent.

Even this does not include woodland, which constitutes 11 percent of the remainder, and which could in theory be turned to good account using well-established 'wild farming' techniques like permaculture and forest gardens. Most of what's left is lakes (ok for fishing), parks, golf courses and mountains. Urban development, cities, roads, buildings etc only account for about 4 percent.

So if push came to shove, the tiny islands of Britain could convert 86 percent of their land to agriculture. On a land area of 241,590km² this gives a theoretical MSP of 238,631,640.

But that's nearer the population of the USA than of Britain! So now it's time to question the assumptions. First, could an acre really feed 4 people, year in, year

out? Farmers in Britain with smallholdings say they can be generally self-sufficient in vegetables using around an acre, but there is a limit to what you can grow in the British climate, and soil quality, light, drainage and other variables will also affect yield. And you also need to let land lie fallow or else exhaust it or drench it in polluting nitrate fertilizers, so it would be wise to slash that figure in half.

But even so, and even allowing some meat farming so people can still enjoy the odd burger or sausage butty, it's hard to see how there's any obvious danger of famine. Rather than being a basket case, socialist Britain might even be a net exporter.

Currently the UK produces about 75 percent of its food and imports the rest. But it imports things you can't easily grow here, mostly Mediterranean fruit and veg, coffee, rubber and wine, and exports things the world enjoys, mainly whisky. Imports come from around 28 countries, and the government view is that the more sources you have the better, since your supply is less likely to be interrupted.

But this may not hold when socialism is first established, because global priorities may be more concerned with feeding starving people elsewhere than providing Brits with their morning orange juice and cappuccinos. And though it may be cheaper in capitalism to ship tomatoes from Spain than grow them in UK greenhouses, the same economics may not hold in a non-market moneyless economy. In short, though socialism will be global, it will be smart for people to produce as much as possible locally without relying on fleets of container ships.

And what if, despite all this, people in these islands can't meet their food needs, as many will fear? Here's the thing about famine - it is largely a capitalist phenomenon, not just economically but also demographically. If in socialism a place can't support a population, there is nothing to stop the population moving somewhere else. A similar MSP calculation gives Ireland a potential to feed 2.5 times its current population, while the USA could feed its people 5 times over on arable land alone, without considering the much vaster cattle regions. The same story is true pretty much everywhere - go check it and see. People don't take up much space at all. It's capitalism - and the rich - that engulf resources and create misery. So next time someone looks fearful about socialism, have patience, and work through the figures with them. They'll soon realise that a socialist diet will be a lot better than just boiled spuds seasoned with goodwill.

PJS



Just don't lose the plot

Politics is not in control

The last time there was a prolonged period of slump and stagnation, in the 1930s, a few correctly identified the cause of the problems facing the majority class of wage and salary workers as the world-wide capitalist system of minority class ownership and production for profit. Unfortunately, however, most of those who wanted change misidentified it as there being something wrong with capitalism's political superstructure.

Extremists on both the left and the right blamed political democracy, or 'bourgeois democracy' as they both called it, and both saw the way out as a dictatorship within the boundaries of the nation-state. Mainstream political opinion, too, envisaged a national, not to say nationalist, solution, in protectionism, or the erection of tariff barriers to keep out foreign imports as a way of trying to revive home industries. This didn't work and in the end the rivalries to protect national capitalist interests led to war.

Is history about to repeat itself? Not that there is any reason it should, but it doesn't seem so, even though there are signs of a return to national protectionism as advocated by Bernie Sanders and Trump in America and in the sentiment behind the Brexit vote in Britain. This time the political reaction of both the left and right has been different. There has been no tendency to blame political democracy as such; to blame the current elected politicians, yes, but no call to replace political democracy with political dictatorship.

Quite the contrary. This time the trend has been to blame there not being enough democracy. On the left, this has expressed itself in substantial support for parties like the Five Star Movement in Italy, Podemos in Spain, and the Pirate Party in

Iceland which blame remote and corrupt politicians and favour a more direct democracy in which voters themselves get to decide more. On the right too the call has been for more referendums and to 'take back control', even if to try to push through a populist and nationalist agenda.

Although more respectable, 'more democracy' is as little a way out as 'less democracy' was in the 1930s. This is because the problems the working majority face today, as then, result not from some flaw in the capitalist system's political superstructure but from the very basis of the system – minority ownership and production for profit. What is required is not political reform but a complete revolution in the basis of society.

Even if the political superstructure was made more democratic – with electors being able to initiate referendums, recall MPs, instruct them how to vote by internet polling, etc – this would not make any difference to the way the capitalist economic system operates.

Today's politicians fail, not because they are insincere, corrupt or incompetent (as many but not necessarily all are) nor because they are not subject to enough control by those who elected them. It's because those who elected them have set them an impossible task, that of making the capitalist economic system work in the interest of the majority class of wage and salary workers. This can't be done because the workings of the capitalist economic system forbid it.

Capitalism is a profit-making system that can only work in the

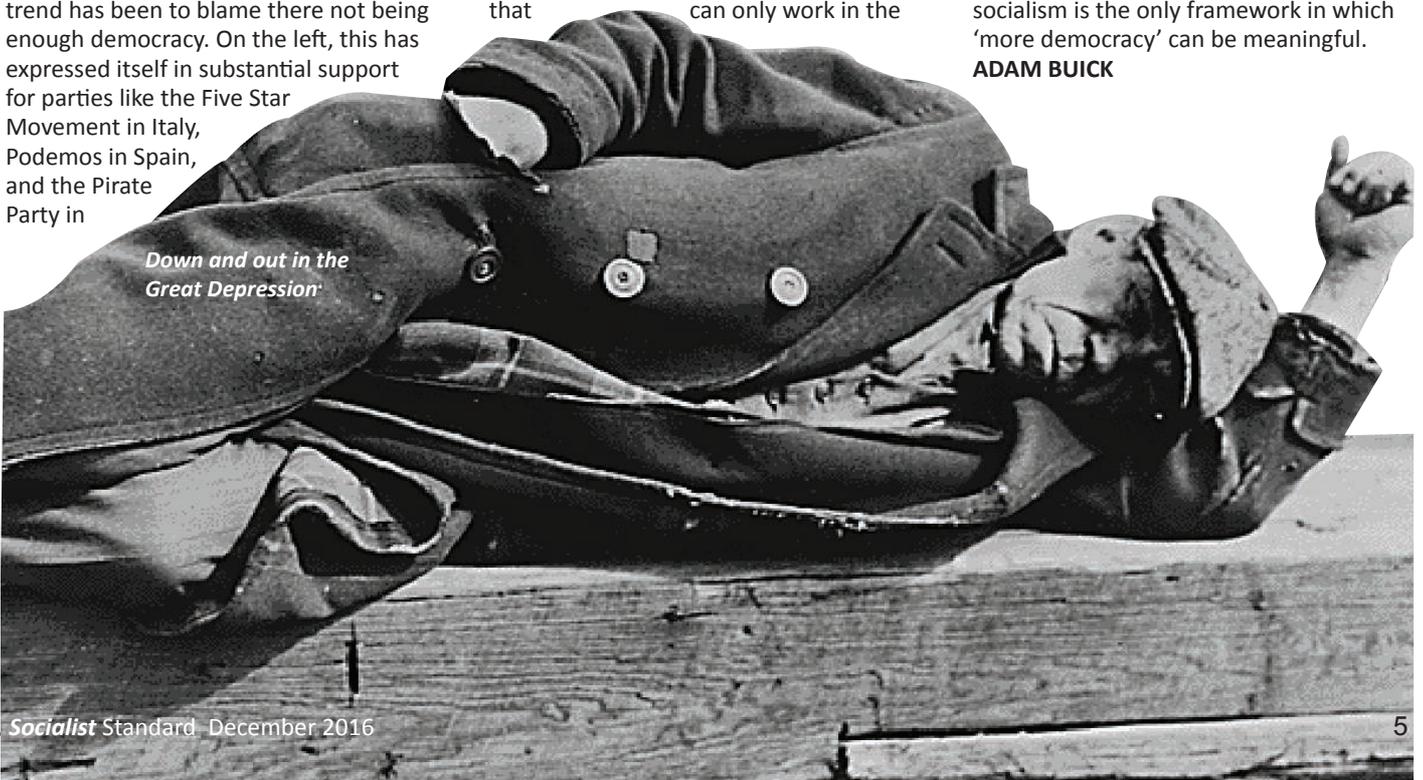
interests of the privileged few who live off profits, never in the interest of the majority. As the system runs on profits, making profits has to come before meeting people's needs. If they don't, or are not allowed to, then the economic system stalls. That's the nature of the system.

This is why greater transparency, no corruption and more voter control will not make any difference to the way capitalism works. The new breed of elected representatives that this would bring, and has already brought in some countries, would not be able to fare any better than the old gang. The economic laws of capitalism would oblige them too, on pain of provoking an economic downturn, to put profit and the conditions for profit-making above solving the majority's problems and meeting their needs properly. Given the profit system, profits must come first.

This said, the call for 'more democracy' is valid. But, within capitalism, it is not going to make any essential difference. For it to be effective requires a radical change in the basis of society, from minority ownership to common ownership by all. Only on that basis can production be geared to directly meeting people's needs instead of being subjected to the economic laws of the profit system. Only on that basis will there no longer be the vested interests and inequalities that distort formal democratic practice today. Only on that basis can what people decide they want be implemented and those they choose to carry this out be subject to effective democratic control. In short, socialism is the only framework in which 'more democracy' can be meaningful.

ADAM BUICK

*Down and out in the
Great Depression'*



The Catholic Church, capitalism and socialism

POPE LEO XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, or 'Rights and Duties of Capital and Labour' of 15 May 1891 can be seen as the social manifesto of the Roman Catholic Church. Its popularity as a social document has diminished probably even more than the atrophying authority of the Church itself, but while, effectively, other Papal pronouncements remain as Church policy only because their renunciation would bring into serious question the authority of their Papal authors, *Rerum Novarum* still reflects the acknowledged social doctrine of the Church.

Leo begins by denouncing on moral grounds the chasm between rich and poor – which, paradoxically, is an inevitable feature of the class society which he steadfastly supports, capitalism wherein originates the 'enormous fortunes of some individuals and the abject poverty of the masses.'

The Pope spells out his vision of what would be morally and economically correct for the working class in a society where the Church's moral guidance would underpin capitalism: The

"A woman by nature is fitted for home-work"

Pope Leo XIII

wages of the working man – 'a woman by nature is fitted for home-work' – should not be regulated by free contract only and 'ought not to be insufficient to support a frugal and well-conducted wage earner... if a workman's wages is sufficient to comfortably support himself, his wife and his children, he will find it easy, if he be a sensible man, to practice thrift; and he will not fail, by reducing expenses, to put by some little savings and thus secure a modest source of income... The Law should support ownership.' This in various ways is repeated and emphasised not only in this Encyclical but in succeeding Encyclicals by later Popes. Wealth, property, ownership, these are all 'natural rights' enthusiastically endorsed by the Church.

The Church, in the person of Leo and his successors, affirms that society should not be classless: 'It is impossible to reduce human society to one dead level... It is a great mistake to take up with the notion that class is naturally hostile to class and

that the wealthy and the working-men are intended by nature to live in mutual conflict... Capital cannot do without Labour nor Labour without Capital.' The Pope here is obviously taking a swipe at socialism but does not say why he thinks socialists would want to either reduce or elevate human beings to one 'dead level' nor does he tell us

how Capital could dig a field.

In his *On the Reconstruction of the Social Order* (May 1931), Pope Pius XI re-affirms and endorses the attitude to the social question put forward by Leo XIII. Especially does Pius leave no doubt as to the attitude of the Church in relation to socialism/communism. He again encourages Catholic workers to organise in Catholic trade unions and finds it unfortunate that these sectarian organisations have not attracted the numbers that what he calls the Socialist and Communist unions – by which he means non-sectarian – attract.

Pius trenchantly defends the right of private property; by this he does not mean one's habitation or items of personal value. He means capital, effectively the minority ownership of the entire means of life of the whole of society. Still, the Pope laments 'There are those who falsely and unjustly accuse the Supreme Pontiff [himself] and the Church of upholding the wealthier classes against the proletariat.'

Pius on behalf of the Catholic Church answers those who think they can reconcile religion with the concept of a society based on common ownership and the production of goods and services solely for use. Indeed, the one truth we could find in all this Papal nonsense is Pius's assertion that '*No one can be at the same time a sincere Catholic and a Socialist properly so-called.*'



Cashless but not profitless

'Apple's latest ambition is to rid the world of cash' reads the headline in the *Times* (20 October), reporting Apple's chief executive, Tim Cook, saying 'we would like to be a catalyst for taking cash out of the system.' The prospect of a 'cashless society' has been held out before. Apple's plan is that people should use their smartphones to pay for things instead of cash or a cheque or even a debit or credit card.

A cashless society is not the same as a moneyless society, for a reason hinted at in a turn of phrase used by Christopher Burniske, described as 'an analyst of digital currency':

'Apple is building a payment structure where you can use all kinds of digital means to transfer value.'

Actually, transferring value is not a bad way of describing one of the functions of money, that of being a means of

exchanging values.

When something is bought (and therefore sold) what is happening is that the ownership of something that has 'value' is being transferred from one person to another. Money is the means through which this is done. In this transaction money represents a value that is transferred from the buyer to the seller in exchange for something in principle of equal value. The buyer will normally have acquired the money by themselves having exchanged something for it.

Things that are bought and sold (Marx called them 'commodities') have value because they have been produced by work, their value being the amount of necessary labour embodied in them through the work of the series of workers involved in their production from start to finish. At one time money had intrinsic value itself as a product of labour, that involved in mining, transporting and refining the gold or silver and then of minting these into coins. So exchange really was an exchange of real things of equal value. This time is long past. For over a hundred years now, 'money' has been paper (and with the new £5 note plastic) and metal tokens for value. These still represent value even though they

have no, or not much, value themselves.

Now that the electronic technology exists there is no reason why cash could not be replaced by digital money. In fact it already is to an increasing extent. It is doubtful, though, that it will ever completely replace cash. In theory it could, but a cashless society would be not be a moneyless society. It would be a society in which cash had merely been replaced by a digital currency. It would still be a buying and selling society where goods and services were produced for sale on a market with a view to profit. It would still be a society based on the ownership of the means of wealth production by a tiny minority with the non-owning majority being forced to sell their mental and physical energies for a wage or salary. It would still be capitalism.

But what a waste of human ingenuity and IT that could be more usefully employed to help organise the production and distribution of wealth to meet human needs in the non-market, money-free society that socialism will be. Apple's real aim of course is not so much to help a cashless society emerge as to make a profit from selling the devices it makes and the apps to use them.



Rough Ride on Runway Three

HEAD AND shoulders above the rest is how Chris Grayling (pictured) emerges in many group photographic images of our mistresses and masters in government. He is outstanding in ways other than a physical presence because, since he first got into Parliament in 2011 as the Honourable Member for Epsom and Ewell, he has held a generosity of ministerial offices including a spell when the Tories were in opposition as a Front Bench Shadow Minister. His record has given him valuable experience of normalising some controversial matters, to the extent that it seemed natural that he should be Secretary of State for Transport when at the end of October it was confirmed that the dispute over the third runway at Heathrow Airport had been settled. Settled, that is, to the extent that it will be laid down together with all the associated horrors of chaotic terminals and jam-packed roads and atmospheric pollution – and engine noise.



Heathrow

It was a matter of going along with a recommendation by the Airports Commission to develop Heathrow rather than Gatwick Airport, which was hoping to be allowed to have a second runway. Grayling stated the case for Heathrow: 'The step that government is taking today is truly momentous. I am proud that after years of discussion and delay this government is taking decisive action to secure the UK's place in the global aviation market – securing jobs and business opportunities for the next decade and beyond'. This news was the worst possible for thousands of people – for example those in Harmondsworth, where some 700 homes, an ancient church and eight Grade Two listed buildings and a graveyard would disappear under the bulldozers, as would the nearby ancient village of Sipson. And to another, crucial objection Grayling had an answer – if that is the correct term – ready: 'No airport is able to be silent', he assured the objectors

and others and then, before the gasps of outrage had died away, 'but we have studied new supplementary evidence that shows it won't be quite as noisy as some people seem to think it will be'.

Combative

These assurances might have been more effective if they had been voiced by someone with a less turbulent and discouraging past than Grayling. He was appointed to his present job last July; in the past he has held nine others of varying responsibility and the most he has survived in any of them was two years. His first experience of office was as Minister for Employment, from 2010 until 2012, when he was responsible for the supposedly constructive work of the Job Centres. He quickly gained a reputation for his combative style including a reduction in costs by making some 100,000 staff at the Job Centres redundant, with a predictable effect on the benefits of out-of-work people who were condemned by him for 'being habitually unemployed, generation after generation, living in sink council estates'. He carried this assessment style over into his later job as Lord Chancellor and Minister for Justice when he laid down that prisoners should be encouraged to remodel themselves away from their 'something for nothing culture' and he took steps to stop them receiving books from their families and friends. He also encouraged private companies such as Securicor and G4S to play a greater – and more profitable – part in the supervision of prisoners released early on licence. These achievements were responsible for him being dubbed 'Failing Grayling' and made it difficult to understand why he had been appointed to some of the more sensitive posts in government.

Demonstrators

But Grayling's store of Arguments for Survival is unusually deep, enabling him to survive when his rivals have given up. When he was dumped with the responsibility for seeing the Third Runway through to establishment it had been in process, from one side to the other, for a very long time. It was another example of politicians who habitually encourage us to

trust them for their talent for crisp clear-headed attitudes but are liable to change their collective minds, often diametrically from one embattled side to the other – at times developing nothing better than a state of chaos. Heathrow was opened as 'London Airport Heathrow' in 1946, coming out of the purchase in 1930 of 150 acres of land by an aircraft engineer from the vicar of Harmondsworth. Over the years it repeatedly expanded, with a succession of Terminals until in 2001 the then Labour government was persuaded by a campaign to manage the aerospace congestion by building a further runway. In 2003 Alistair Darling, when he was Minister of Transport, produced a White Paper which effectively set the debate going, confirmed by another White Paper in 2005. This set off a widespread, organised protest movement which objected to the proposal on the grounds of aircraft noise, atmospheric pollution and road traffic congestion – on one occasion making its points with a band of intrepid demonstrators on the roof of Parliament. This did not persuade the Labour government with its Prime Minister Gordon Brown to change its policy.

No Ifs No Buts

That had to wait for 2009 and the future Prime Minister of the coalition government David Cameron who made

Harmondsworth



many people feel a lot better with his famous declaration including the phrase that '...the third runway at Heathrow is not going ahead no ifs, no buts' and after the 2010 election the Lib Dem Nick Clegg was encouraged to try to seduce a few votes, along with all those others who had believed him in the matter of student loans, by agreeing that the whole idea of a Third Runway was dead in the airways. And there was the next Tory Prime Minister

Continued page 18

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

North London branch. Meets 3rd Thurs. 8pm at Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Ave, NW5 2RX. Contact: Chris Dufton 020 7609 0983 nlb.spgb@gmail.com
 South London branch. Meets last Saturday in month, 2.30pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Contact: 020 7622 3811.
 West London branch. Meets 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY. Contact: 020 8740 6677. tenner@abelgratis.com

MIDLANDS

West Midlands regional branch. Meets last Sun. 3pm (check before attending). Contact: vincent.otter@globalnet.co.uk. 01242 675357.
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 Lancaster branch. Meets 2nd Sun. 3pm, Friends Meeting House, Meeting House Lane. Ring to confirm: P. Shannon, 07510 412 261, spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org.
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 South West regional branch. Meets 2nd Sat of even months. Railway Tavern, Salisbury, 2pm (check before attending). Contact: Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol BS5 6DN. 0117 9511199.
 Brighton Discussion Group. Contact: Anton

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SCOTLAND

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 Glasgow branch. Meets 3rd Weds. at 7pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Contact: Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. 01355 903105. peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk.
 Dundee. Contact: Ian Ratcliffe, 12 Finlow Terrace, Dundee, DD4 9NA. 01382 698297.
 Ayrshire. Contact: Paul Edwards 01563 541138. rainbow3@btopenworld.com.
 Lothian Socialist Discussion @Autonomous Centre Edinburgh, ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Meets 4th Weds. 7-9pm. Contact: F. Anderson 07724 082753.

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Pirate Nations – The Jolly Roger

‘WE’VE HAD enough!’ The Pirate Party have captured the imagination of many in Iceland, especially the young. Iceland’s political landscape has been transformed by its general election result and the success of the Pirate Party which won 10 seats in the 63-seat parliament – up from the three it won in the 2013 general election, in a voter turn-out of 79.2 percent. For the Icelandic establishment, they may still retain control of the helm but their ship of state is beginning to flounder.

The Pirate Party does not have a leader, although former Wikileaks activist and founding MP Birgitta Jonsdóttir tends to speak for it in public (perhaps, as a poet, she has a better way with words). She said her party subscribes to its agenda of ‘fundamental system change’.

They are challenging the assumption that political leaders are necessary and politics could not operate without them.

Ásta Guthrún Helgadóttir, another of their parliamentary members explained, ‘We are not here to gain power. We are here to distribute power.’

The Pirates’ core issues appeal to the popular sentiment in Iceland; direct democracy; freedom of expression; civil rights; and government transparency as set out in a crowd-sourced constitution which creates new rules for civic governance.

Political parties under the Pirate flag are now active in many countries. But we should remember that their libertarian attitudes were based on the history of real

and sometimes not so real pirate ‘nations’. In the modern era, we have had Somalia which was notorious for its piracy, while one of the earliest foreign interventions of the newly-independent United States was the suppression of the Barbary pirates operating from North Africa. Our conception of piracy stems from the adventurers of those state-sponsored buccaneers and privateers from the time of Raleigh and Drake when the Caribbean was a melting pot of poor immigrants, political exiles and escaped plantation slaves.

Christopher Hill in *Radical Pirates?* described life at sea as based upon mutual aid, a necessary survival tactic in which piracy was no exception in fostering a natural solidarity. Many pirates had crewed on merchant ships and grown to dislike the hierarchal authoritarianism.

Booty was divided up by a fairly egalitarian share system and those maimed received extra compensation. The Dutch Governor of Mauritius met a pirate crew and commented: ‘Every man had as much say as the captain’. The captain enjoyed no special privileges.

Pirate captains were elected and could be deposed at any time for abuse of their authority; for cowardice or cruelty towards the crew and revealingly, for refusing ‘to take and plunder English Vessels’ for the pirates had turned their backs on the state and its laws and no lingering feelings of patriotism were to be allowed. The captain only had right of command in battle, otherwise, all decisions were made by the whole ship’s company.

Libertalia (or Libertatia) was a more-than-likely fictionalised colony founded in the late 17th century in Madagascar by pirates. Marcus Rediker, in *Villains of All Nations*, writes of Libertalia, ‘[The] pirates were anti-capitalist, opposed to the dispossession that necessarily accompanied the historic ascent of wage labor and capitalism. They insisted that ‘every Man was born free, and had as much Right to what would support him, as to the Air he respired.’ They resented the ‘encroachments’ by which ‘Villains’ and ‘unmerciful Creditors’ grew ‘immensely rich’ as others became ‘wretchedly miserable.’ They spoke of the ‘Natural right’ to ‘a Share of the Earth as is necessary for our Support.’ They saw piracy as a war of self-preservation. [They redefined the] fundamental relations of property and power. They had no need for money ‘where every Thing was in common, and no Hedge bounded any particular Man’s Property,’ and they decreed that ‘the Treasure and Cattle they were Masters of should be equally divided.’

Of course, the Pirate Party of Iceland will be unable to manage things much better than the conventional parties since it is capitalism, not the politicians, which runs its government and which is to blame for all our problems. They will have the doomed future of the original anarchistic pirates they wish to emulate, which they will soon discover if they ever do form a government.

ALJO





When ideologies

The “establishment” candidates Hillary Clinton and Jeb Bush had money and media backing, but their bankrupt ideas doomed their campaigns.

The 2016 US presidential election revealed the splits within the Democratic and the Republican Parties. We witnessed the breakdown of the coalitions that each party had relied upon in past elections. As the political tendencies within both coalitions grew estranged from each other, the conventional ideology and slogans of each party became increasingly hollow and unconvincing. This new reality was revealed over the course of the primaries and the general election, as the ordinary tactics of the ‘establishment’ candidates proved not only ineffective but often completely counterproductive.

Identity crisis

At the outset of the presidential primaries, however, it seemed that only the Republican Party was facing a true identity crisis. The first sign of trouble was that well over a dozen Republican politicians declared their candidacy for the Party’s presidential nomination, reflecting the perceived weakness of the supposed frontrunner Jeb Bush. Moreover, some of these candidates had risen to prominence on the back of the so-called Tea Party movement, which rewarded politicians who aggressively challenged the ‘moderate’ Party leadership.

Yet, despite the breakdown in Party discipline and open criticism of Republican leaders, nearly all of those seeking the nomination imagined, on the basis of past primaries, that a viable candidate would have to pledge loyalty to the sacred principles of the Republican Party, such as Christian values, a belief in small government (i.e., welfare and tax cuts), faith in corporate deregulation and the free market, and blind support for overseas military adventures. Those core principles roughly correspond to some key factions within the Republican coalition: the pious Christian right, the small-government “libertarians” (‘free market’ capitalists), and the hawkish Neocons.

Those factions were already coming into severe conflict with each other years before the 2016 election. For instance, the obsession of the Christian right with issues like abortion or gay marriage, was alienating Republicans (particularly those in urban areas) who were less interested in serving God’s will than in rendering unto Caesar as little as humanly possible. The Libertarians and other true believers in small government were, in turn, vehemently opposed to the massive spending on the military and foreign wars,

bringing them into sharp opposition with the Neocons and the foreign-policy establishment. And the Neocons themselves already had one foot planted in the Democratic Party, which had continued under the Obama administration the Bush-era policy of aggressive ‘regime change.’

Yet even while the Republican coalition was splitting along such lines, the Republican candidates stuck to the idea that it was necessary to come across as a Bible-thumping, corporation-loving Christian warmonger in order to win the nomination. The one candidate who ignored that outdated common sense was of course Donald Trump, himself a Tweet-wielding, corporation-running, Capitalist a-hole.

Trump refused to genuflect at the altar of orthodoxy, it can be imagined, simply because it did not suit his brash showbiz persona. Whatever the case, his approach turned out to perfectly suit the public mood. And, with surprising eagerness, the rank-and-file abandoned supposedly cherished Republican beliefs in order to back a two-time divorcee from that ‘den of sin’ New York City who called for economic protectionism and stimulus spending (along with his tax cuts) and declared that the invasion of Iraq was a colossal blunder.

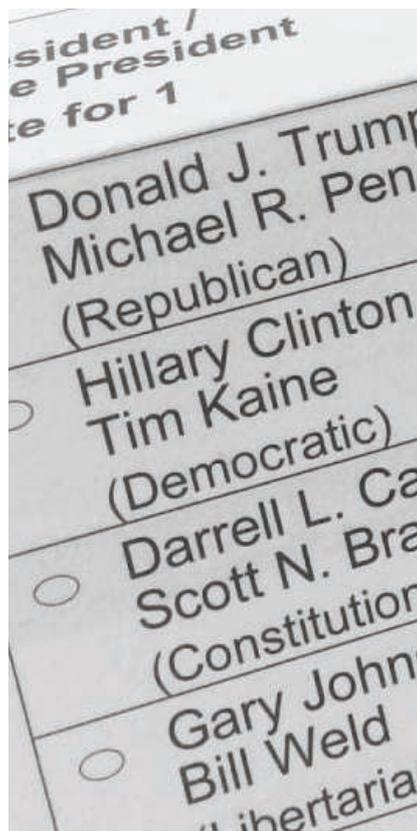
Complacent

The willingness of Republicans to turn their backs on Party dogma in favor of the ‘straight-shooter’ Trump was a sign that the public mood was shifting dramatically. But the Democratic leadership looked on complacently, confident that the Republican primary was unfolding in a way that would benefit Clinton.

In April 2015, Democratic strategist and Clinton confidant Sydney Blumenthal suggested in an email (later released by Wikileaks) that the Clinton campaign should elevate what he called the ‘Pied Piper candidates’ (like Ted Cruz, Ben Carson, and Donald Trump) ‘so that they are “leaders of the pack and tell the press to take [them] seriously” as a way of moving “established candidates further to the right” and making the “more extreme candidates . . . actually represent the mainstream of the Republican Party.’

Under normal circumstances this may have been an astute strategy. But this time around the Democratic leaders were badly misreading the situation in concluding that only a moderate from either party was a viable candidate. The Republican leaders shared that common sense; but fortunately for them (in the end) they lacked the tools that the Democrats had to crush an insurgent campaign.

Thanks to the Democrats’ ‘super



es run out of ideas

delegates' and frontloaded southern primaries, not to mention a Democratic National Committee crawling with Clinton operatives, the nomination of Hillary was all but a foregone conclusion more than a year before the primaries even began.

Even the participation of Bernie Sanders in the primary seemed, at first, to play right into the typical election strategy of the Democrats. His assigned role, like Dennis Kucinich and other 'radical' candidates in the past, was to generate just enough interest in the election among youth, trade unionists, and others on the 'Left' to prevent them from deserting the Democrats for a third-party candidate. Bernie himself seemed to have no greater ambition initially than to 'push the Party to the left,' but to his surprise, no doubt, a powerful movement began to gather around him.

Despite all the careful preparations to keep the rabble from being roused in the election, the split between rank-and-file Democrats and the Party leaders was laid bare over the course of what became a bitter primary battle between Sanders and Clinton. As in the case of the Republicans, the election campaign was not the cause of the split, but it did make very clear to the public the deep divisions that had been papered over during the Bush and Obama years.

In fact, the fraying of the Democratic coalition was already well underway back in the 1990s under the Bill Clinton administration. The coalition had once centered on the strength of the labor unions, who could mobilize campaign workers and funds to back Democratic candidates. The steady decline of organized labor (accelerated thanks to Clinton-era policies) altered the balance of forces within the Party. Moreover, the Democratic leadership were able to take labor-union support for granted, since organized workers were hardly likely to defect to the rabidly anti-union Republican Party. Another group whose unconditional support was assumed were African Americans, who had been almost

uniformly opposed to the Republicans ever since President Nixon implemented his 'southern strategy' of appealing to white southern workers.

This election, the Democrats also thought the Hispanic vote was in the bag, thanks to Trump's vilification of Mexicans and obsession with building a border wall. But Obama has deported well over two million illegal immigrants during his terms in office, breaking the record of George W. Bush, which may account for why Hillary only won just over 60 percent of the Hispanic vote.

In any case, taking the votes of so many of the rank-and-file Party members and supporters for granted was premised on the singular awfulness of the Republican Party — and for a time the strategy seemed to work well enough. But an ideology that is largely negative or defensive offering few positive principles or goal — seems doomed to failure.

And the end did come in November 2016 with the defeat of the ideologically bankrupt Clinton campaign, which had smeared supporters of Trump (and Sanders!) as misogynists and racists, and even dabbled in laughable conspiracy theories suggesting sinister links between Trump and Putin.

Nostalgia

Granted, the central ideas of the Sanders and Trump campaigns were based on a nostalgia for the good old days (that never were) — whether returning the Democratic Party to its role as the supposed party of the working class or bringing 'greatness' back to American somehow — but at least their slogans did challenge the status quo and create the impression of having some positive content.

It might seem that the Trump and Sanders insurgencies offer the two parties a way out of their ideological and organizational impasses. But is that the case?

Trump, certainly has taken a broad axe to the rotten planks of the old Republican platform. But his own incipient platform looks to be very shaky. For instance, how is he going to balance tax cuts with expanding the military budget and increasing spending on infrastructure as a stimulus measure? His surprising victory has brought a temporary unity (or truce) among warring factions within the Party, but no fundamental compromise is on the cards.

Meanwhile, Bernie's supporters hope to win Party leadership from the Clintonites to implement 'progressive' policies. Much of their criticism of the Party establishment is on the mark, but they overlook the very basic fact that capitalism is a system of production for profit. This reality shapes policy and leaves only a limited space for the sort of reformist policies the 'Berniecrats' are advocating. The supporters of Sanders may be right about a strategy to win voters to the Democratic Party, but the role of the Party is not simply to win elections but to administer capitalism effectively, which is to say, 'profitably.'

It is impossible to predict exactly where the Republican or Democratic Party might be headed, but if either party were to undergo a decisive split it would

continued page 22



The recent competition to decide who is the best person to front the American capitalist system for the next four years has led to a lot of soul-searching in the newspapers.

The Last Trump?



Articles have poured out to explain why Donald Trump won. The first point to make is that he didn't actually win. Hillary Clinton got more votes than he did. They still haven't finished adding it all up yet (the U.S. is a big country) but it's certain that Clinton got more votes – very narrowly, true, but still more votes. They got over sixty million votes each, but the latest estimate is that Clinton could have over a million more than Trump. The Americans have a strange system: each state sends a varied number of members to an 'electoral college', which elects a new president. If one candidate in a state has one more vote from the public than anyone else, he or she automatically gets all that state's electoral votes (except in Maine and Nebraska where the votes can be split). This means that one candidate can get more votes across the country, and still lose – or can get fewer popular votes, and still win. At the 2012 election, when it seemed at one point that the Republican candidate would lose out under this system, a certain Donald Trump denounced the system as being 'a disaster for democracy'. Now that the same Donald Trump is gaining by this odd arrangement, it turns out that the system is just fine.

Executive power

The American president, to all outward appearance, is the most powerful man in the world. An article in the *Washington Post* (11 November) was full of foreboding about the man who is shortly going to be able to wield that power. 'Trump will command not only a massive nuclear arsenal and the

most robust military in history; but also the ability to wage numerous wars in secret and without congressional authorization; a ubiquitous system of electronic surveillance that can reach most forms of human communication and activity; and countless methods for shielding himself from judicial accountability, congressional oversight and the rule of law.'

This power has been built up steadily over recent years. The process was constantly and bitterly attacked by Barack Obama while George Bush was president. In 2007 Obama said: 'This administration also puts forward a false choice between the liberties we cherish and the security we provide.' But as soon as he became president, 'Obama not only continued many of the most extreme executive-power policies he once condemned, but in many cases strengthened and extended them. His administration detained terrorism suspects without due process, proposed new frameworks to keep them locked up without trial, targeted thousands of individuals (including a U.S. citizen) for execution by drone, invoked secrecy doctrines to shield torture and eavesdropping programs from judicial review, and covertly expanded the nation's mass electronic surveillance.' It's amazing how something which is evidently quite wrong when someone else is doing it becomes evidently quite right when you are doing it yourself.

Now this enormous power has been handed over to a man who boasts that he can assault women with impunity – which means that an individual who brags about committing criminal acts is now (ultimately) in charge

of enforcing the criminal law. So someone who almost glories in the reputation of being a loose cannon is going to be in charge of the nuclear codes which could unleash American nuclear bombs upon some 'enemy' population. The man who has the power to start the third world war is on record as saying that if Japan had nuclear bombs, then in a showdown with North Korea 'they'd probably wipe them out pretty quick', ignoring the obvious corollary that such a nuclear clash would inevitably involve the rest of the world as well, almost certainly leading to the human race being wiped out 'pretty quick'. Trump's declared or evident positions on gun-control, on abortion, on torture (he favours re-introducing waterboarding), on race (he was endorsed by the Ku Klux Klan), and on international politics (he has no objection to the blood-soaked dictator Assad of Syria, nor to Russia's Putin – 'so highly respected in his own country and beyond') are enough to send shivers up the spines of those who believe that the capitalist system can be progressively ameliorated to the point where the workers will have nothing left to wish for. Then his fierce declared hostility to immigration (though his opinions veer wildly from day to day – e.g. he himself married an immigrant – in fact two immigrants) his declared hostility is a sad headache to those members of the capitalist class who rely on immigration (from lower-wage countries) to keep down US rates of pay.

Like some other prominent people who appear to be keen on wars as a general proposition, he was unfortunately not able to give the Vietnam War his personal attendance – he got four student deferments and then a medical deferment. And Trump has praised the usefulness of American bankruptcy laws. Half a dozen casino or hotel businesses of his went bankrupt between 1991 and 2009, but while others may have lost money, these regrettable episodes do not appear to have impacted upon Trump's own prosperity (he has never been *personally* bankrupt). Altogether he is no stranger to the American courts. Apparently more than seventy lawsuits against him are pending, some connected with the so-called 'Trump University', some of whose students felt they had been short-changed.

Not so smart

Some members of the working class are so humbled by the capitalist system that they come to believe that the upper class are simply smarter than the rest of us. One theory is that if all the money in the world were shared out equally among everybody today, in six months the present upper class would have grabbed it all again. But others believe that the rich, so far from being smarter than everyone else, are in fact less smart. And if the two contenders for the job of the immensely powerful American president – Trump and Clinton – were anything to go by, that seems much more likely. When Clinton was in charge of American

foreign affairs, she used a personal e-mail account to deal with some affairs of national importance. She apparently was oblivious to the danger – almost the certainty – that political opponents would leap gratefully upon such naivety. And there were other occasions when (to say the least) she did not maintain a clear division between important national affairs on the one hand and various Clinton funds on the other, despite the obvious fact that such dealings would later give valuable ammunition to her political opponents. As for Trump, foolishness must be his middle name. Even if you felt a personal pride in your ability to assault women, would you openly boast about it, in circumstances where (in these electronic days) your words might well be recorded for



Trump: a loose cannon who is going to be in charge of the nuclear codes which could unleash American nuclear bombs upon some 'enemy' population

posterity? And where if you ever fulfilled your ambition of standing for the presidency, your words (no longer deniable) would probably antagonize more than half the voters? It is tempting to believe that members of the upper class have so many people working for them that they never have to undertake the planning, the decisions, the careful consideration which members of the working class have to exercise constantly merely in order to operate their daily lives.

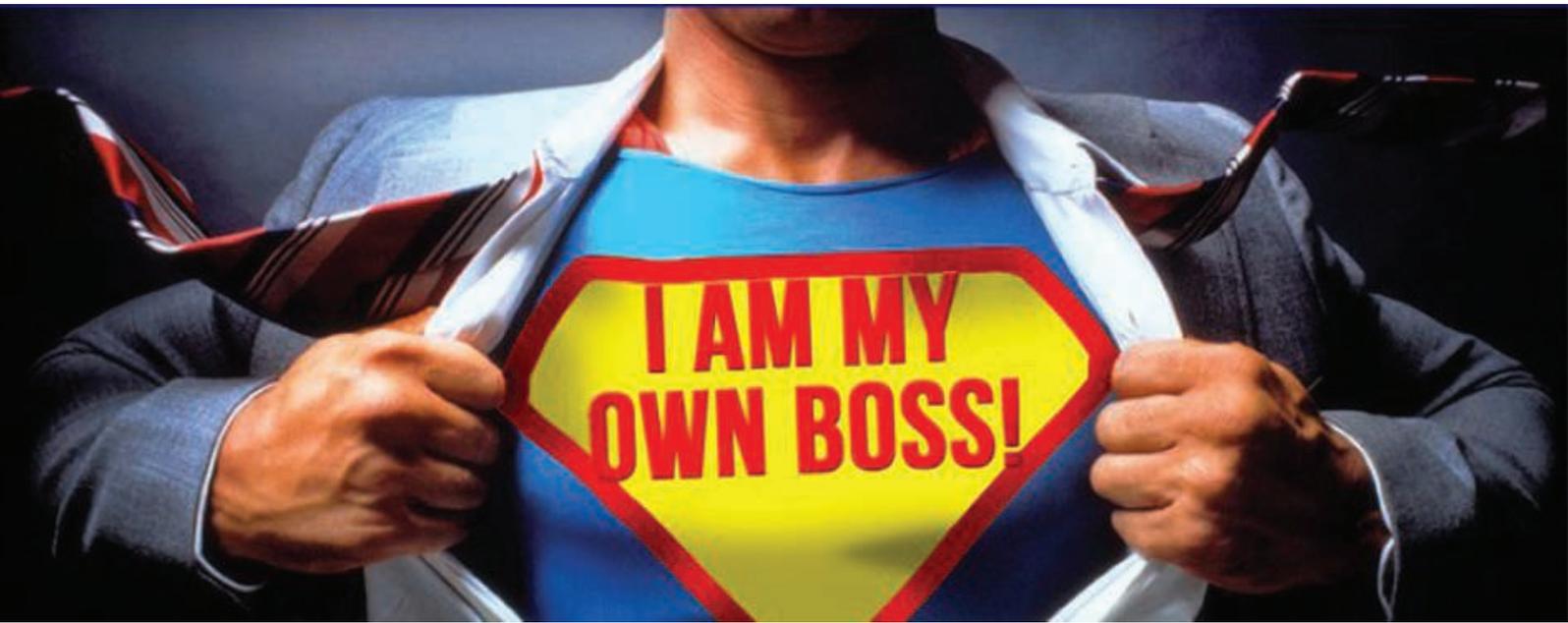
Be that as it may, the thought of the immense powers shortly to be exercised by someone as unpredictable as Trump has caused deep cogitation even among those who most fervently support our present system.

Recently the *London Times*, not the most revolutionary of newspapers, carried an article lamenting recent events in America, where, among other things, 'the rich have got much, much richer' (10 November). As for the ordinary people, 'no one prioritized their loss and anguish until a billionaire channelled their voice. The system is rigged, Trump told them, and the truth is that it is, although not perhaps in the sense that he meant. Since the 1970s American society has grown radically more unequal, as union power has collapsed, competition increased and shareholders and managers awarded themselves the lion's share of income. Workers' pay has risen by eleven per cent in real terms in that time, while CEO's pay has risen by almost 1000 percent. Workers no longer get the rewards from increased productivity. The top one per cent are taking 95 cents in every dollar, compared to 50 cents just twenty years ago.'

So the world waits, with bated breath, for the Trump presidency. But the almost meaningless slogan 'Make America great again' can only evoke the obvious retort that America has always been great – for those who own it.

ALWYN EDGAR

We look at some changes that have led to new forms of work, and ask whether these are truly new and better than traditional kinds of employment.



Gigs and Umbrellas

Being your own boss, as a self-employed sole trader, may sound like a good idea. You can to some extent decide on your own hours, and are not subject to a boss or manager who lays down the law about how you do your work. But, like so much under capitalism, the reality does not match the image.

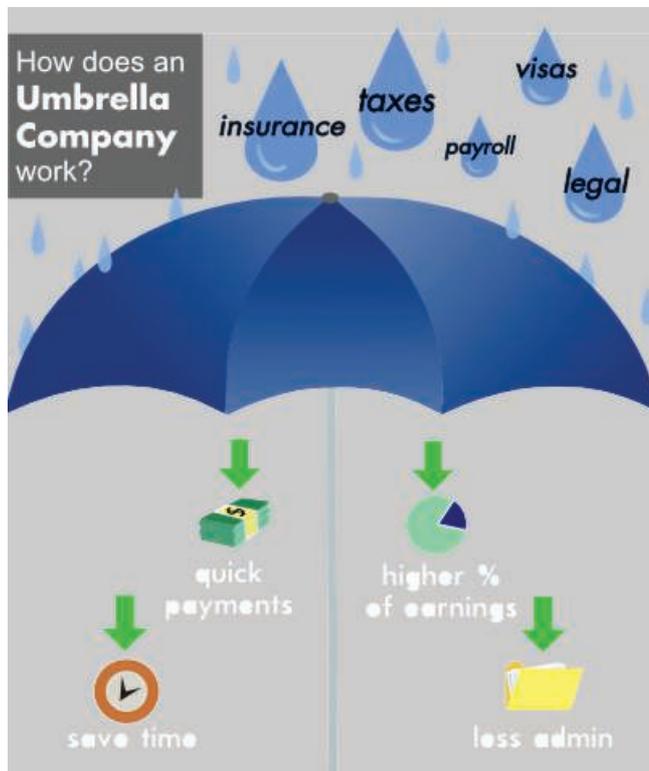
Officially, a self-employed person runs their own business and sells goods or services for a profit. You can hire other workers, you provide your own equipment, and (according to gov.uk) you 'can decide how, where and when you do your work'. You have to register as self-employed, keep proper records and complete a self-assessment tax return each year. You will have to cope with insurance and business rates and provide for your pension. You have to worry about business plans and cash flow. Moreover, you will not get sick pay or holiday pay, and income can vary and be unpredictable. Self-employment is clearly not all plain sailing, with lots of administrative matters to take care of as well as being sure you actually make enough money from your work.

There are nearly five million self-employed in the UK,

an increase of 45 percent since 2002; part-time self-employment has grown much faster than full-time. The self-employed work in many areas, from plumbers and electricians to accountants. As another example, many hairdressers rent the use of a chair in a salon, rather than being employed by the salon. But, while the number of self-employed is going up, their earnings have been going down. One claim is that average wages for such workers are less than they were twenty years ago, at £240 a week. BBC Online (20 October) looked at some examples. One man who has his own cleaning business was earning far less than previously but said he had a much better work-life balance. A session singer said payments had changed very little over the last couple of decades but, with changes in music-buying habits, his income from sales was now virtually non-existent. The rise in numbers is partly the result of workers who have lost their jobs trying to set up in business on their own. But it is also due to people being classified as self-employed when that description is not really applicable to them.

At the end of October, minicab drivers for the firm

Uber won a case at an employment tribunal, which ruled that they should be classed as workers employed by the company, rather than as self-employed, and so should receive holiday pay and the 'national living wage'. Uber put passengers in touch with drivers via a smartphone app, and claimed to work for the drivers, enabling them to increase their 'business'. But in fact Uber recruited and



How an umbrella company describes its activities - from contractortaxation.com

controlled the drivers, set their fares and ran a disciplinary procedure. The tribunal judges described the company as using 'twisted language' to describe their relationship with its workers. Uber took 20 percent commission from its forty thousand British drivers, and is a massive international company operating in over sixty countries, with income last year of \$1.5bn. This was clearly not self-employment at all but a bogus set-up which made the company big profits, intensified the exploitation of the drivers and worsened their working conditions.

It has been estimated that well over 400,000 of the five million mentioned earlier are wrongly classed as self-employed. It is impossible to know the correct figure, but it is clear that Uber are not the only company that gets away with calling employees self-employed. The courier company Hermes has been alleged to be another example, as has Deliveroo. Even the Financial Secretary to the Treasury has stated that 'Employment status in the UK is determined by the reality of the working relationship and not simply by the terms of any contract' (theregister.co.uk, 27 October). In fact this is part of a wider phenomenon, sometimes known as the gig economy (based on the idea of musicians performing and getting paid for individual performances, rather than working regular hours). A gig economy is 'an environment in which temporary positions are common and organizations contract with independent workers for short-term engagements' (WhatIs.com). Freelance work has been common for years, especially in areas such as journalism and translating, and the majority of freelance workers are

women. The Internet has increasingly made it possible for people to work from almost anywhere, so that the worker's location and that of the company employing them can be miles or even continents apart. Many more people now work from home or from coffee houses, which can be very atomising in terms of having no face-to-face contact with fellow workers.

Another new development in this area is so-called umbrella companies, which operate as intermediaries between temporary workers (often called contractors) and the agencies that provide work. About a third of supply teachers, for instance, have had to join such a company. Supposedly this makes it easier for teachers who work in different schools, and even for different agencies, in the course of a week, as they have only one organisation to deal with from an administrative and payroll point of view. But many workers in such a situation have found themselves worse off financially, since the umbrella company takes a cut from their earnings, and it can take some time to get paid. This is not technically self-employment, and is in reality little different (if at all) from working directly for an agency or school.

The *Communist Manifesto* noted how fairly prestigious occupations such as doctor, lawyer and scientist had under capitalism been converted into wage labourers. Maybe the nature of employment is currently changing further. Rather than the masses of workers employed for years or decades in mine, mill, factory, shop and office, there is now much more short-term and temporary work with a sequence of employers, where someone can work for one company for a week or a month but then for a quite different company, undertaking different projects for which continued employment with one employer would simply not be appropriate. Many computer programmers and other IT specialists work this way, for instance. It all shows how zero-hours contracts are by no means the only way in which capitalism is making workers even more insecure.

One defence of self-employed status is that it involves workers owning the means of production. But owning a laptop or a van and a few tools does not make anyone independent of the market system or the overarching control of the capitalist class. The gig economy, umbrella companies, ostensible self-employment: none of these alters the subordinate status of the workers they apply to or represents anything other than a merely formal break with wage labour.

PAUL BENNETT

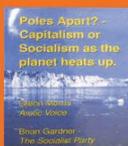
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A very costly illness

The occasion of the first discernible symptom was treated as a joke. Around the table in the coffee bar on a Saturday morning Ben suddenly lunged across to grab his brother's croissant and sat there eating it. But he was not smiling. And neither was his brother or his wife Deb. And it was the same on another coffee morning when Ben suddenly arranged two unnecessary seats at the table, telling the others that these were for his father and his eldest sister – who had been dead for some years.

But as the disease took its remorseless grip on him it became less and less appropriate to be amused by those symptoms. There was the morning when Deb still had enough confidence in him to agree for him to go to the shops in the parade around the corner from the maisonette where they lived but this was changed when he lost his way along the half mile or so of the pavement – and did not bring back any shopping. Then there was the sudden need to lock away all food and drink in a high cupboard after Deb came upon him in the kitchen making himself a morning coffee from a basic ingredient of washing up liquid. And when he suffered such confusion over doors – which one led where and why – that he mistook their front door for the entrance to their toilet and urinated on their balcony in view of the other residents.

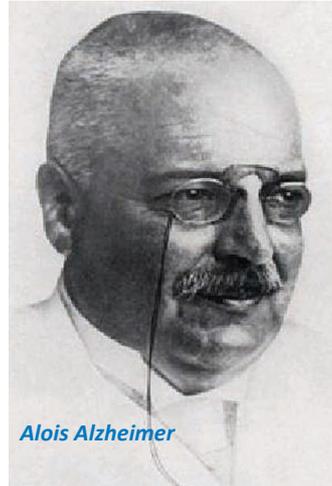
Respite Care

Ben's reaction to this situation was mainly a primitive fear for himself, which caused him to be guarded – defensively abusive – to others who put him under pressure to behave in a more conventional fashion. There were times when he refused to go to bed at night or to get up in the morning, to get dressed or to eat his food. And if anyone – particularly Deb – put any pressure on him to change he reacted with sulks, rages, threats. There were times – in a shop, a café, a car – when the situation became so badly out of control that she was starkly up against the memory of a friend whose husband also suffered from the same disease which changed his behaviour from a gentle, deeply caring partner and father to their two daughters into a man whose response to the presence of his wife was to be physically violent towards her. She tried Respite Care – short periods in a nursing home to provide his family with some relief – but his conduct was such that it became necessary for him to stay in a home permanently. Where he fumed and glared and swore until pneumonia took him into impotence and then the relief from death. This had to be an immediate prospect for Ben when his periods of Respite Care led to a succession of amnesia and seriously disabling accidents. It did not take long for him also to be placed permanently in a home – selected by Deb after prolonged, aching guilty assessments of the locality – where they kept him as free from serious accidents as they could until he also faded away, in the local hospital, from what was officially recorded as another case of pneumonia. In fact he had suffered for some ten years from the developing grip of Alzheimer's Disease.

Cigars

The disease is named after Alois Alzheimer, the German neurologist and psychiatrist who perceived the particular pathological condition of dementia which carries his name. Medical science was always his obsession and in the late 19th

century he took up a residential placement at the Hospital for Mentally Ill and Epileptics in Frankfurt, where his pioneering work was deservedly regarded as Free From Restraint. (He was, incidentally, a cigar smoking obsessive and was inclined to leave his stubs on the bench where he had demonstrated his work to his students – who thought none the less of him for it). Alzheimer was especially involved – obsessed would



not be too strong a term – with a 51 year-old woman who suffered from behavioural problems with a deepening memory loss developing into severe dementia. When she died in 1906 Alzheimer examined not only the records of her illness but also her brain. The conditions he found there were distinctive enough to justify a diagnosis of senile dementia which became known as Alzheimer's Disease. He died, aged 51, in 1915 from cardiac failure.

Reading

Ben was at first reluctant to take advice about his developing strange behaviour but Deb insisted. The early diagnosis was that he had a reading problem and, although he could read all the newspapers and some hefty tomes of history, he was referred to a Therapeutic Reading Group in the hospital. It was through Deb's insistence that he was eventually seen by a consultant, who placed him as an Alzheimer sufferer and began visiting him at home for £150 a prescription. The cruel reality is that with passing time Alzheimer's and its dementia become more prevalent and insistent. The most recent figures show some 850,000 cases in the UK, expected to rise above one million over the next ten years. It is the third most common cause of death in UK women. Typical symptoms, matching up with Ben's experience, are memory loss, slower thought processes, mental agility and judgement – the dreaded lack of emotional control and what it means in terms of potential violence towards those close to the patient. There is no cure.

As Ben's condition worsened, as his responses to Deb – one of that gallant band of 700,000 known as 'informal carers' – became more chaotic and threatening, she became more desperate, struggling against the impending conclusion that the disease would in the end defeat her best efforts so that for both of them to survive she would have to surrender his care to some kind of residential institution, with all that meant in terms of paying for him to be there.

Assessment

She found such a home, she worked out that all things considered she could just about afford a place there for Ben but when he was accepted his condition worsened until he could not walk, or even stand, or even sit upright. His speech became agonisingly slow and he was obsessed by his desire to be taken back to their home. In his brain there was chaos where before there had been order

continued page 23

RELIGION AS CULTURAL IDENTITY

Many express surprise when told that to join the Socialist Party a prerequisite is that they must have no religion. For some, religion is regarded as a 'personal matter' that should not be subjected to any political analysis or individual inquiry. But an even greater objection can be articulated in terms of cultural identity. Someone of African or Indian origin, for instance, may regard their religion as an intrinsic cultural component of his individual and social personality. To be told by someone of European origin that they must give up their religion can seem to be yet another example of cultural imperialism. It cannot be denied that the 'Enlightenment Project', of which Marxism/socialism is a part, has its roots in European history. Could it be that some cultures are so divergent from this tradition that any insistence on having no religion being a necessary prelude to socialist understanding is not only impossible but also an alienating insult to such cultures?

Any study of the history of religion shows it to be, along with all other human ideologies, subject to change. Christians may object to this by referring to the 2000 years of belief in 'the son of god' but the contemporary version of their religion bears little resemblance to the small Jewish sect that began it. The Great schism between the Eastern and Western incarnation of the Christian church was forerunner to the Reformation and countless other sectarian splits.

Many cultures have embraced one religion or another but this is always changing along with the identities it forges among the population. The adoption of Christianity by the Roman state under Constantine saved this particular sect from falling into historical obscurity like countless other religions before it. We'll never know his entire motivation for doing this but it would be naive in the extreme to believe that it was an exclusively spiritual decision unaffected by political influences.

You don't have to be a Marxist to see that the adoption of any religion by a ruling class does depend on important political considerations. Henry VIII's split with Rome must be understood in political terms (the need for a male heir to consolidate Tudor hegemony). And this is at the heart of all the major state religions; they are the result of the need of a powerful minority for an authoritarian social structure (and a religion/ideology) that legitimises their rule. Seen in this light, religion seems little more than the manipulation of the weak by the strong. This is why socialists reject religion of any persuasion; we regard it as part of the slavish mentality that sustains capitalism.

The above description of the role of religion within a dominant class's ideology does seem appropriate outside of the European tradition. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam etc. have all undergone historical change due, in part, to the political needs of powerful elites within the countries concerned. Taking this historical perspective we can see that many religions have reached out from their origins both in terms of geography and in terms of their values and content. Indeed some, like Christianity and Buddhism, have become the very antithesis of the originators intentions. So in terms of religion as part of a

cultural identity we are dealing with the same 'shifting sands' as we do with all other human value systems. This is not a criticism of religion but it emphasises the illusion of an unchanging cultural tradition and serves to undermine the accusation of any kind of 'cultural incompatibility' between the European origins of socialism and its global ambition.

Today we see, as a reaction against capitalism's global nature, many cultures desperately clinging to indigenous traditions within which religion often plays a very important role. Socialists understand the revulsion that many feel towards consumerism's complete lack of moral and ethical values; but trying to reach back to a mythical 'golden age' of righteousness and justice inspired by religion is pointless and dangerous. It feeds into the hands of zealots who would restore the oppression and hypocrisy that was the reality of any theocratic rule. And this is the heart of the matter; today the immense majority on our planet are enslaved by capital. Whatever culture and religion you belong to the greatest reality in your life is finding a capitalist to sell your labour to. This is the cultural reality we all share.

Capitalism also has its origins in Europe and has proven immune to any cultural barriers. Socialism cannot exist without the prerequisite of the development of ubiquitous capitalism, both in terms of the political consciousness created and its levels of production. As both the inheritor and destroyer of capitalism there seems no reason why socialism should prove any less 'multi-cultural' than its global predecessor. The world and its people are interconnected as never before – we can see that what we share as a species is more important than what separates us. Instead of rejecting this evolving worldwide culture and retreating into reactionary sectarianism let's embrace it and, through revolution, realise its human potential.

It is tempting to see history in terms of the human species struggling towards maturity where there is no place for gods and demons. Ironically perhaps Saint Paul put it best when he said: 'When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things'.

WEZ



The World Socialist Party (India) on the History of Political Economy

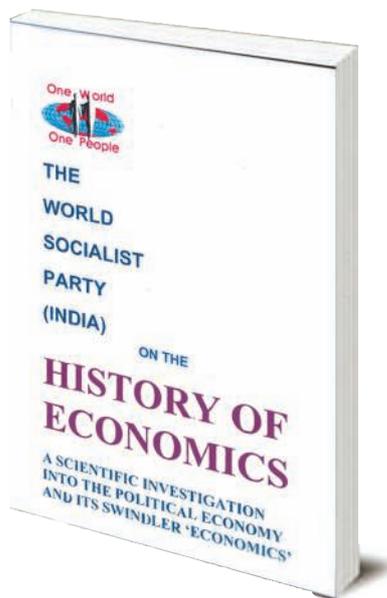
The first half of this new 60-page pamphlet from the World Socialist Party (India) is a republication of a series of articles on the "History of Political Economy" up until the end of the 18th century that appeared in the Socialist Standard in 1961. The second half is a newly written analysis of bourgeois economic thinking from 1870 on.

It can also be read online here:

<http://www.worldsocialistpartyindia.org/hoe.pdf>

Copies can be ordered from our office at 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN or by email to spgb@worldsocialism.org

Price in UK £1.50 (including inland postage). Cheques or postal orders



should be made out to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain".

Price in Rest of World £3 (or equivalent) (including overseas postage) by paypal (go to the website <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/> and scroll down towards the bottom).

Continued from page 7

Theresa May who in January 2009 intervened like a seasoned objector on the matter of the Labour government plan to approve the terminal: 'A third runway will result in thousands of additional flights, increased noise and more pollution for thousands of people. The government's promises on the environmental impact of this are not worth the paper they are written on'.

We are accustomed to the exposure of politicians in a confusion of their impotence. In the case of the third runway the reasons are readily available. Heathrow is effectively owned by a number of investment funds in countries such as Qatar, Singapore, China while the British Chamber of Commerce expects it to bring £30 billion of 'economic benefits' to the UK economy between 2020 and 2080. Aircraft fly, people travel, goods are flown back and forward across the world, influenced by profits or loss – by those 'economic benefits'. The third runway is not judged on its effects on human welfare but on which side of that equation it operates.

IVAN



Jack London was wrong

THE WRITER Jack London died a hundred years ago last month. He is more known for his adventure stories than for his economics but *The Iron Heel* published in 1907 has a chapter 'The Mathematics of a Dream' in which the hero, Ernest Everhard, sets out to 'develop the inevitability of the breakdown of the capitalist system' and 'demonstrate mathematically why it must break down.'

Everhard summarises his argument: 'We found that labour could buy back with its wages only so much of the product, and that capital did not consume all of the remainder of the product. We found that when labour had consumed to the full extent of its wages, and when capital had consumed all it wanted, there was still left an unconsumed surplus. We agreed that this surplus could only be disposed of abroad. We agreed, also, that the effect of unloading this surplus on another country would be to develop the resources of that country, and that in a short time that country would have an unconsumed surplus. We extended this process to all the countries on the planet, till every country was

producing every year, and every day, an unconsumed surplus, which it could dispose of to no other country.'

When this point was reached, he argued, capitalism would break down. This was a popular view amongst members of the old Socialist Party of America (of which London was a member). They expected that in this event capitalism would be replaced by socialism. London's fantasy was that it would be replaced for at least three hundred years, by 'Oligarchy' where all industry would be controlled by a single trust and its directors, who would use up the 'unconsumed surplus' by building magnificent cities for themselves and a labour aristocracy and by maintaining a large standing army, while suppressing all dissent and brutally oppressing the rest of the population under an 'iron heel'.

It was a fantasy, though some people have seen it as an accurate prediction of fascism (in fact Russia under Stalin would be a better example). But what about the mathematical demonstration that capitalism will inevitably break down at some point?

It's flawed. Everhard assumes that, under capitalism, all production is for personal consumption whereas in fact some is used to replace and expand productive capacity. Obviously the workers can't buy back what they produce, otherwise there'd be no profits. He assumes that capitalists can only consume so much, which is true,

but ignores the fact that they can use the 'surplus' that is left over after this to invest (buy raw materials, energy, new factories, etc). This in fact is the aim of production under capitalism – to accumulate profits as more capital. It is not to satisfy the consumption needs of the capitalists any more than of the workers.

Once this is taken into account, there is no built-in, permanent unsaleable surplus under capitalism. In theory, all that is produced can be bought, by the combined purchases of workers for their consumption, of capitalists for theirs *and* of capitalists for investment. In practice, however, this doesn't happen all the time. If the profit prospects are not good enough, then capitalists will not collectively invest all the surplus and there will be a slump, as regularly happens under capitalism when overproduction in one key sector of the economy results in falling prices and so falling profits. This is why from time to time an unsaleable surplus does appear, but this is never permanent.

London was right on one point, though. If capitalism were to break down automatically then the outcome would not necessarily be socialism. That can only happen when a majority want socialism, understand its implications, and organise themselves democratically to bring it into being.



Living The Dream

IT MIGHT sound obvious, but the way we react to global events depends on what information we have about them. In his latest epic polemic, Adam Curtis takes this simple point and turns it into something deeper and more unsettling.

He argues that the way we have come to see the world is through a process of 'Hypernormalisation', also the name of his film, available through the BBC iPlayer (www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p04b183c/adam-curtis-hypernormalisation#group=p026sy87).

The title comes from Alexei Yurchak's book *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, which analysed the mood in the Soviet Union during its last decades. Yurchak coined the term 'hypernormalised' to describe the strange way that Soviet society was perceived by its populace at the time. Official pronouncements about matters like rates of commodity production were recognised as unreliable by most people every time they went to an empty shop or joined a food queue. But without alternative explanations, everybody had to act as if the official story was real, distorting their sense of reality. An analogy familiar from many workplaces is how targets and outcomes are measured, which everyone involved realises are manipulated and fake, but which we all pretend are objective and accurate. We've bought into a 'dreamworld', shaped from the top by politicians and financiers, as a way of covering up how they don't have control over events, from suicide bombings to Brexit, from corruption to migration. The aim is to maintain as much stability as possible in an unstable world.

The political and social climate in which this shift in perception has taken place developed from the mid-70s. Then, according to Curtis, the way authority was exercised changed from old-fashioned political negotiation to new-style power through money and threats. Two examples he gives are from 1975, when in America, banks stopped lending to businesses, and took authority away from politicians, and in Syria, where President Assad's attempts to unite Arab nations were scotched by the then US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger. He used an approach he called 'Constructive Ambiguity' to fracture alliances between Arab states by misleading them about the details of treaties between other nations. This succeeded in disuniting the Middle East and infuriating Assad. These events helped shape the world we live in now, of tensions between Islamic states and a West still facing a financial crisis. Being unable to control the situation has meant that governments focus on manipulating our understanding of them, through other tactics like 'Perception Management'. One example of this was the American government and armed forces engineering the UFO phenomenon. Curtis argues that they spread

disinformation that the strange lights and shapes people were seeing in the skies could be alien spacecraft, to cover-up their real explanation as experimental military planes.

The strategy of Perception Management is more than just telling lies, though. Its 'highest achievement' was when George W Bush and Tony Blair turned to Colonel Gaddafi of Libya for help with the situation in Iraq. The Public Relations industry, espionage and most academics all contributed to Gaddafi's reinvention as an ally, having been demonised by the West for years. Gaddafi pretended to dismantle weapons of mass destruction he didn't have, and took the blame for the Lockerbie bombing in exchange for sanctions against Libya being lifted, introducing the odd notion of accepting responsibility for something you don't admit doing. Gaddafi's role and persona has been remodelled by Western states, regardless of the truth about him, whatever that is.

The government and media personified conflict in the Middle East with 'evil people' like Saddam Hussein, Assad of Syria and, sometimes, Colonel Gaddafi. This distracted us from how the conflict was really shaped, as described in Curtis' previous broadcast (see *Socialist Standard*, March 2015). In *Bitter Lake*, he argued that American and European military and economic involvement in the Middle East fuelled jihadism and suicide bombings, which in turn fuelled more Western involvement, creating a feedback loop.

In Russia, perception has been manipulated through the work of 'Political Technologists', such as Vladislav Surkov, now working as a personal adviser to President Putin. Surkov sponsored fascist groups, and anti-fascist groups, and parties opposed to Putin. Then he let it be known that he was doing this, so that no-one could tell how real these organisations were.

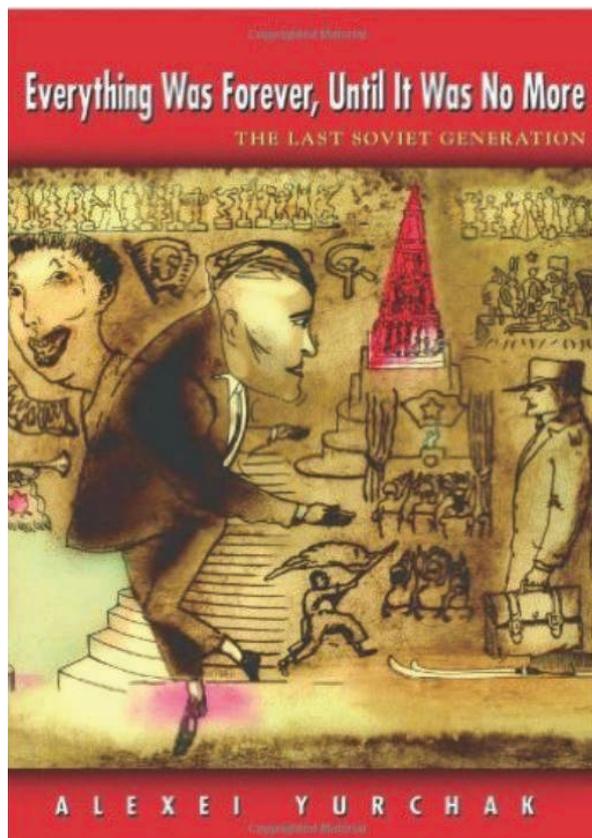
When so much about the outside world is confusing and contradictory, we've turned to cyberspace to find some reassurance. But the algorithms behind social media mean that we get pulled to online content which isn't likely to challenge our views. According to Curtis, in an age of individualism, we find security in having ourselves reflected back at us.

Radical politics has also changed to fit with our uncertain times, and now tries to influence people's thinking through personal expression, not through collective action. So, singers, artists, comedians and writers (including Curtis himself) voice radical ideas which may empower them and produce great, perceptive works, but they can't change the world because that relies on working together. Curtis says that radicalism now doesn't involve people giving themselves to a collective project as much as those in the 1960s civil rights movement did.

He discusses the two recent movements which did involve people acting collectively: the

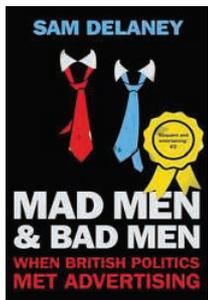


Curtis speaking in San Francisco, 2005



Poster Boys

Sam Delaney: *Mad Men & Bad Men: When British Politics Met Advertising*. Faber & Faber £9.99.



Political advertising is not allowed on radio and TV in the UK, but is permitted on posters, in the press and on-line. Party political broadcasts do not count as advertising, though advertising gurus work on

them. Political ads are not subject to the advertising code, so do not need to be honest and truthful. Here Sam Delaney examines the contribution of advertising to politics, based mainly on interviews with admen and a few politicians. A couple of adwomen get brief mentions.

Saatchi & Saatchi are well known for their work on Conservative Party posters and election broadcasts. It worked both ways, though, as the political impact helped make the agency very successful. Delaney opens, however, by recalling an interview that Maurice Saatchi gave when Thatcher died, in which he claimed that the agency had not really done very much, and that presentation was not all that important in politics. Maybe this just illustrates the common adage that the adman should never take credit for the client's success, since it is all down to the quality of the product (whether shampoo or a political party). Of course sometimes admen do claim that they played a central role. Possibly the truth is that advertising and presentation are crucial in close elections, such as that of 1992, but not otherwise.

The Conservatives have nearly always had far more money to spend on advertising than Labour, and Tory ads have often been rather more brutal than those of Labour. Perhaps the best-known political slogan was 'Labour isn't working' from 1978. Complaints about this led to even more publicity for the Tories and the poster containing it. The 'Labour's tax bombshell' poster from 1992 had a comparable impact, despite being not entirely accurate. Big ad agencies have been reluctant to be associated with Labour, on the grounds that their corporate clients might not approve, so their links have sometimes had to be kept secret.

One of the book's themes is the way the balance of power between admen and politicians has changed over time. Originally admen were very much in the back seat, and Callaghan only consulted them after making decisions. But gradually they became more central, softening

Thatcher's image, for instance, and influencing which topics were given most importance in campaigns. The emphasis on criticising opponents rather than presenting a party's own achievements and promises remains, but admen and their agencies now seem to have less of a role.

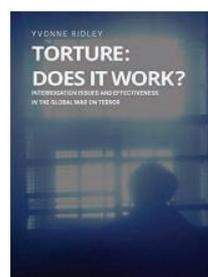
After reviewing the 2015 General Election campaign, Delaney writes, 'It is hard to see why or to what end political parties will ever employ ad agencies again.' This does not mean the end of political advertising, but a big change in how it is carried out. In April 2015 the Conservatives were spending £100,000 a month just on Facebook advertising. The use of social media has now become central, together with ads targeted at specific groups of voters (such as voters in marginal seats, or women who might be thinking of voting UKIP rather than Conservative). A lot of money has been spent in building up a database of actual and potential Tory voters, partly based on the causes people supported in petitions on change.org. Just as all advertising has become slicker and more 'professional', the same applies to its political cousin.

There is no mention of admen in Anthony King's *Who Governs Britain?*. It can hardly be argued that the admen are among those who govern, but they clearly sway people's opinions and that shows the influence wielded by money.

PB

Torture

***Torture: Does it Work?* By Yvonne Ridley. Military Studies Press, 2016.**



To most people the idea of torture is a Hollywood fantasy, a fictional beast reserved for high budget screen plays starring the likes of Bruce Willis and Jason Statham.

To Yvonne Ridley, however, the idea of torture is a very real prospect. After being captured by the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, Ridley was held captive for ten days and, despite not experiencing physical torture, the mental strain she endured certainly qualifies her to write about such a subject. In this book, Ridley uses her experiences to produce a well-researched piece, discussing many of the key aspects of torture from the philosophical origins of the practice, to a spike in the use of torture since 9/11.

The book especially focuses on the methods used by the United States to circumvent the Geneva Convention rules and particularly the opening of the

Guantanamo Bay detention camp in 2002. Despite the official stance of the United States against torture, a workaround was found by changing the definition of torture following the September 11 attacks in New York, and renaming torture methods such as water boarding as 'enhanced interrogation techniques'. The classified nature of what truly occurs at Guantanamo Bay, Ridley suggests, allows for the United States to practice torture on terror suspects in private, whilst also holding a public stance against the issue.

Ridley discusses the arguments for the use of torture, with the notion of the 'ticking time bomb' scenario and the introduction of 'torture warrants' for extreme cases, as well as the idea that suspected terrorists should not be treated as prisoners of war, not deserving the rights outlined in the Geneva Convention. These ideas are debunked by Ridley, pairing her experiences to interviews with ex-Guantanamo detainees and finding a range of negative connotations to the use of torture. Included in these points is the alarming fact that false intelligence fabricated by torture victims was a catalyst in the United States' invasion of Iraq.

Overall, this book offers a great insight for those interested in the phenomenon of terrorism, with a strong and highly referenced argument against the use of torture. Ridley's argument is perhaps summed up best by an analogy to close, in which she describes torture 'as about as effective a weapon in modern warfare as a substandard Thompson submachine gun would have been for a soldier embattled on the front line during the Second World War'.

WILLIAM HORNCastle

Polyani

***Reconstructing Karl Polyani*. By Gareth Dale. Pluto Press. 2016.**

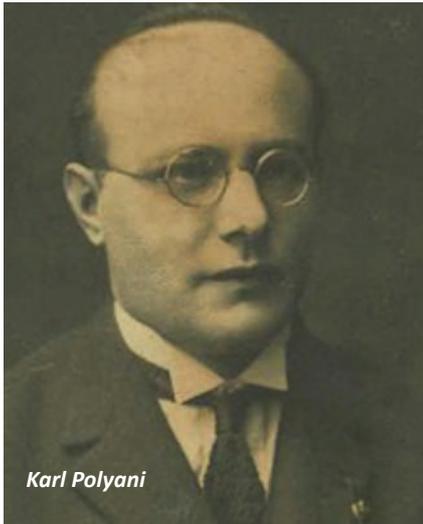


Karl Polyani (1886-1964) is best known for his 1944 book *The Great Transformation* about the emergence of the market economy and market society in which, contrary to all previously existing societies,

everything including land, labour and money has a price and is bought and sold. He demolished the arguments of his fellow Austro-Hungarians (he was from Hungary), Von Mises and Von Hayek, that an unregulated market economy was natural and the most rational economic system. He called it a 'capitalist utopia' and showed how the state had played an

active role in promoting its coming into being.

Dale's book will tell you all you want to know about him and his other ideas. Polyani was a Social Democrat who



Karl Polyani

believed that political democracy opened up the possibility, even the inevitability, that popular pressure would transform into 'socialism' as a society in which state planning would subordinate the market (he did not envisage the abolition of the market).

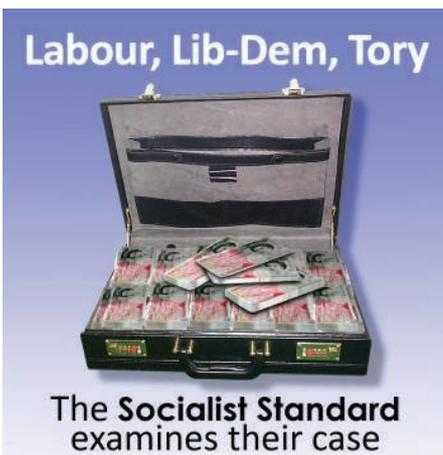
Dale also records how in the 1930s he was a fellow traveller of the worst kind, justifying Stalin's 'terror trials' believing the clearly fabricated 'evidence' presented by the prosecutors.

Despite this, *The Great Transformation* remains a classic criticism of laissez-faire capitalism.

ALB

Election result

In our review of Micah White's book *The End of Protest: A New Playbook for Revolution* we said we would say how he did in his bid to become mayor of Nehalem in rural Oregon in the election there in November. He got 36 votes (20%). The election was won by his Republican Party rival with 138 votes.



Women, Work and War

Cotton in Lancashire and wool in Yorkshire was the traditional division. What was once the world's largest woollen mill, at Armley, is now the Leeds Industrial Museum (pictured), with the expected displays of machinery for



weaving and so on, but also covering various other areas. Part of the site is still closed after the floods last Christmas.

An exhibition 'Women, Work and War' is currently running there, dealing with the impact that the First World War had on women's working lives. It consists of a series of displays in various parts of the museum, rather than a single exhibition.

Many women had of course worked in wool and other textile industries before the war, but the need for men to fight, kill and be killed led to many women taking jobs in mills for the first time. They were

generally less well-paid than men, but earned more than they had previously at cleaning and sewing. The need for uniforms for those in the armed services resulted in increased demand for clothing and so to an even larger workforce.

Leeds was also a centre of the printing industry, with many war propaganda posters produced there. Women came to take on a central role in this, for instance as keyboard operatives. They also worked on the railways, as porters, cleaners and guards, but not as drivers. They worked as conductors on the city's trams, earning the same as men but required to wear long skirts rather than trousers.

From 1915, women working on the railways were allowed to join trade unions for the first time. The National Union of Railwaymen (sic) campaigned for women to receive the minimum wage for a man (presumably involving a pay rise). The number of women in the United Garment Workers' Union also increased during the war, but the vast majority of women workers were not in a union.

Women in addition played a prominent role in the munitions industry. In 1915 the first National Shell Factory was established at Armley, but the biggest works was in the Leeds district of Barnbow, which produced over half a million tonnes of munitions. On 6 December 1915 there was an explosion at Barnbow that killed thirty-five women workers. Two further explosions there, in 1917 and 1918, killed five more workers, men and women. Guns and bombs did not kill just on the front line.

PB

Continued from page 19

Arab Spring and Occupy. He argues that the Occupy movement set out to make real the original aim of the internet, as a leaderless space, free from politics and hierarchies. The sharing and spreading of ideas which the internet enables means that it could be used to organise a revolution without leaders, and it contributed to both how the Occupy movement and Arab Spring operated. However, after using social media to organise themselves, radicals in the Arab Spring ground to a halt without having a vision of what they wanted society to be. Hard-line Islamists did have a plan for the future, though, and this gave them the drive to gain power. In the West, the Occupy movement lacked a programme to really change society, and instead became confused and dominated by meetings. Its members had no vision of a future world, so instead the movement was less about ideas than how to manage situations.

In interviews (www.youtube.com/

[watch?v=tVx3lt8ZKHw](#)), Curtis has emphasised that not seeing a better, future society is central to the problem of our 'hypernormal' perception of capitalism. We've lost the 'thrill' of wanting to jump into an unknown future, and find reassurance in accepting the version of reality presented by (and suited to) the capitalist class and its apologists.

Rulers manipulating the 'truth' is nothing new. The difference now is the sophistication with which this is done, whether through Perception Management, Constructive Ambiguity, Political Technologists or algorithms. Curtis' argument isn't just that these approaches are used to keep control of us, but also to cover up the lack of control each section of the ruling class has over global events. His aim is to help us see through the 'hypernormalised' version of reality we are fed, to raise awareness of our awareness.

MIKE FOSTER



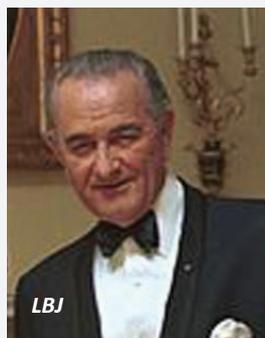
50 Years Ago

America Votes

THE MID-TERM elections in America provided the customary festival for the devotees of the Great Man Theory.

Disgruntled Democrats were ready to blame President Johnson for their losses. The *Daily Telegraph's* Washington correspondent passed on a report that Democratic leaders in Michigan were thinking about opposing Johnson as their Presidential candidate in 1968.

On the other side, jubilant Republicans surveyed their leaders — Reagan, Romney, Percy, Nixon — and began planning the build-up to present one of them as the nation's saviour at the polls the year after next.



Whichever party is defeated at the election, the Great Man Theory remains unbeaten. The Democrats who now blame



Johnson for their setbacks are conveniently forgetting that they once adored him as the man who would build the Great Society. The only remedy they have to offer is to peddle the same sort of nonsense about another man.

In the same way, the Republicans who are now come to praise men like Reagan and Percy may yet stay to bury them in unforgiving recrimination.

This is a familiar spectacle. Capitalism's leaders are always being credited with more power over the system than they actually have. No man, and no government, has ever been able to control capitalism; in the end the system wins.

When we have an election in which the votes reflect a developing knowledge of that fact, we shall be somewhere near getting rid of the problems the great men are always promising, and always failing, to solve.

(*Socialist Standard*, December 1966)

OBITUARY

KEN SHAW, 1920-2016

My father Ken Shaw died in October this year aged 96. He joined the Socialist Party in the mid-seventies and was to remain a party member for the rest of his life.

Along with a few others he was instrumental in forming the West Yorkshire branch, which, though short-lived, had some success staging and attracting audiences to a series of public meetings in his home town of Bradford.

When younger, Ken had been a member of the CPGB. Marriage to a catholic girl from Italy inevitably meant occasional visits from the local parish priest, whose disgust he incurred by leaving copies of the *Daily Worker* lying around the house.

Ken became disillusioned with the CP and for a number of years switched allegiance to Labour. Then, in the 1970s, he started reading the *Socialist Standard* and soon became convinced about the case for socialism. He quickly succeeded in getting a few others interested and the formation of the branch soon followed.

On my return visits home I would always find the latest issue of the *Socialist Standard* in prominent view somewhere around the house. I later discovered that this had been with the express intention of getting me interested — which eventually it did.

Ken spent his working life in the photo-litho department of a local printing firm. He was a talented amateur painter and photographer and has left a wealth of examples of his work.

ROD SHAW

Continued from page 11

not be too surprising. Then again, both may very well manage to more peacefully realign themselves along different lines, in altered coalitions.

Fascinating fiasco

In any case, the 2016 election has revealed the current fault lines within those two parties and also taught us (or at least reconfirmed) a number of valuable lessons. It has become clear, for instance, that the 'faithful' of each party may not be as blinded by loyalty as their opponents imagine. Ultimately, each party has to gain and maintain the support of its members and of voters on the basis of ideas. Even a campaign backed by the power of money and the media can fall flat without any coherent ideology at its basis.

The obvious case example is the Clinton campaign, which enjoyed a formidable fundraising apparatus and network of media lackeys. But the mixed message of the campaign, reflecting the gap between Clinton's words and deeds, left her vulnerable to Sanders and vanquished by Trump. The weapons the Clinton campaign wielded ended up harming her more than her opponents by exposing to the public, without much room for doubt, that she was *the* establishment candidate. The more money Clinton raised from her donors and the more articles published to praise her or attack her opponents, only ended up underscoring that status as the champion of the status quo.

This fascinating fiasco is highly encouraging to a socialist party. One can expect the ruling class to launch ferocious attacks against the socialist movement, starting with the media, once the movement has grown too powerful to ignore. But there is every likelihood that the effort to attack and discredit the socialist rebellion, will only contribute to its strength. It is already rather astounding that in a US presidential election, of all places, a Democratic candidate and his supporters would embrace terms like 'socialist' or 'revolutionary,' which are ordinarily used to smear a leftwing opponent. We have come a long way from the 1990s, when Democratic politicians lived in fear of being labeled 'liberals' by their Republican opponents.

The 2016 election campaign suggests that now is an ideal moment for socialists to boldly attack the thread-bare ideologies of bourgeois political parties and present our alternative to capitalism.

MS

Meetings

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

DECEMBER 2016

WAKEFIELD

Saturday 3 December, 1.00 p.m.

Wakefield Socialist History Group
"The Politics of Antonio Gramsci"

Howard Moss from the Socialist Party will be one of the speakers and will speak on "Gramsci, Socialism and Human Nature."
Venue: The Red Shed, 18 Vicarage Street South, Wakefield, WF11 1QX.

LONDON

Chiswick

Tuesday 20 December, 8.00 p.m.

Seasonal Social

Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall,
Heathfield Terrace, W4 4JN.

Clapham

Sunday 11 December, 3.00p.m.

AFTER BREXIT AND TRUMP, WHAT?

Speaker: Bill Martin

Socialist Party Offices, 52 Clapham High St,
London SW4 7UN.

EC Meeting

Saturday 7 January 2017, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN.

Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

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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 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.

Continued from page 16

and forethought. One morning in his room a nurse was unable to find a pulse. The ambulance rushed him to hospital where in a few hours his wish to die was allowed to take effect. And who had to pay for all of this, and how? A succession of social workers – bright, sensitive, desperate to humanise Deb's agony amid her loss (but with the job of controlling the cost – during the past year the average price of a place in a care home has risen to over £30,000) called to assess her situation. In some cases a local authority could put some cash in but only after an assessment had established a need and the fact that there was no other source. Any savings and property (they called it 'capital') above £23,250 would have to be taken into account. Or there were charities which might be able to help. Deb did not find it agreeable to submit to these interrogations while trying to control her exhaustion and grief.

But if you asked her, and her children, what they thought of this method of organising human lives, of managing and surviving, she would readily respond that it was the best available to us. She could not – did not want to – look beyond a system in which money is a vital conduit along which all human activities including health, sickness, death, are directed. Ben suffered this as well and his death should have taught something to all those who knew him.

IVAN

Same shit, different day

General elections worldwide, whether 'fair' or foul, past and present, have one result in common: they won, we lost. You will not hear socialists today talking about the USA being on the brink of revolution or that 'the capitalist class is on its last legs' as the Marxist Daniel DeLeon did in 1896 and 1902 respectively. Elections can serve as a barometer of socialist consciousness and ultimately as a way of making capitalism history. In the US Sanders' reformism was no threat to the status quo, and President Trump means business as usual just as much as President Clinton would have. Depressing enough without considering the recent coronation of King and Queen Ortega in Sandinista Nicaragua.

An old opiate

'Schools across Egypt are forcing Christian children and those of other religions to wear the Muslim headscarf and quote the koran by heart, or they will be punished and kicked out of school. Muslims are also getting punished if they do not wear their hijabs. One 12 year-old Muslim girl named Rahman Salem was forced to leave her school lesson after taking off her hijab, and was banned from participating in any activities at her school, located in the Northern part of Egypt' (cbn.com, 5 November). Religion 101: Islam means submission, so such news should not be surprising. Socialism 101: banish gods from our minds and capitalists from the Earth! Socialists unlike professional atheists recognise that capitalism is the main source of irrationality and exploitation in the modern world. Religion then will not end until we the 99 percent understand and act to end the vale of woe that is capitalism.

From the horse's mouth

'Indonesian President Joko Widodo said there will be "no compromise" to his country's sovereignty in the contested South China Sea, ahead of a visit to staunch US ally Australia. The comments come after Australia's foreign minister, Julie Bishop, on Tuesday said the two countries were considering joint naval patrols in the contested waters. China claims almost the entire South China Sea, through which about \$5 trillion worth of trade passes each year. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam and Indonesia also claim part of the sea... Indonesian warplanes staged a large-scale exercise last month in the waters around the Natuna Islands archipelago, following a spate of face-offs between the country's navy and Chinese fishing boats in the gas-rich southern end of the South China Sea' (reuters.com, 4 November). Here we have it in black and white: wars are fought over trade routes, areas of domination and resources.



Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov

Valery Raskin, a so-called Communist MP, wants to see the dead dictator feature on coins and notes as a way of marking the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917: 'Lenin's return to Russian rubles will confirm the fact that our society has finished its formation and entered the phase of maturity. This will also be good because the majority of Russian citizens have warm feelings towards Vladimir Ilyich [Lenin] and the Soviet era in general, as it allowed us to become one of the world's leading countries. We should pay tribute to Lenin, who laid the foundation of a social state in Russia' (rt.com, 2 November). This is a fitting tribute as Lenin and the Bolsheviks hastened the development of capitalism in Russia. He also distorted Marxism and thereby severely damaged the development of a socialist movement. That members of the 99 percent in Russia are wage slaves like us and have need to reflect positively on life under past dictators says much about the struggle to live under Putin.



Imagine no countries

We hear daily reports of the horrors of war in places such as Syria. Imagine then, if possible, all the accumulated indignities and suffering which led to one resident of a refugee camp in Greece to state recently: 'Give me the money to pay a smuggler and I'll go back to Syria right now. There the death is quick. Here we are dying slowly' (pri.org, 2 November).

FREE LUNCH

