

socialist standard

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

Mirror, mirror on the wall...



Reflections on capitalism



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

We use every possible opportunity to make

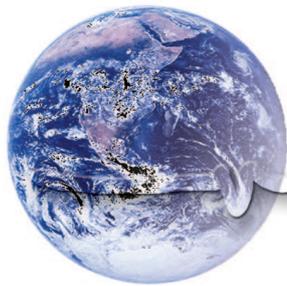
new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections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

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we

will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

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

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



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Editorial

Working Class Dismissed

David Cameron's accent, though less plummy than some of his Tory predecessors, fairly tinkles with the sound of silver spoons being removed from their mahogany cases. We Brits with our highly attuned class antennae know a toff when we hear one. So when considering how it is that this man's government is preparing to unleash a programme of 'welfare reforms' that seems set to devastate the lives of thousands of working people, cynics observe: 'How can you expect a man like Cameron to begin to understand the needs of 'ordinary' working people' – many of whom, it is often said with real justification, live one payslip away from destitution.

There is some truth in the observation, but Cameron's ignorance of working class lives is not the source of his government's attack, because, underneath the superficialities of accent and dress, class exists as part of what a capitalist economy is, and plays a leading role in government policy.

Economic class is much simpler than the British, multi-tiered system of class identities. It's an objective matter of wealth: if you don't have sufficient wealth not to have to work for a living then you are member of the working class. It doesn't matter whether you work in overalls or a business suit, on a building site or in front of a PC; if the only way you can support yourself or your family is to work for a wage or a salary, then economically you are working class. If you can derive a good income from the wealth you own through rent, interest and profit, then you are a capitalist.

Class defined in this way is not a doctrinaire attempt to

stick labels onto people that may not want them. It is not a personal or arbitrary decision, but an observable matter of social conflict. The working and capitalist classes not only possess a different degree of wealth, but they use it in different ways: the worker uses it to live, the capitalist to extract more wealth from the worker. This sets their material interests on a direct collision course. Under threat of annihilation and bankruptcy in the capitalist marketplace the capitalist class is forced to reduce wages at every opportunity and to get more productivity out of its employees. The working class, to protect its standard of living, is forced to resist.

Crucially, class also determines access to government power. A capitalist government has no choice but to manage capitalism, and capitalism can only be managed in the interests of the capitalist class. The government, whatever form it takes, must always place the interests of the capitalist class first.

The shiny, immobile features of David Cameron and his exclusive Eton education may be markers of his class, and he may lack understanding of the lives of workers, but the class issues that determine his government's policy-making are not the personal attributes of politicians. In government, Cameron and his cabinet colleagues are representatives of the capitalist class, and it is in the objective interests of the capitalist class and not the working class that his government, or any government, must act.



Caring and Sharing

YOU HAVE a pie, and you have to share part of it with someone else. The question is, how much should you offer? Logically, not much, and logically, the recipient should be happy to accept any amount, no matter how small, since it's better than nothing. But here's the rub. If that someone thinks you're being stingy they might refuse your offer, in which case neither of you gets anything.

In the human version of this 'ultimatum game', where the pie is replaced with money, the players tend to make roughly equal or 'fair' offers, showing that human concepts of fairness can override the logic of economics. Exactly why this happens is uncertain. It may be that the donor is motivated by some internalised moral framework, or it may be that the donor feels nothing of the sort but is simply responding to the fear that the recipient is fundamentally irrational and will ruin everything by throwing their proverbial toys out of the pram in response to a perceived injustice.

In studies with chimpanzees involving food, the same does not apply. The recipient is happy to get whatever they can, and the donor shows no tendency towards generosity. However a new study with chimpanzees, using tokens instead of food, has found the same tendency towards 'fairness' that is found in human adults and young children ('Sharing: Chimp study reveals origins of human fair play', *BBC Online*, 15 January).

One of the awkward questions in evolutionary theory is the rationale for altruism, which on the face of it contradicts the principle of selfish interest, at least outside close kinship groups. But since we know it does exist in humans there is considerable interest in establishing whether something akin to it is present in our nearest relatives, in other words whether it is ancient and innate behaviour or modern and socially acquired.

Unfortunately the chimp test is not entirely conclusive. It only used a small number of chimps, and critics argue that with limited abstract capability the animals may not have understood the test all that well, or just had less interest in tokens than in food, hence skewing the result. One would be tempted to dismiss the study altogether were it not for the fact that other studies have suggested suites of behaviour that might be summed up as 'ethical' in wolves and coyotes ('The Ethical Dog', *Scientific American*, 19 March 2010). Vampire bats are known for reciprocal meal-sharing, and a type of awareness which among humans would be called empathy has been observed in many other mammals, from elephants to rats and mice.

In game theory, the tendency to cooperate or defect (cheat) depends on how many times the game is played. In one single iteration or turn the logical strategy is to defect, because there is no opportunity for the other player to 'retaliate' tit for tat. The same is true if there are a finite number of iterations, because the end point logically dictates a defection, which strategy then cascades in reverse all the way back to the beginning.

But where the number of iterations is infinite, that is when there is no fixed end-point, the most stable strategy is tit for tat cooperation, where defection is punished and cooperation rewarded.

Professor Martin Nowak of Harvard describes how this direct reciprocity can evolve in a number of ways, most interestingly towards indirect reciprocity, where the individual 'pays it forward' without immediate expectation of return (*Scientific American*, January 2013).

This behaviour is most developed in humans, possibly because of language and the evolution of gossip and the consequent emergence of 'reputation'. However, defection still

exists. In Garrett Hardin's classic 1968 study 'The Tragedy of the Commons', a group of livestock owners who share common land each allow their animals to overgraze, ultimately leading to disaster for all. This 'Tragedy' has been offered up as a reason why socialism, based on sharing, won't work, and real world examples of the Tragedy of the Commons abound, in particular with regard to natural resources and climate change, where humans share the world but are separately and collectively ruining it.

Nowak goes on to discuss game studies where players had to donate a portion of their money into a pool which was used to 'save the world'. They didn't always succeed, but cooperation was more likely to occur where the players felt properly informed, and where their acts of reciprocity were public, rather than private (the reputation factor again).

What these studies overlook is the question of private property, and how this motivates behaviour. The players failed to 'save the world' because their common interest in doing so was at odds with their personal interest in preserving their 'private property'. Here there was a clear temptation to cheat, hoping that other people would make up for the shortfall. Nowak does not describe any version of the game in which the players have no private money but only a common pool, yet it seems likely that behaviour would be quite different where no interests were in conflict.

Similarly, Hardin's scenario is not a demonstration of why socialism won't work because it involves livestock *owners*, whose interests are separate and conflicting, so even though the land is shared the animals are not, and this private ownership leads to conflicting interests resulting in the destruction of the Commons. Were they socialist farmers who shared ownership of the animals as well as the land, their interests would not be in conflict and therefore overgrazing would be a nonsensical strategy that would help none of them.

On a not unrelated note, and demonstrating that charities do fulfil a useful purpose in promoting awareness even if they don't ultimately solve problems, Oxfam recently produced a report which pointed out in no uncertain terms what the consequences of private ownership are – massive and destructive inequality (*The Cost Of Inequality: How Wealth And Income Extremes Hurt Us All*, Oxfam, 2013). As they point out, the 100 richest people could abolish poverty for the world's poorest four times over, and that during this global recession there has been 'an explosion in extreme wealth' (*BBC Online*, 19 January). As their Chief Executive states, 'We can no longer pretend that the creation of wealth for a few will inevitably benefit the many - too often the reverse is true'. Quite so, and whether the human response to this is intellectual or animal, scientific or ethical, it would do well to look past Oxfam's feeble and pious demands for tax reforms towards the one thing that really would be a game-changer – socialist revolution and the abolition of private property.

The Falklands again

THEY ARE back in the news following the recent disclosure, in documents released at the end of December under the thirty year rule, that Thatcher was taken by surprise, but this changes nothing and vindicates nobody. Opponents of Britain are encouraged by Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner's renewed call on 3 January for the Falklands to become part of Argentina.

The Falklands (in Spanish, Islas Malvinas) are a group of small islands in the South Atlantic off the coast of Argentina. The present population can be traced back to European settlement in the nineteenth century, primarily the British approval in 1840 to form a colony there. Britain aside, many other countries have claimed them over time, but Argentina has the longest standing claim to these islands as their own territory.

In 1982, the *Socialist Standard* at the time described the country 'in the grip of a severe recession. At the end of March a trade union demonstration against the effects

of unemployment and rising prices brought some of the worst civil disorder ... But the move against the Falklands brought a miraculous change; patriotic frenzy swamped the reality of the workers' parlous condition' (Doing the Bulldog Thing,



Argentinian prisoners

May 1982). This was a description of Argentina, but one that in many respects might have equally applied to Britain at the time.

Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands, then, just short of a thousand workers dead, over two thousand wounded and two months

later the islands were retaken by British forces. A few days later the Argentine junta collapsed. American support was absent, the President, Ronald Reagan, had been advised the military junta led by the dictator General Galtieri was a bulwark against 'communism'. We asked of Britain, 'If the government was so disgusted by the Argentine junta's record of repressively anti-working class dictatorship, why was it a major arms supplier to the Junta up until the invasion of the Falklands?' (The War in the South Atlantic, July 1982.) The famous left-winger Michael Foot, then Leader of the Labour Party, made a powerful speech in favour of the taskforce sent to retake the islands.

If you want to see how sincerely Britain or any ruling class protects the wishes of the islanders, look at what Britain did to the similarly populated Chagos islanders in Diego Garcia some years earlier.

Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.

DJW

Film Review

Les Misérables



Tom Hooper's *Les Misérables* is the cinematic version of the Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil stage musical based on the 1862 Victor Hugo novel. Hooper's film comes in at 158 minutes and is a 'sung-through' musical comprising about fifty songs, the most popular being, *I Dreamed a Dream* sung by Fantine, a 'grisette' turned prostitute played by Anne Hathaway. Hooper had all his actors sing live on set, there is no 'count-in' or predetermined tempo and the piano is following the pacing of the actor which is a first for a filmed musical. Orchestral music was added

post-production. The outstanding voice is Eddie Redmayne's tenor as revolutionary student Marius, especially in the song, *A Heart Full of Love*.

'Les misérables' are the working class, 'the wretched poor' of nineteenth-century French capitalism in Paris, but the film glosses over the poverty, disease, crime, prostitution, exploitation of the working class, and the inequalities of wealth in capitalism. Hugo was concerned with the 'degradation of man by poverty and the ruin of woman by starvation'. The 'saintly' Valjean, played by Hugh Jackman, has served 19 years in the galleys for stealing a loaf of bread. The film is Valjean's search for redemption, and there is a Christian theme in songs, *I Have Saved your Soul for God* and *Why did I allow this man to touch my Soul and teach me Love?* Hugo saw his novel as 'a progress from nothingness to God.' Valjean's conversion supports Marx's statement: 'Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.'

The characters of Monsieur and Madame Thenardier, played by Sacha Baron Cohen and Helena Bonham Carter, are the 'comic relief,' and their 'rascally' antics in *Master of the House* and *Beggars at the Feast* push the film into the Dickensian whimsy of Lionel

Bart's *Oliver*. If the Thenardier couple are Fagin then the street urchin, Gavroche, with 'cockney' accent is the Artful Dodger.

The use of computer-generated imagery recreates the Parisian working-class districts of faubourgs and 'cours des miracles,' comprising dense streets and medieval alleyways, later destroyed by the 'renovations' under Haussmann which would better able the bourgeoisie to control the Parisian working class. A replica of 'the Elephant of the Bastille' was built in Greenwich which adds authentic historical context to the film.

The climax of the film is a futile, student-led Republican uprising, which actually took place in June 1832 against the 'haute bourgeoisie' monarchy of Louis Philippe and is portrayed in the songs *At the Barricades* and *Do you hear the People Sing?* Sixty million people worldwide have seen the stage musical, *Les Misérables*, but if going to see it could change the world then it would have been made illegal.

The 1831 working-class uprising of silk workers in Lyons who sang, 'When our rule arrives, when your rule shall end, then we shall weave the shroud of the old world. Listen! Revolt is rumbling,' is a better subject for a 'revolutionary' film musical.

Steve Clayton



Deadly prayers, twisted knickers and motorcycles

'SAUDI LABOR minister faces 'Deadly Prayers' from angry clerics' ran the headline on the *Al Arabiya News* website (26 December 2012). When you read an opening paragraph like that you just know, don't you, that the more you read, the more bizarre it's going to get?

'A group of religious figures in Saudi Arabia have threatened to strike the labor minister who seeks to create jobs for women with 'deadly prayers', ran the story. 'They threatened to pray that he gets cancer like his predecessor Ghazi al-Gosaibi, who died of the disease in 2010'. And to prove that he meant business, one of them assured reporters: 'I supplicated against a senior official at the ministry and he received the (cancer) disease and he died'.

They don't mess about with their prayers in Saudi Arabia, do they? And while, as threats from Islamic extremists go, having the 'deadly prayers' of a group of deranged clerics unleashed at you probably isn't on the same level as a fatwa, it probably is extremely noisy and inconvenient, and God knows what the neighbours must think.

To a non-believer the most disturbing thing about being threatened with 'deadly prayers' by 200 odd clerics (well, very odd clerics in this case) must be that they assume that everyone else is as ignorant and gullible as they are. But what was it that got them so wound up?

The cause of the problem was the obviously unsuitable nature of the work that was being proposed for women to do. It was a 'Westernisation plan,' the Minister, Adel Fakeih, was told. 'Your ministry has thrown our daughters in places that don't suit their values'.

The unsuitable work for women that the Minister was proposing, believe it or not, and that the clerics were getting their religious knickers in a twist about, was the plan to allow women to work in lingerie shops instead of men.

Meanwhile in the Indonesian province of Aceh where strict sharia law is observed the Mayor, Suaidi Yahya, says he intends to save women's 'morals and behaviours' and has ordered them not to straddle motorbikes behind male drivers.

Under new regulations women motorcycle passengers are only allowed to ride side-saddle because straddling the bike seat violates Islamic values. 'When you see a woman straddle, she looks like a man' he said. 'But if she sits side-saddle, she looks like a woman'. And he added, helpfully, that women sitting side-saddle only rarely fell off.

But 'how to ride a motorbike is not regulated in Sharia' protested one local. 'There is no mention of it in the Koran'. And it does seem that the new regulation has not been fully thought through. What if the woman is driving the motorcycle? Should her crash helmet be worn over or under the burka? What position should she adopt when riding a push bike? What about two women on a tandem? Which side should she face when riding side-saddle?

Well the answer to the last one is obvious. - Whichever side faces Mecca. Although care will be needed to face the proper direction when turning corners.

NW



Caricature lampooning a woman who refuses to ride side-saddle. English cartoon, c. 1810

Religious Observations

The Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) has put a stop to the publication and sale of all books in its archives that support the theory of evolution, daily *Radikal* has reported. Titles by Richard Dawkins, Alan Moorehead, Stephen Jay Gould, Richard Levontin and James Watson are all included in the list of books that will no longer be available to Turkish readers: <http://tinyurl.com/c7b38nj>

Every year an unknown number of children - most of them disabled in some way - are murdered in northern Ghana because of the belief that they are in some way possessed by evil spirits set on bringing ill fortune to those around them. The practice is the consequence of ancient traditions and customs and is shaped by poverty and ignorance in remote and often marginalised communities. But it is still infanticide and no less horrifying than the killing of children anywhere. For years NGOs and the Ghanaian authorities have tried advocacy and education in an attempt to eradicate the practice but with only marginal success. Well into the 21st century, Ghana's so-called spirit children are still being killed because they carry the blame for the misfortunes of everyday life: <http://tinyurl.com/bxg8zeg>

Millions of children in Indonesian elementary schools may no longer have separate science classes starting in June,

the beginning of their next school year, if the government approves a curriculum overhaul that would merge science and social studies with other classes so more time can be devoted to religious education....Officials who back the changes say that more religious instruction is needed because a lack of moral development has led to an increase in violence and vandalism among youths, and that could fuel social unrest and corruption in the future:

<http://tinyurl.com/bhqcrz4>

A popular Indian spiritual guru sparked a backlash Tuesday after saying a 23-year-old student could have averted a murderous gang-rape by begging for mercy from her attackers. Self-styled godman Asharam, known to his followers as 'Bapu' or father, told his devotees: 'This tragedy would not have happened if she had chanted God's name and fallen at the feet of the attackers. The error was not committed by just one side,' he said:

<http://tinyurl.com/byo3ggc>

Being spiritual may give life deeper meaning but it can also mess up your mind, research suggests. A study found that people professing to be spiritual, but not conventionally religious, were more likely to suffer from a host of mental challenges. Their demons included abnormal eating conditions, drug abuse, anxiety disorder, phobias and neurosis. They were also more likely than others to be taking medication for mental health problems:

<http://tinyurl.com/bz2fndh>



Capitalism no better

DEBORAH ORR, who writes on economic matters for the *Guardian* from a vaguely Green standpoint, entitled her 28 December column, 'It's time for a better capitalism, one that creates jobs and provides security', arguing that 'the civil, civilised kind of capitalism we have long been promised could yet emerge from the rubble of the financial crisis.'

Her argument was based on what she sees some firms as doing in the current economic crisis:

'After decades during which we have all be told that we must allow the market to decide, the market is making a pro-social and humane decision. It is choosing to sacrifice profits in order to save itself. This is what the sales are all about – companies slashing their profits in order to keep ticking over, providing jobs, maintaining a presence. Staying in the game is being valued above providing shareholder value.'

This is not what sales and their lower than usual prices are about. They are a business strategy designed to maximise income over expenditure, i.e., to make a profit by selling more at a lower profit rather than less at a higher profit.

Some firms, in the present economic crisis, may well be prepared to 'tick over', merely covering their costs without making a profit, just to stay in business. But this would not be the start of a 'fairer' capitalism in which firms seek merely to cover their costs so as to provide jobs for their workers and lower prices for their customers.

Doing this to try to survive the crisis would not be a 'pro-social and humane' decision, but a hard-headed business decision in the interest of shareholders, since if a company goes under – as Comet did before Christmas and Jessops, HMV and Blockbuster did in January – the shareholders lose nearly everything. Surviving means that when the slump comes to an end and growth resumes, as it will sooner or later (even if later rather than sooner, as there is now talk of a triple-dip recession), the company is still 'in the game', ready to take part again in the chase after profits.

In imagining that companies accepting to make no or very little profit could prove to be permanent, Orr is being naive. Capitalism could not function on that basis. What would be the point for a capitalist to invest money in a business just to end up at the end of the accounting year with the same amount of money?

The aim of capitalist production is to end up with more money at the end than at the beginning. What Marx expressed as M-C-M' where C is the purchase of the materials and labour to produce something. Orr's 'better capitalism' based on M-C-M would not really be capitalism at all, just some unrealistic economic system that could never exist.

In any event, it is not the case that most companies involved in post-Christmas sales are just 'ticking over', still less aiming merely to do this. They are aiming to make as much profit as they can and they will be succeeding, even if for some this won't be as much as in previous years. Others, on the other hand, benefitting from the disappearance of their rivals, will be making more than before.

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Roadkill

Roadkill

Roadkill

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Roadkill

A MASSACRE

of 28 children and teachers at a school in Connecticut on December 15 has received weeks of intensive media coverage. And yet very little attention is paid to the roughly 100 people killed in the U.S. every day by motor vehicles. The carnage at the scene of a serious road accident is just as horrific as a battlefield, but only those directly involved – the victims and the workers whose job is to clean up the mess – are fully aware of it as an everyday reality.

Millions of animals – deer, badgers, frogs, birds, etc. – also die on the roads. They are called ‘roadkill’. That seems an apt term for the human casualties too. Worldwide human roadkill is estimated at 1.3 million a year. The injured number in the tens of millions.

Average annual human roadkill in the U.S. in recent years has been about 40,000. (Another couple of million are hurt; 250,000 of them have sufficiently bad injuries and sufficiently good health insurance to be hospitalised.) There has been a modest decline since the 1970s, when the yearly average was about 50,000.

Various reasons have been suggested for the decline, including a crackdown on drunk driving and the adoption of certain safety features, especially seat belts and eventually (in the 1990s) air bags. We owe these improvements to persistent efforts by campaigners for safer car design, Ralph Nader being the best known.

Feeling safe

This example demonstrates that campaigns for reform can sometimes achieve worthwhile results. Worthwhile, but limited and temporary. Because there has been no decisive reorientation of car design toward safety as opposed to style, power and comfort.

Thus, as Catherine Lutz and Anne Lutz Fernandez point out, car manufacturers prefer to make the driver *feel* safe rather than help him *drive* safely. By swaddling driver and passengers in a warm, quiet and smoothly moving cocoon, insulated from the noise and bumps of the road, they ‘prevent drivers from sensing how fast they are going or how dangerous the road conditions are’ (*Carjacked: The Culture of the Automobile and its Effect on our Lives*, Palgrave Macmillan 2010, p. 179).

However, the biggest setback to the cause of safe design has been the rise of the monsters known as Sport Utility Vehicles. SUVs are much more prone to roll over than ordinary cars and much more lethal when they collide with other road users (Keith Bradsher, *High and Mighty: The Dangerous Rise of the SUV*, PublicAffairs 2002).

The decline in human roadkill is partly the result of people minimising their exposure to traffic as pedestrians, though at a high cost in the form of isolation and loss of community. In the old days, when motor vehicles were few and far between, children were free to roam around on their own and play with friends in the streets. Now they are cooped up at home. There they can prepare for their future role as drivers by playing video games like

Carmageddon, where the goal is to smash up as many other cars and run down as many pedestrians as possible.

Pollutants

Beside direct roadkill, cars harm and kill people through the pollutants that they emit into the air we breathe. Here too campaigns for reform have had some successes. In particular, exhaust filters are now in wider use and petrol no longer contains lead additives.

Here too, however, the few successes are overshadowed by a daunting list of failures. And here too SUVs are the worst culprits. Motor vehicles still emit enormous quantities of tiny particles and poisonous compounds, including nitrous oxides, carbon monoxide and volatile organic compounds that react in sunlight to form ozone. Most of these gases and particles do most harm to the respiratory system, causing such diseases as asthma, bronchitis, emphysema and lung cancer. Another pollutant, benzene, damages the bone marrow and immune system and causes leukemia and other blood cancers.

A car emits poisons into the air both inside and outside, making it hard to tell whether it is less unhealthy to ride with the windows closed or open.

Burdens on society

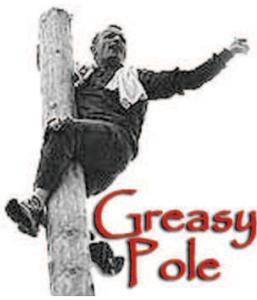
These are not the only burdens that the car imposes on society. It devours enormous material and labour resources and generates a vast stream of material waste, much of it hazardous and/or non-recyclable. The car and the hydrocarbon fuels that power it make a big contribution to the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases and thereby to climate change.

Cars have a huge impact on *land use*. Land is used to manufacture cars, sell cars (showrooms), service and repair cars (garages, filling stations), wash cars, drive cars (roads, driveways) and – no small item! – park cars (roadsides, car parks, home garages). An expanding area of arable land is being used to cultivate biofuels for cars.

These burdens grow heavier as the numbers of cars (and especially SUVs) increase. The total number of motor vehicles in the world passed the one-billion mark in 2010. It can be expected to continue rising rapidly as cheaper models open up new consumer markets in countries such as India and China.

A central issue in clarifying the general shape of a socialist society is what place cars would occupy in it. Will it be possible to provide everyone with access to car transport in some form, provided that a switch is made to electric cars? Or would it be necessary to restrict car use to a bare minimum?

STEFAN



Is UKIP worth a vote?

dweller in the African deserts using sentries standing straight up on their hind legs to spot approaching predators and ushering the others away into the safety of their burrows. Little wonder that they provoked such raptures. And then some whiz kid in an advertising agency woke up to the fact that 'meerkat' sounded very much like "market". And from that swung out a campaign on TV, the internet and wherever, about a company which, for a fee, will inform us about the comparable costs of insuring cars or homes or of credit cards and loans... The slogan for all this was 'Compare The Meerkat.' Among the inducements to use this service there was the chance to be rewarded with a cuddly meerkat to take to bed. Or to buy a meerkat diary or calendar. Or a coffee mug. It threatened to be overwhelming.

Farage

Perhaps it was as a spin-off to this that the Minimalist web-site posted some photographs of meerkats alongside others of Nigel Farage, a founder and current leader of the United Kingdom

Independence Party (UKIP). There are in fact some striking facial similarities between the two - which in some quarters may have been regarded as appropriate because political leader Farage pulls the same tricks as any insurance sales person, suggesting that the customers pay - but in this case with their votes - for some promised benefits of security and progress. 'Well you're in luck, you're in exactly the right place !...

We always put our customers first!' bellows Compare The Market while UKIP assures us that we can safely vote for them because they believe '...in every area of policy, in listening to the people and giving them more control over the services they receive'.

From what is known about Farage, it is unlikely that he took umbrage at being likened to the meerkat. His friend and associate, MEP Godfrey Bloom, says that his lifestyle is '...appalling, he'd be the first to admit it. He drinks too much red wine and he smokes too much.' Which is very different from the way things were under his predecessor, Lord Pearson, who felt he had to resign because he was '...not much good at party politics' or perhaps, as one rather more specific opinion of him had it, 'a bumbling toff; wealthy, out of touch and eccentric.' But Farage may prefer to be judged by results: UKIP has recently notched up some impressive electoral performances - notably when it came second in the by-election in Rotherham last November - and he can claim to be one of the most easily recognised politicians in the country. In fact, a recent MSN poll named him as the top politician of 2012.



UKIP leader Nigel Farage

UKIP

Since its inception UKIP has advanced on the electoral front, if only to occupy some of the ground left open by dissent within other parties and the anger of the LibDem membership at being in coalition with the Tories. Threatening by-election results left panic-stricken Tories asking whether their outlook might be more settled if they dumped Clegg and his LibDems in favour of unity with UKIP. Any such move might be hampered by Cameron's opinion in 2006 of UKIP as 'fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists...' although his flexibility in such matters can be judged by his welcoming the LibDems into government in 2010 in spite of his recent assessment of them as 'a joke.' Farage was first elected as an MEP - which was by no means consistent with his trumpeted hatred of Europe - in 1999, making his name for such contributions to their debates as his description of Herman Van Rompuy, the President of the European Council, as '...having the charisma of a damp rag and the appearance of a low-grade bank clerk'. He refused to withdraw or apologise and was penalised by the loss of ten days Members' allowance. He leads a group under the name of Europe of Freedom and Democracy, the principles of which enable it to accommodate a Mario Borghezio whose description of the re-election of Barack Obama was 'Multiracial America has won, which I can't fucking stand' and who, on a separate occasion, proclaimed 'Vive les Blancs de l'Europe. And underlying these matters Farage is rated, in terms of his attendance, among the worst value for what he gives as an MEP.

Crash

He has kept up that style, regarded by his followers as challenging the more established and rigid political mannerisms. At the 2010 general election he was not impressed by the custom that the current Speaker of the House of Commons should not be opposed and stood for UKIP in Buckingham against John Bercow. On polling day, he unwittingly attracted further attention when he was a passenger in a private aircraft which nose-dived into the ground when the UKIP banner it was towing became entangled in its tailplane. Both Farage and the pilot were lucky to escape with their lives; Farage was seriously injured but shrugged off the pain as he hobbled about his business, seemingly unconcerned about what other disasters might be consequent on flying a banner-flaunting UKIP and his place in it. The pilot responded by threatening to kill Farage and the crash investigator. Eventually a sympathetic judge decided that he (the pilot, not Farage) was suffering from 'a depressive disorder of moderate severity... clearly needed help' and made him subject to a Community Order.

To any voters who can be said to be 'depressive' as a result of their betrayal by the political parties of capitalism, UKIP claims to be therapeutically energising, more hopeful, offering something unique. In fact, it can hardly be distinguished from the rest. Typically, its policies claim to deal with capitalist problems associated with wages, unemployment, crime, housing, the health service... It offers nothing to persuade anyone to make an exception and to go out and vote for another period of capitalism and its impotent leaders. There is, of course, one difference for UKIP, in the bizarrely damaging behaviour of its leader. To vote for it on that basis would be a symptom of clearly being in need of help.

IVAN

Confusion about class

*Göran Therborn, Professor of Sociology at Cambridge University, is known for his writings on 'post-Marxism,' notably his 1980 book, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*, where he reflects on the writings of Louis Althusser, and then describes the 'ideological constitution of classes' and the relationships between ideology, political power and social change.*



In his 25-page essay, *Class in the 21st Century* (*New Left Review* 78, Nov/Dec 2012), Therborn describes the twentieth century as 'clearly the age of the working class,' stating that 'working people who lacked property became a major and sustained political force' but 'the working-class century no doubt ended in defeat, disillusion and disenchantment, it also left behind enduring achievements'.

From a Marxist perspective, this survey of the twentieth century is open to criticism. Primarily, the fact remains that the capitalist class in the West were never removed from political power. In Russia, China, and Cuba, a Leninist 'vanguard' party bureaucratic class operated a state capitalist system of production and the working class continued to have their surplus value stolen from them. Reforms in the West to capitalism in the 20th century that could be said to have benefited the working class like the introduction of the Welfare State in Britain are also open to question. So-called 'achievements' like full employment, economic policies in the Keynesian mould adopted after 1945, state capitalist 'nationalisations' of major industries, legislation to protect collective bargaining and industrial action have all been reversed after world capitalist production went into crisis in the 1970s and the global capitalist class adopted a more unfettered form of capitalism in order to shore up profits.

Therborn discusses the working class and political power in the context of capitalist society but never acknowledges the need for the 'overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, and conquest of political power by the proletariat'. There is no talk of abolishing capitalism, ending the wages system and transforming world capitalist society into global socialism.

He writes of the 'Social Democratic labour movement', 'the reformist wing of 20th century labour', 'modern, centre-left social democracy' and 'Communist parties or their descendants' as the sources of the 'achievements' of the past and claims that they have left 'progressive legacies' for the 21st century. Therborn feels 'whatever may be said about the ruthless authoritarianism of its leaders, the Communist movement produced an extraordinary number of self-sacrificing, dedicated militants in every corner of the world. Their adulation of Stalin or Mao was wrong-headed, but very often they were the best - sometimes the only - friends of the poor and

the downtrodden. This everyday commitment demands the respect of all progressives'.

That's as may be, but Therborn admires leftist leaders and organisations such as Castro, Chavez, and 'Morales and his coca growers with a spine of disciplined cadres'. He appears committed to a



belief in leftist political organisation and leadership as formulated by Lenin. Therborn writes that 'the October Revolution provided a model of political organisation'. Lenin wrote 'that the working class, exclusively by its own efforts, is able to develop only trade union consciousness', and argued that class-consciousness had to be brought to the working class 'from without' by professional revolutionaries organised as a vanguard leading the working class to 'socialism'. Therborn does not speak of socialism; it is always about reforms in the interests of the working class in capitalism. One is again reminded of Lenin who argued that 'socialism' is a transitional society between capitalism and full communism in which 'there still remains the need for a state' and a money economy. Lenin emphasised the concept of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' which would become the 'dictatorship of the Party over the proletariat'. According to Lenin: 'It follows that under communism there remains for a time not only bourgeois right, but even the bourgeois state, without the bourgeoisie!' The theory of 'socialism' as a transitional society is an apology for state capitalism.

Therborn writes that 'the persistence of Communist-led states after 1989-91 means that a socialist option remains open to some degree' which clearly establishes that Therborn believes China under Mao was a 'socialist' society.

Leftist and Leninist political parties and governments have not abolished capitalism, do not promote socialism and do not agree that 'the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves'. Therborn

believes that in Latin America 'socialism is on the agenda' with 'left-of-centre governments' but Cuba, Bolivia and Venezuela are 'state capitalist' economies.

Therborn sees the 21st century as heralding 'the return of class as an ever-more powerful determinant of inequality,' but Marxists argue that class never went away. He points correctly to the development of capitalism in China, India and Brazil as being of importance and that 'the emergence of a powerful movement based on this proletariat would have a tremendous impact,' although he concludes that a 'political transformation spearheaded by working-class parties seems even more improbable - whether they are reformist or revolutionary in character'. But Therborn does say that 'For a new left to have true global significance, deeper roots will have to be dug in Asia.'

Therborn says 'the liberal media looks to an ascendant middle class as the vanguard of democratic reform'. He believes that the 21st century will be 'the age of the global middle class. The workers of the last century are banished from memory; a project of universal emancipation led by the proletariat is replaced by universal aspiration to middle-class status'. Progress, he thinks 'is likely to be driven by the hopes and resentments of the middle class' and 'workers and the popular classes in all their diversity - the *plebeians*, rather than the proletariat'. Here, Therborn appears to be using definitions of social class from Ancient Rome: the plebeians were a class below the patrician landowners but above the 'capite censi' of the proletariat, and so they are akin to a modern 'middle class' or petty bourgeoisie. But later Therborn confusingly distinguishes between 'the new middle class, or the plebeian masses'. He sees that in 'a confrontation between the rich and the rest, with the middle class playing an important role among the latter'.

Marxists argue that the 'middle class' is part of the proletariat, the working class, 'who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live'. The 'middle class' are excluded from ownership of the means of production, sell their mental power, and so form part of the working class too.

The world in the 21st century needs global socialism which is 'the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all'.

STEVE CLAYTON



What is capitalism?

At the dawn of humanity people lived in small communal groups and shared the produce of the day's gathering and hunting amongst themselves to ensure their collective survival. With the advent of agriculture, many thousands of years later, came private property. With private property came social classes and the state. Property, in the form of land and cattle to begin with, has to be defended from those who do not own it. The state develops as institutions are created to help preserve private property.

Early agricultural society eventually develops into feudalism. At the top of the feudal system is an all-powerful monarch; below him, barons and knights; and below them, peasants and serfs. The monarch grants the barons land in return for support in times of war. At the bottom of the pyramid are the peasants and serfs who work the land. Serfs are tied to the land and have to give a certain amount of work a year to support the barons.

Eventually, as the result of a process that begins in the seventeenth century, increasing numbers of peasants are driven from the land and become wage-labourers. The era of Capital is born.

Capitalism is a system of society in which the purpose of economic activity is to both reproduce and enlarge capital.

What is capital?

'Capital' is wealth, but a very specific type of wealth, which merely through ownership allows one to create more wealth. In capitalism wealth takes the form of commodities. A commodity is any useful product of human labour that is produced to be exchanged. Money acts as the universal equivalent of all commodities.

Since all goods have been turned into commodities, and access to non-commodified materials is restricted, those without the means of producing anything to exchange must sell the only thing they have: their capacity to work and bring themselves back to work the next day – their labour-power.

As an economic system, capitalism involves just two classes. On one hand, the capitalists, those who use their monopoly on the productive wealth (factories, raw materials etc.) to create more wealth, and on the other, non-owners of capital, the workers.

In feudal society, as the peasants have their own means of production, surplus must be extracted via 'extra-economic' methods through the real or ultimate threat of force. In capitalism surplus wealth is extracted through economic means; it is because of the market-dependency of the wage-labourer that labour-power is sold and the owner of capital profits from it.

Production in a capitalist society is not production for use but production for exchange with a view to a profit. The producer does not produce to directly satisfy a need but produces in order to exchange one commodity for another. In order to produce, the capitalist must purchase means of production (factories, land, equipment etc.) and labour-power. Once the production cycle is complete the capitalist hopes to recoup these costs plus an extra amount on top (the profits).

To survive in the competitive marketplace each enterprise attempts to increase the amount of profit coming to it; the capitalists must strive to increase the productivity of labour-power. But paradoxically this increased productivity has the effect of lowering the value of commodities since less labour-time is required per unit

to produce them.

If an enterprise adopts a new production technique that allows it to produce commodities at a rate below the socially necessary average labour time it will have a competitive advantage: it can sell the commodity cheaper than its competitors and yet still make a profit or sell at the same price as its competitors and make 'super profits'.

To compete and remain profitable, the competitors have to adopt this new technique also. The *socially necessary* average labour time is now reduced across the board; instead of being a means of gaining a competitive edge, the new technique is now a necessity for remaining in business.

It is this never-ending need to improve production techniques that creates the dynamic of capitalism. To simply stand still capitalists must re-invest the majority of their surplus value. Without keeping pace of developments in machinery and technological advances the capitalist would go out of business and cease to be a capitalist.

In this sense then, capitalism is not a system for the enrichment of individuals but a system for the never ending accumulation of capital for its own sake.

At odds with itself

In primitive societies where production is not yet market dependent crises take the form of disease, pestilence, famine and natural disasters. In capitalist societies crises tend not to be caused by nature. For the most part we can store enough surplus to protect us from the ravages of the elements. Capitalist crises occur when the market mechanisms that regulate the distribution of labour break down. This is not because of some external influence that disrupts an otherwise balanced system but because of the internal contradictions of capital which periodically present and resolve themselves through crisis.

Capitalists throw their money into circulation in order to have it returned plus a profit. When there are no profitable avenues of investment to be found the production cycle freezes up, commodities pile up

in warehouses, debts cannot be repaid and economic activity comes to grinding halt.

Crises can only be overcome by the devaluing of capital. This is done by selling off commodities cheaply, laying off workers, shutting down factories and dropping property prices. Though some capitalists will not survive the purge some will and those that do will be able to buy the assets of their former competitors at knock down prices, thus fuelling the next round of accumulation.

The capitalist system is the most productive mode of production in the history of humankind. In the space of a few centuries the world has been transformed beyond all recognition. Average life expectancies have more than doubled. Technological developments occur at a rate that would have been previously unimaginable. More food, clothing and shelter can be produced using less labour than ever before. It would seem that the material problems of survival have finally been solved.

Yet capitalism is a system at odds with itself. The need for constant accumulation is the driving force of society, determining where and in what way human energies will be used. Instead of being a system through which humankind controls the fulfilment of its own development, humanity is controlled by a system which it has itself created. It is the conflict between the need to accumulate capital and the need to fulfil human want that is at the heart of all social problems today.

Capitalism creates vast wealth but it also creates vast poverty and inequality. If you image the world were shrunk to a global village of 100 people with all ratios remaining the same, 20 people would own 75 per cent of the wealth, 21 would live on \$1.25 a day or less, 18 would live without clean water and 14 would go hungry or malnourished.

Society has passed through many stages and it would seem unlikely that this current one is the final. A further period of social change is possible, where humanity as a whole takes control of the productive powers and where human need becomes the guiding force for a new age of technological and scientific progress.

DJP



Imagining a Socialist Society (3)

The third, concluding part of our series on the possibilities of socialism.

Socialist society will inherit a number of problems from capitalism. So we must take some account of the prospect and estimates of likely changes in the near future as a result of climate change and a post-peak oil world society.

Inherited problems

On peak oil there seems to be pretty well a consensus now, worldwide, that we have a mounting problem on our hands and a marathon task ahead to sort out the problem. However, the biggest stumbling block is the manner in which the subject is presented to us – again, always in terms of money costs. We already have the technical know-how, and when scientists and technicians and engineers are finally freed from the constraints of the current system of having to make a profit at every step, there really is no doubt that they can come up with even more fantastic inventions than we can currently dream about. The solutions we are being offered are lack-lustre and extremely limited, only taking into account those who can pay. Are we drilling for oil and gas and mining for coal because of the positive benefits they confer? Are we building more and wider roads and increasing air travel for increased ease and convenience for travellers? Are we chopping down forests to plant palm plantations and using other crops for biofuels instead of for food because feeding people is more important than feeding engines? No!

The reason for trying to extract oil from way under the seabed – with all those risks involved to the environment – and from the filthy polluting tar sands is simply that it is profitable. Coal is even more harmful to human health but still profitable. Burning fossil fuels could go on for some little time yet with the various beneficiaries wheeling and dealing about the most profitable ways to prolong the despoliation of the planet and the negative effects to human health. We know we have much better methods already in our hands and hosts of people chomping at the bit to get started in putting these new technologies into practice on a very large scale at the household and industrial level. Many would have chosen to have done it years ago if it weren't for the prohibitive *monetary* cost. Clean electricity from sun, wind, wave and tides. Geothermal energy. Oil left in the ground or reserved for crucial manufacturing and extracted with care. Buildings constructed to use minimal energy and have minimal impact on the environment.

Similarly with transport. What we need is a system that doesn't require households to have one or more cars because the public transport system is so abysmal and work arrangements chaotically organised – read 'organised to maximise profit'. Roads and airways are not the most efficient way of moving either people or goods. Presently they are huge polluters and the bane of many people's lives. We could take a holistic approach and could use clean electricity from renewable sources to provide an integrated transport system for people, products and industry. Recycling will be undertaken

as a matter of course in every possible area. Materials, being our storehouse for the future, will be valued for their worth to our ongoing wellbeing; they will not be wasted by an obsolescence-mentality but used wisely, aesthetically and carefully in line with our philosophy.

Externalities, the negative aspects of transactions which have to be kept off the balance sheets in case they impact on profit margins – effluent in waterways, emissions dangerous to animal and plant life, the dumping of toxic waste on land and in the sea, any despoliation of our habitat and disregard for the



Cleaning up after an oil spill. Socialism is likely to inherit such problems

conditions in which people live and work in relation to these externalities – will become an integral part of the planning equation, to be taken account of in full on the balance sheet of the common good.

Food and Farming

Farming methods will be adopted according to health benefits, not wealth benefits, and satisfying genuine hunger, not hunger for profits. For instance, how will the current water inequalities be resolved around the world? Water is vital to life, it's vital to agriculture and manufacturing and it's needed in both urban and rural environments. Right now agriculture is losing the price war for water.

On an international scale we now find countries making deals with other countries to grow the whole or the bulk of their grain crop because the water they save by not growing it domestically is more profitably used elsewhere. For others their own water shortage problems are relieved – never mind if the local populations of the grower nation have to go short or be put off their land and out of their homes for this exchange.

There is huge wastage of water with some countries' current irrigation methods, poor infrastructure, and old or outdated technology in some industries. There is also a billion dollar business selling bottled water at up to a thousand times the cost of water from the tap with how many thousands of gallons wasted in the process? Crazy! With shrinking aquifers and glaciers, and fertile land sinking below rising sea levels, water is seen only as a vital resource with an ever-increasing price tag.

With the profit motive removed from the equation things will be managed very differently.

In the likely future, demographics will probably shift a great deal, but we shall be in a position to totally rethink the use of the global water supply and consider every stage from aquifers, dams, irrigation methods, industrial use and domestic consumption. Water and the infrastructure required will be considered in minute detail as to how best to use, reuse, conserve and generally value it as a basic necessity of all life – one of everyone's fundamental requirements.

Also within agriculture we shall be reassessing the relative values of different methods of producing our food. We shall be free to look at the results of studies knowing that there is no hidden agenda or biased information. It is well known that the United Nations Millennium goal of reducing *extreme* poverty by half by 2015 is failing miserably. Hunger, illiteracy and disease are still growing year on year. What actually is *acceptable* poverty or *tolerable* poverty anyway? Poverty at any level is pretty grim, surely?

When we have the correct, unambiguous facts in front of us decisions can be made unemotionally about land use. Chemical fertiliser or natural manure and traditional methods? Monocrops or mixed farms? Grain



for food or fuel? Grain for humans or animals?

What's so important about grain? This depends on how you see the future. It depends on whether you consider it more important to use it for human food, for animal food or for transport fuel. It impacts on how you view population forecasts or global warming warnings and it depends to a certain extent on where you live in the world.

Surely it makes more sense in general to reduce food miles – to re-localise agriculture for everyone's benefit? By doing so huge savings will be made in fuel and energy use. Certainly in the period of social reorganisation whilst we are investing our human energies into appropriate infrastructure we can cut emissions drastically and restore food security and control to local communities, always remembering decisions will be made locally. On the global scale we will move right away from decisions imposed and implemented by world financial authorities and transnational corporations in favour of working for the common good. Respect will automatically be conferred to local knowledge and traditional methods, understanding that the objective will be to satisfy food, fibre, fuel and other needs, not monetary goals.

As to demographics, one proven positive knock-on effect of education for girls, especially, as recorded in places such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and some African countries is that in communities where the girls have the opportunity and encouragement to go to school they

then grow up to marry later, have fewer children and the numbers of both maternal and infant deaths decline.

Statistics also show that more stable family conditions, e.g. security of food and income raises people to a different level of security where it isn't seen as linked to a large brood of children. The security of free access in a socialist society will fulfill that role. In these terms it is possible to see that population levels will decline because of mass conscious choice, relieving some of the pressures foreseen as a result of climate change.

Healthcare and Education

Socialism will involve life without healthcare budgets; waiting lists will be made history; there will be no treatment denial; there will be access to healthcare from prenatal to death, with preventive medicine recognised as the core of a healthy society; known cures such as for malaria will be available universally; unencumbered research into cures for diseases like multiple sclerosis will take place; unhampered individual choice and access to contraception, abortion, rehabilitation therapy, respite care and, where appropriate assisted suicide, will be the norm.

Basic schooling would take a huge shift away from the narrow confines of a rigid, test-based curriculum. Endless possibilities would be available from an early age to stimulate children. No financial budget means more 'educators, facilitators, trainers, coaches, mentors' etc. to guide young and old through a much wider educational experience. Learning is better stimulated through a holistic and experiential approach and would be available on demand at all life stages.

In Conclusion

Imagining a socialist society entails the following: we imagine many pluralist, co-operative, non-competitive, non-combative communities around the world, linked by their common goals of creating space for free thought, wider vision, acceptance of the other and tolerance of minority issues. We imagine a balance between 'back to nature' and 'into the future boldly', philosophically



There'll be a 'much wider educational experience' in socialism

embracing both healthy body and healthy, enquiring mind. The process of developing this, the only viable alternative society to the market economy, will come from the local and familiar at community level from all the many diverse regions of the world, as all are recognised and welcomed into the free association as valuable parts of the whole. We imagine societies of individuals having vanquished the oppressive capitalist system at last and having satisfied basic needs, now conscious of their higher human faculties and aware of their role in the environment, focused on being all they can be.

JANET SURMAN

ZEITGEIST AND ‘MARXISM’

The Zeitgeist Movement, founded in America in 2008 by Peter Joseph and Jacque Fresco, stands for a worldwide ‘resource-based economy, which in many respects resembles what we called ‘socialism’ (and, if pressed, ‘communism’): the Earth’s resources would become the common heritage of all humanity and be used in a rational way to provide what people need and to which they would have free access without money; and calculations concerning production would be done solely in units of resources and not duplicated by monetary calculation, as today.

The Movement’s opponents have also noticed a similarity and have denounced Zeitgeist for

propagating ‘Marxist Communism’, still a powerful swear-word in the US. ZM’s response, in a new guide to their orientation just published on the internet, is to insist that they are not Marxists (see thezeitgeistmovement.com/uploads/upload/file/15/TZM_Orientation_Part_1_of_4.pdf). This is true. They aren’t. While they are scientific materialists and do see humans as adapting their social arrangements in the light of changing economic and technological conditions, they do not see the agency for these adaptations as some class pursuing its material

class interest.

Referencing the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, they acknowledge that the goal it advocates is a ‘stateless and classless society’. (Curiously, they omit ‘moneyless’ even though the *Manifesto* speaks specifically of ‘the communist abolition of buying and selling’.) But they go on:

‘On the surface, reformations proposed in TZM’s promoted solutions might appear to mirror attributes of ‘Marxism’ if one was to completely ignore the underlying reasoning. The idea of a society ‘without classes’, ‘without universal property’, and the complete



THE ZEITGEIST MOVEMENT

redefinition of what comprises the 'State' might, on the surface, show confluence by the mere gestures themselves However, the actual Train of Thought to support these seemingly similar conclusions is quite different. TZM's advocated benchmark for decision making is not a Moral Philosophy, which, when examined at its root, is essentially what Marxist philosophy was a manifestation of.'

Continuing the same theme, they say 'the Marxist notion of a "classless society" was to overcome the capitalist originating "inhumanity" imposed on the working class or "proletariat".'

They then expound their own approach:

'TZM's advocated train of thought, on the other hand, sources advantages in human studies. It finds, for example, that *social stratification*, which is inherent to the capitalist/market model, to actually be a form of *indirect violence* against the vast majority as a result of the evolutionary psychology we humans naturally possess. It generates an unnecessary form of human suffering on many levels which is *destabilizing* and, by implication, *technically unsustainable*.' (Their emphasis)

So, unless all they are concerned about is that capitalism is 'technically unsustainable', they too want to overcome the 'indirect violence' and unnecessary suffering that its 'social stratification' imposes on the 'vast majority'. So let's not argue about who is more scientific than thou.

Is 'Marxism' really a 'moral philosophy'? What, in fact, is 'Marxism'? Is it the views of Marx the individual or the system of thought that Engels called 'Scientific Socialism'? It is true that in his earliest writings, just after becoming a socialist at the end of 1843, Marx's approach was philosophical rather than scientific. He denounced 'political economy' and 'private property' for resulting in the treatment of the 'proletariat' in a way that was contrary to the 'species-nature' of humans. This could indeed be interpreted as basing the case for socialism on a 'moral philosophy' – a view of how humans should be treated but weren't.

However, while Marx never abandoned his indignation at what the working class had to suffer under capitalism, he soon ceased to base the case for socialism on a philosophical theory of human nature. Already in the *Communist Manifesto* he was criticising other German Socialists for not seeing

socialism as the movement and outcome of the struggle of 'one class with another' but as representing 'not the interest of the proletariat, but the interest of Human Nature, of Man in general, who belongs to no class, has no reality, who exists only in the misty realm of philosophical fantasy.'

As Engels was later to put it, in *Socialism Scientific and Socialism*, based on something he had written in 1875:

'Modern Socialism is, in its essence, the direct product of the recognition, on the one hand, of the



Above: Peter Joseph, co-founder of the Zeitgeist Movement.

class antagonisms, existing in the society of to-day, between proprietors and non-proprietors, between capitalists and wage-workers; on the other hand, of the anarchy existing in production.'

Socialism was a class issue, not a mere moral issue; it was when this was recognised that socialism ceased to be 'utopian' and became 'scientific'.

Engels's pamphlet was in effect the founding document (much more than the *Communist Manifesto*) of what has come to be called 'Marxism' – though not by Marx himself. Marx was right about this, as the term suggests that socialist theory was the product of ideas thought up by one man, whereas, in fact, being a reflection of an on-going struggle built-in to capitalist society, it would have developed even if Marx and Engels had never been born and stands independently of whatever they may or may not have said or done. But inadequate as the term is, we are lumbered with it.

So, when, in their criticism of what we will have to call 'Marxism', ZM go on to say the following, they are in fact expressing a view shared by Scientific Socialism:

'TZM is not interested in the poetic, subjective & arbitrary notions of "a fair society", "guaranteed freedom", "world peace", or "making a better world" simply because it sounds

"right", "humane" or "good".'

They go on:

'Rather, TZM is interested in Scientific Application, as applied to societal sustainability, both physical and cultural. The Method of Science is not restricted in its application to the "physical world" and hence the social system, infrastructure, educational relevance and even understanding human behavior itself, all exist within the confines of scientific causality. In turn, there is a natural feedback system built into physical reality which will express itself very clearly in the context of what 'works' and what doesn't over time, guiding our conscious adaptation.'

Apart from the language, Marx had said something similar in 1859 in his well-known outline of the materialist conception of history in his *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, in particular:

'Humanity always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve: indeed, on closer examination, it will always be found that the task itself only arises when the material conditions for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation.'

In other words, as long as a social and economic system is 'working' there will be no pressure to change it. Marx identified the pressure for change as arising when a contradiction developed between a newly emerging way of organising the production of the wealth of society and a social and political superstructure reflecting an earlier technico-economic basis; the agent for change was a class that organised and benefitted from the new method and which would engage in a struggle with the old ruling class for control of political power. Technico-economic changes made a change of society necessary but the agent of change would be a specific class rather than the members of society in general that *Zeitgeist* seem to be suggesting

The same applies to the change from capitalism to socialism where, according to Marx, the agent of change will be the majority class of wage and salary workers and their dependents struggling against the entrenched minority capitalist class for control over the means of wealth production.

Insofar as ZM reject the class struggle they can be acquitted of the charge of 'Marxism'. However, as they stand for the Earth's resources becoming the common heritage of all, they must be found guilty of standing for 'Communism.'

ADAM BUICK

OBITUARIES

Stan Royal

Our oldest and longest-standing member, Stan Royal, died in November a few weeks short of his 98th birthday. He was born in Fulham in 1914 and joined the Socialist Party in 1942. During the war, as a carpenter by trade, he was directed to work on bomb damage. Afterwards he and a brother set up their own business. Later he worked as a surveyor pricing jobs for Ealing and then for Wandsworth council. He was an active member of West London branch until he retired to live near Arundel in Sussex but still kept in touch.

Roland Lambert

West London branch are saddened to have to announce the death in November of Roland Lambert, who was the Party's Head Office Organiser until a couple of years ago, at the relatively early age of 62. Roland first joined the Socialist Party in 1968 at the age of 18, having previously been in the YCL. He was born, bred and lived and worked all his life in the Chiswick area of West London, working for the parks department of Hounslow Council. He was an active member of the branch, participating in all its activities and attending the regular fortnightly meetings. As Head Office Organiser he came into contact with members and others throughout the country who will remember him for his helpful and unassuming manner. Our condolences go to his partner and family.



Why the arms trade

Vince Cable, the Business Secretary, is the LibDem MP for Twickenham. At a meeting in his constituency on 29 November he was handed a petition signed by 9,000 demanding an end to arms sales to oppressive regimes. Among other things, the petitioners criticised the government for helping organise the two-yearly arms fair at the Excel Centre in London. According to the local paper:

'Business Secretary Dr Cable defended his position and said the aerospace sector was helping to refuel the economy and countries should be allowed to protect themselves. Dr Cable said: "I am not a pacifist. I do accept that governments and countries have a right to defend themselves and that is done either through manufacturing or [importing] the weapons to do so"' (*Richmond & Twickenham Times*, 7 December).

Actually, given capitalism (which both he and the petitioners accept), this is not an unreasonable answer. The world is divided politically into armed states whose governments preside over the operation of capitalism in the territory where their writ runs. These states are all jockeying for position over access to raw materials, markets, trade routes and investment outlets. It's a struggle in which 'might is right'.

In order to maintain their position, states need to arm themselves with the most destructive weapons they can afford, not necessarily to use but to show how much 'might' they have when it comes to negotiations over these economic matters. They need weapons for this just as much to 'protect themselves' in the event of invasion. In fact, actual war is only as a last resort, when a state considers that its 'vital economic interests' are under serious threat.

So, there is an economic demand for weapons, and where there is a paying demand a profit-seeking supply will arise to meet it. Britain has an arms-producing capacity – miscalled the 'defence industry' which can meet this demand. The capitalist firms concerned are not going to miss this opportunity to make profits, and the government is not going to discourage them. Quite the reverse. The Prime Minister himself has not hesitated to personally become a 'merchant of death':

'The Prime Minister said Britain should support all sectors of the economy where it had a comparative advantage, including defence. He came under fire last week for pushing for contracts for Typhoon jets in UAE, Saudi Arabia and Oman. He previously led trade missions to Africa, Indonesia, China, India, Russia, Mexico, Brazil, Japan and Malaysia' (*Times*, 13 November).

Opponents of the arms trade argue that it promotes war. But they have got it the wrong way round. It is economic competition in which 'might is right' that promotes the arms trade. As long as capitalism lasts with this built-in competitive struggle between states over economic matters there will be a demand for arms and so an arms trade. No state which has, as Cameron put it, a 'comparative advantage' in arms production is going to renounce this profit-making advantage on 'ethical' grounds. This means that, given capitalism, the opponents, despite their sincerity and however justified their objection to arms and arms trading which socialists share, will unfortunately be tilting at windmills. The only way to stop it is to join us in campaigning to end capitalism.

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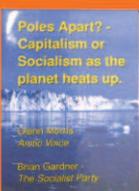
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BERNARD SHAW'S 1906 'serious comedy,' *The Doctor's Dilemma*, was recently produced at the National Theatre starring Aiden Gillett as Sir Colenso Ridgeon and Tom Burke as Louis Dubedat.

Shaw based Ridgeon on Sir Almroth Wright, a celebrated and fashionable bacteriologist, who when asked by Shaw what he would do if there were too many applying for a certain treatment, replied, 'we should have to consider which life was worth saving'.

This would become the central plot of the play where Shaw indicts privatised medicine because of its lack of impartiality, its pecuniary interest, rationing, moralising, unaccountability, ineffective treatments, negligence, and sees private doctors as competitive tradesmen in 'a conspiracy to exploit popular credulity and human suffering'. *The Doctor's Dilemma* is an argument for the creation of a public health care system such as the NHS in 1948 (which Shaw himself welcomed as an example of 'gradualist Fabian socialism').

Lenin felt that Shaw was 'a good man fallen among Fabians', and Alick West saw Shaw as a 'second Proudhon'. In 1882 under the influence of Henry George and reading Marx's *Capital*, Shaw wrote: 'the importance of the economic basis dawned on me', and was on the point of joining the Marxist SDF but instead opted for the Fabian Society. Shaw disagreed with Marxian concepts such as the labour theory of value and the class struggle and wanted 'to place socialism on a respectable bourgeois footing'.

Shaw's 1912 *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism* was republished in 1937 and Hardy in the *Socialist Standard* wrote that Shaw's views were 'essentially utopian - that there will be money incomes under socialism, and that the capitalist foundation can be made to support a socialist system of society'. The welfare state and the NHS established from the 1942 *Beveridge Report* and the 1944 White Paper are Fabian 'socialist' constructs within capitalism. Marxists see the welfare state and NHS essentially as the 'redistribution of poverty among the workers' from those without to those with dependants, maintaining a sufficiently healthy and efficient working population, keeping unemployed workers from, and insuring the capitalist class against working-class discontent. For the capitalist class the welfare state and the NHS meant increased profits and were seen as 'a necessary expense of production'.

As we said in the *Socialist Standard* June 1944, 'only under socialism can doctors truly serve their fellow workers, and a real health service for all be established'.



The Strange Agency Live in Tottenham

THE STRANGE Agency, an Anarcho-Socialist 'prog rock' quartet from West Wales was the highlight at the 'Paranoid Olympics', a Mad Pride fund-raiser for the Campaign Against Welfare Benefit Cuts in Tottenham recently.

The Strange Agency (possibly named in homage to the 1960s Marvel Comics superhero, Dr Strange) are Craig High, vocals, Dave Bates on guitar, Issy Bates on bass guitar, and Steve Johnstone on drums. Their debut LP, *Strange One*, was reviewed by *Classic Rock Magazine* in September 2012, which declared that: 'Had this unruly bunch of West Wales long hairs been signed to Stiff Records in 1976, you can't help but think chart success would surely have been theirs'. Dave was previously a long-term member of former Hawkwind front man Nik Turner's band, and Craig also worked with Turner on a dub/psych version of the 1973 Hawkwind single *Urban Guerrilla*, which was about the anarchist Angry Brigade.

The Strange Agency played a set of nine songs in Tottenham which displayed Craig High's political lyricism from helping out your neighbour in *Digging Holes* - also notable for the John Cipollina guitar style of Dave Bates - to *Stanley*, a tribute song to the film director Kubrick, famous for the anti-nuclear bomb film *Dr Strangelove*, and the psychedelic *2001: A Space Odyssey*. *Twisted Instinct* is a powerful tour de force, referencing LSD discoverer, Albert Hoffman, and musically it was Blue Cheer's cover of *Summertime Blues* or James Williamson's guitar on Iggy and the Stooges album *Raw Power*.

The lyric 'Do they know what we are after?' signals a call to overthrow the system. *Digital Inferno* is an attack on capitalist war, *The Storm* identifies the bankruptcy of bourgeois capitalism and Judeo-Christian civilisation, *Corporate Buildings* highlights the oppression of financial capitalism, *A Global Warning* shows that capitalism is the enemy of nature and the urgent need for a green socialism. *Whirlpool* attacks political apathy and urges people to 'mobilise your picket lines' and 'mass action is a must'.

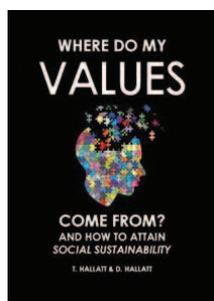
Craig High's vocals are articulate and literate Punk, and his trilling 'r's' are reminiscent of John Lydon while Dave Bates' guitar has its origins in Hendrix. With Craig also on clarinet or blues harp, the Strange Agency effect is a 1960s and 70s psychedelic and progressive melodic rock sound. Think of a heavier Tom Verlaine and Television circa 1977.

Steve Clayton



Values

***Where Do My Values Come From? - And How To Attain Social Sustainability.* By Thomas M.V. Hallatt & Dale M.R. Hallatt. Kindle eBook.**



Instead of chasing the chimerical 'values' that may lurk inside the heads of private individuals, the focus of this book is human behaviour as it is shaped by and shapes

the cultural referents that make up a 'value system'. The authors undertake their investigation using an interdisciplinary approach with case studies to illustrate their argument. The focus is on four fields from the human sciences: genetics, neuroscience, physiology and environmental psychology.

Beginning with an examination of the genetic basis of behaviour, the authors correctly state that there is no evidence that genes can bypass environmental influences and directly cause a particular behaviour. However, as they point out, that is not to claim that we are born as 'blank states', as we are born with certain genetic predispositions, but it is the environment that determines how and in what way these will play out.

It is our genetic inheritance that gives us the neuronal equipment that enables us to experience empathy, because of the survival value of becoming a social species. It is also due to our evolved history that we have brains that are highly malleable: changes in the environment determine which propensities are strengthened and which are weakened. With this in mind it makes no sense to speak of a fixed human nature which is outside or above environmental influence. Any long-term observed patterns of human behaviour must also be squared against the fact that the problem of scarcity in the environment has never been resolved and that any changes in the environment in the future will affect behaviour. 'We make the environment, the environment makes us'.

The concept of 'operant conditioning' is central to this book, the basic idea being that behaviours that are 'reinforced' are more likely to be repeated. Positive reinforcement takes place when a

behaviour is reinforced because of a reward of some kind; negative reinforcement takes place when a behaviour is reinforced by the removal of an adverse stimulus in the environment. The strengthening of neural pathways in the brain is the reinforcing mechanism.

The penultimate chapter is largely taken up with proposals for a reform of education methods inspired by the observations of the preceding chapters. All of these could be incorporated into present system; after all science and technological innovation do require a stream of new critical thinkers. Though, under capitalism the purpose of education is not to raise healthy, free-thinking individuals but only to provide sellers of labour-power capable of operating the technological means of production. The authors do raise this point in a brief passage, but its full implications are not fully developed.

So here is the fly in the soup, the whole book is based on an analysis of culture but from the standpoint of the individual, the role of structural factors in limiting and steering behaviour is neglected: 'society is like one big experiment, whereby the dependent variable is the behaviour emitted by a person and the independent variable is the environment that is manipulated and changed in various ways to bring out the behaviours in people'. But the fact that the control of the productive factors that shape the economic and socio-political environment is outside the reach of the majority and that the owning minority are compelled to comply to the blind logic of capital accumulation is somewhat missing from the analysis. The interdisciplinary approach that is adopted fails, as it fails to include the study of the laws of historical and economic change.

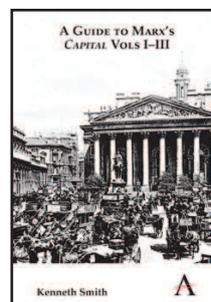
This book can be thought of as an updated version of B.F. Skinner's *Freedom and Dignity*, incorporating the latest developments in the sciences. If Marx can be said to be history's number one victim of glib criticism and misrepresentation, then perhaps Skinner is a close contender for the number two spot. Both Marx and Skinner developed coherently materialist theories of change, Marx in the area of social change with what has become known as historical materialism, and Skinner in the field of individual behavioural change with what he called behaviorology or radical behaviourism. These two concepts could be seen as complementing each other to make a coherent whole, with Marx providing analysis at

the macro level and Skinner at the micro; though Skinner himself never advanced such a view (more often than not he got Marx wrong) and this claim is sure to bring resistance from Marxists. However, with that thought in mind I shall recall the words of Engels writing in the *Anti-Dühring*: 'Freedom does not consist in any dreamt-of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends'; there is no reason to exclude the laws of behaviour from our enquiry.

DJP

Curate's egg

***A Guide to Marx's Capital, Volumes I-III.* By Kenneth Smith. Anthem Press, 2012.**



Readers of Volume I of Karl Marx's *Capital* may have found the early theoretical chapters difficult. In a letter to Kugelmann (30 November 1867) Marx advises him that the following

chapters were the most immediately readable: 'Working Day' (Vol. I, Part III), 'Co-operation' and 'The Division of Labour and Machinery' (Part IV) and 'Primitive Accumulation' (Part VI). In a letter to Wollmann (19 March 1877) Marx explained why he did not follow his own advice and start the book with the descriptive historical material: 'In the scientific exposition the arrangement is prescribed for the author, although some other arrangement might often be more convenient and more appropriate for the reader'.

Building on Marx's advice to Kugelmann, Kenneth Smith's guide presents the three volumes of *Capital* in a different order of reading to that in which they were published, as a more user-friendly way of reading Marx's work. However, in the course of his exposition Smith argues that for most of the twentieth century the full development of capitalism has been undermined by the existence of a non-capitalist 'third world' which has caused capitalism to take on the form of a highly developed mercantile system. Mercantilism, as Smith points out, is basically 'buying cheap in order to sell dear', rather than the accumulation of capital in industrial enterprises. But while some sellers

can profit in this way, the seller's gain is exactly offset by the buyer's loss. The total amount of value in existence remains unchanged. If all sell dear then they cannot buy cheap and all lose as buyers exactly what they gain as sellers. Exchange, in Smith's interpretation, is a zero-sum game. There has undoubtedly been a growth of speculative finance, but without the surplus value provided by the accumulation of capital there would have been no growth of 'mercantile-capital'.

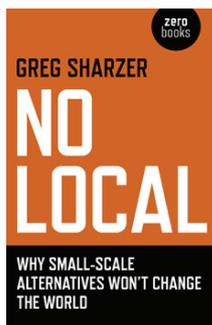
Smith also repeats a few myths, such as the claim that capitalism for Marx was characterised by increasing 'immiseration' of the working class. Despite the usual use of quotation marks, Marx never used that term. Central to the notion of 'immiseration' is increasing poverty of the working class, but this is based on a misunderstanding of Marx's discussion of paupers in mid-nineteenth century Britain. The increasing pauperism Marx mentions in Chapter 25 of Volume I refers to the then 'lowest sediment' of society (the unemployed, the ragged, the sick, the old, the widows and orphans), not the entire working class. This issue is important because many commentators cite this misunderstanding as proof that Marx was completely wrong. For instance, the influential economist Paul Samuelson has asserted that since 'the immiseration of the working class' (using quotation marks as though he is quoting Marx) 'simply never took place' *Capital* can

be disregarded ('Marxian Economics as Economics', *American Economic Review*, Vol. 57, 1967). *Capital* still demands attention, but Smith's guide cannot be recommended.

LEW

Small is small

No Local: Why Small-Scale Alternatives Won't Change the World. By Greg Sharzer. Zero books, 2011. 180 pages.



According to Sharzer there are two kinds of 'localists' – those who openly favour small-scale capitalism (small businesses, ethical consumption, community gardening)

and those who see small-scale alternative economic arrangements (cooperatives, LETS schemes, local currencies, credit unions) as a way of undermining capitalism and progressing towards a post-capitalist society. His argument is that 'while small-scale alternatives can survive and occasionally flourish, they won't build a new, equitable society. Their prospects are severely limited by the power of capital.' They may be ways for some people to survive under capitalism, but are no threat to it.

Pro-market localists share the assumption of mainstream economics that capitalism is a system geared to meeting paying consumer demand whereas in fact it is geared to making profits and accumulating them as more capital. Capitalist firms are driven by market forces to accumulate as, to stay in the race, they must continually invest in reducing their costs of production. Small firms are not exempt from this pressure. Neither are the cooperatives favoured by anti-market localists. Both kinds of localist are 'faced with the impalatable conclusion that small alternatives won't outcompete or destroy capitalism.' Rather, 'capital's inherent drives to profit expose local alternatives to ruthless market discipline.'

Ethical consumption can't be effective because most people can't afford it. LETS schemes and local currencies are less convenient than ordinary money and only survive because (and as long as) some activists are prepared to put in the extra work to keep them going. Community gardening in towns has to compete with other, rent-bringing uses of the land. If national governments have been unable to delink their economies from the world market how can local communities be expected to?

Sharzer questions both the feasibility and the desirability of localist schemes to maximise local autarky:

'Consumer goods, let alone mass

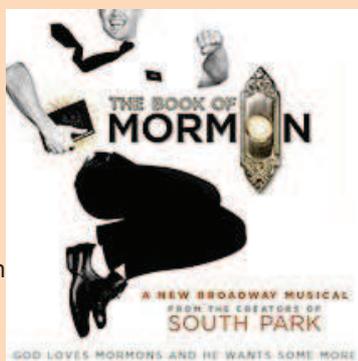


Courting Mormons

MORMONISM WILL be under the theatrical spotlight with the London debut of musical *The Book of Mormon* later this month. This provocative production has been written by the creators of *South Park*, which featured an episode lampooning the faith's flimsy origins. In the 1820s, humble farmer Joseph Smith was supposedly directed by an angel to some magic golden plates inscribed with sacred texts, which no-one else ever saw. His translations of these apparently-real inscriptions formed the basis of Mormonism, a spin-off from Christianity with a morbid emphasis on judgement after you kick the bucket. The *South Park* episode made the point that nice, friendly people can have some pretty wacky beliefs. This was also borne out by BBC3 documentary *Young, Mormon and Single*.

The programme focused on the annual week-long Duck Beach gathering in North Carolina, U S of A. This is where hundreds of single Mormons meet up looking for love and

marriage; a Mormon meat market, even. Getting hitched is central to Mormon beliefs, with marriage being what you aspire for. And there's something else missing in an unmarried Mormon's life as well as a ring on their finger.



This is a ticket to the VIP area of their 'Celestial Kingdom' afterlife, only open to married (and deceased) Mormons. Aiming for this adds to the pressure to find Mr / Miss Right already felt by these no-sex-before-marriage hormone-bombs. So, when courting Mormons split up, their emotional fallout includes dealing with guilt that they're not following their faith properly. It's a shame that all the emotions that come with finding a partner are complicated and constrained by the far-fetched beliefs Mormons have.

On top of these expectations, Mormons have to manage without alcohol and drugs as social lubricants at the Duck Beach gathering. But they prove that you can have a good night playing party games and dancing about without booze. And at least this means they can play beach volleyball the following morning, rather than waking up with a pounding head after downing seventeen Jack Daniels.

Meetings

public transit systems and high-speed internet, are impossible without a highly-developed capacity to source materials, process them into finished products and distribute them across large distances. For example, making solar panels involves advanced machinery and massive financing that would be impossible to muster locally. (...) Even localism's direct democracy needs high-tech to reduce people's workload and allow them time to participate.'

Sharzer, then, makes a powerful case as to 'why small-scale alternatives won't change the world.' This, however, is confined to the opening chapters. After them it's downhill all the way. A whole chapter is devoted to trying to show that localism is the ideology of the 'petite (sic) bourgeois' as if this was a separate class (and as if he wouldn't fall into it himself). Localism could be described as 'petty bourgeois' but only in the economic sense of wanting to create an economy of independent artisans and small ('petty') enterprises. Rock bottom is reached when he praises Lenin 'whose movement inspired millions to take up arms for socialism', i.e., for state capitalism, his own unviable 'alternative'. This means that unfortunately his criticisms are not going to be taken so seriously by anti-market localists.

ALB

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THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SCENE

Speaker: Vic Vanni

Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow G20 2YE

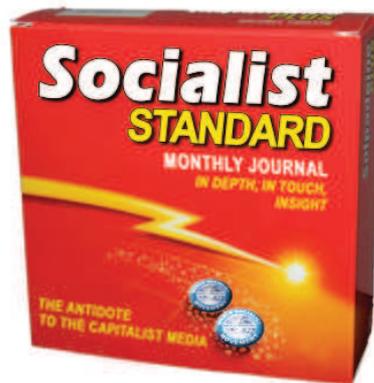
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Friday **29 March** 11.00am - 5.00pm

Saturday **30 March** 11.00am - 5.00pm

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The Socialist Party badge



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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 brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

50 Years Ago

Sir William

NOBODY WHO has troubled to keep an eye on the trade union movement will have fainted with surprise at the news that the New Year Honours List brought a knighthood to William Carron.

Carron, president of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (motto, carved impressively on the presidential chair, "Be United And Industrious"), is the latest in a lengthening line of trade union knights, preceded by such as Tom O'Brien of NATKE and Tom Williamson (now a life peer) of NUGMW.

One thing these men have in common. They are all what is known as "moderate" trade union leaders. And "moderate"



William Carron

is another of the euphemisms beloved of the Capitalist press.

It means a trade union leader who can be relied upon to angrily denounce unofficial

strikes. It means the sort of leader who suffers the wage restrictions of a Labour government and who cooperates in drives for greater efficiency and productivity. A man who thinks that it is a good idea for the unions to be represented on the National Economic Development Council and other such bodies, which are designed to promote co-operation between the workers and the employers. It means a man who does his best to ignore the fact that there is a class struggle in Capitalist society.

But this is not what trade unions are there for. The unions should concern themselves with protecting and advancing the interests of their members. They should be struggling for higher pay, shorter hours, better working conditions, and so on. But where do honours come into all this?

Honours are reserved for the people who have served Capitalism in some way or other; they are the establishment's mark of appreciation.

It is a bitter commentary on the standing of the trade unions today, and on the standard of consciousness of their members, that the men at the top are so often coming to wear a coronet or some other bauble to show that Capitalism has looked upon them and found them good.

(From 'News in Review', *Socialist Standard*, February 1963)

ACTION REPLAY

Reds in the Red

SALFORD IS the largest city in England without a professional football club. You might think that the proximity to Manchester more than made up for this, but it also has something Manchester lacks, a professional rugby league team, currently known as Salford City Reds (it used to have two, but Swinton Lions are at present playing at Leigh's ground because of their own financial problems).



Last year Reds left their stadium at the Willows to move to a new ground, the Salford City Stadium at Barton, a brownfield site near the River Irwell. The stadium was built as a joint venture between Salford Council and Peel Holdings, the largest property investment company in the UK (they also own the Manchester Ship Canal and Liverpool Airport). The stadium, currently shared with rugby union club, Sale Sharks, actually belongs to Peel, and optimistic com-

parisons were made between the Reds' move to Barton and Manchester City's move to their new Eastlands stadium and the investment that attracted.

But all did not go well. Blame has been attached to the general economic recession, to overinvestment in new players, and to failure to attract large enough crowds; whatever the reason, Salford got into financial difficulties and had their bank account frozen, though the chairman insisted it was just 'a short-term cash flow problem'. In December Salford Council rejected a £1.5m rescue plan.

At the time of writing, the club owe money to ex-players and to Revenue & Customs. A hearing to wind them up was due to be held in early January but was adjourned until 4 February, just after the new league season starts. A millionaire racehorse owner has now emerged as a potential buyer.

So it looks like another example of an enterprise aiming too high, failing to achieve its targets and so possibly going out of business. A familiar story in sport and other areas of the economy.

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Voice from the Back

Owners And Non-Owners

The development of the oil industry in the Middle East has led to immense wealth for the ruling class there. 'In just seven decades as a nation, Saudi Arabia has grown from an impoverished backwater of desert nomads to an economic powerhouse with an oil industry that brought in \$300bn last year. *Forbes* magazine estimates King Abdullah's personal fortune at \$18bn, making him the world's third-richest royal, behind the rulers of Thailand and Brunei' (*Guardian*, 1 January). The report goes on to record that the Saudi government discloses little official data about its poorest citizens. But press reports and private estimates suggest that between 2 million and 4 million of the country's native Saudis live on less than about \$530 a month – about \$17 a day – considered the poverty line in Saudi Arabia. So we have up to a quarter of the population living in poverty and hunger while the owning clique luxuriates in obscene wealth. This is capitalism in action.



Desperation In Spain

In recent years Spain has been struggling with a dramatic economic crisis, leading to an unemployment rate of 25 percent and massive evictions. 'Spain's housing market collapsed in 2008 after a housing bubble, hurting the economy and causing a homelessness epidemic. As a result, more than 50,000 delinquent Spanish homeowners were evicted in the first half of 2012 alone, and 1 million

homes lie empty in Spain, according to *Reuters*' (*Huffington Post*, 3 January). These evictions have led to locksmiths in Pamplona refusing to carry out evictions. This move they think could essentially stop evictions in Pamplona because even if the police kick a family out of their home, the evicted can still get back in if no one has changed the locks. But it's unlikely to work.

The Dignity Of Labour

Desperate for work, many Mexicans come to the USA and Canada and work on the farms there. Concerned about migrants settling permanently, the Canadian government has very strict

rules to deal with this. Only married men are eligible for the Canadian program, preferably those with young children, and their families must remain in Mexico. Another incentive to return home: a cut of the migrants' wages is placed in

a Canadian pension fund, receivable only if they return to Mexico. 'Once in Canada, the workers live like monks, sleeping in trailers or barracks, under contractual agreements that forbid them from drinking alcohol and having female visitors, or even socializing with other Mexican workers from different farms. Most of their time in Canada is limited to sleeping, eating and working long days that can stretch to 15 hours, without overtime pay' (*Washington Post*, 5 January).

Happy Families?

Aspiring politicians like to be seen as

supporting families, but the reality is far different. 'Soaring energy bills are forcing one in four mothers to turn off their heating in the depths of winter in order to afford food for their children. Fuel poverty is resulting in thousands of families resorting to wearing extra clothes and using blankets in their homes. More than half of families turn off the heating in their houses when the children are out, while 45 percent of adults keep warm using blankets or duvets during the day, according to a survey. A shocking 23 percent of families are already having to choose between buying food or using heating, according to a survey by the Energy Bill Revolution campaign' (*Daily Mail*, 6 January).

Warm shows of affection by politicians won't heat up your kid's bedroom.

Recession? Who's Recessing?

We are at present living through an economic recession and we are told by the mass media that we all must share

the hardships of these straitened times, but it seems that some are faring better than the rest of us. 'The richest people on the planet got richer in 2012, adding \$241 billion to their collective net worth, according to the *Bloomberg Billionaires Index*, a daily ranking of the world's 100 wealthiest individuals... Amancio Ortega, the Spaniard who founded retailer Inditex SA, was the year's biggest gainer. The 76-year-old tycoon's fortune increased \$22.2 billion to \$57.5 billion, according to the index, as shares of Inditex, operator of the Zara clothing chain, rose 66.7 percent' (*Chicago Tribune*, 2 January).

1. Carlos Slim Helú \$77.6 billion
 2. Bill Gates \$63.9 billion
 3. Amancio Ortega \$58.1 billion
 4. Warren Buffett \$51.2 billion
 5. Ingvar Kamprad \$45.1 billion
 6. Charles Koch \$43.4 billion
 7. David Koch \$43.4 billion
 8. Larry Ellison \$41.1 billion
 9. Li Ka-Shing \$30.7 billion
 10. Bernard Arnault \$30.5 billion
- (*Bloomberg* Jan 2013)

FREE LUNCH

