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Paris COP21

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PLUS

Democracy and Complexity
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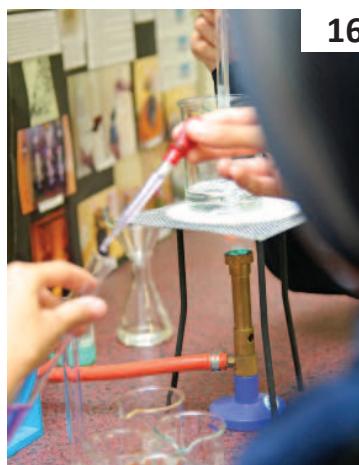
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Introducing the Socialist Party

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



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

and Turkish as well as English.

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

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

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Editorial

The Socialist View on the EU Referendum

IMAGINE TWO social systems, which we can call system A and system B. System A involves a tiny minority owning the means of production, a wages system, exploitation, varying degrees of poverty, resistance by workers, wars, environmental problems. System B involves a tiny minority owning the means of production, a wages system, exploitation, varying degrees of poverty, resistance by workers, wars, environmental problems.

System A was a description of British capitalism with the UK as part of the European Union; system B a description of British capitalism with the UK outside the EU. Clearly they are both exactly the same, and there are no important differences to workers' lives between the two systems. Any differences will be marginal, temporary, and could go either way. So the socialist response to the question of how to vote in the referendum is not to vote Yes or No but to write 'World Socialism' across the ballot paper.

The EU is a capitalist club, designed to simplify and harmonise markets and to

make it easier for member countries to compete against the US and Japan and the rising power of China, Russia, India and so on. On this issue, however, there is a split in the capitalist class and their political and media representatives. In broad terms, the bigger capitalists and those who are export-oriented or are based in the City of London are in favour of EU membership, while the smaller capitalists and those whose business is domestically-based are against.

Those for staying in say leaving would mean less control over 'our economic affairs.' Those for leaving say 'we' would 'regain the power to control of own affairs.'

As is usually the case with statements by the ruling class and their spokespersons, you need to ask who the 'we' being mentioned really refers to. And what kind of 'control' do they have in mind here? As workers, we don't control our own lives and certainly not 'our economic affairs', nor can we solve 'our own problems'. It is the interests and powers of the capitalist class that are focussed on in such statements, though

it must be said that even capitalists and their governments cannot control capitalism.

In the 1975 referendum on the Common Market, as it then was, the Socialist Party made comparable points, adding that 'The British people are only being asked to endorse the continuation of capitalism, in or out' (*Socialist Standard*, May 1975).

Supporters of nationalisation and taxing the rich may well conclude that whether the UK is in or out of the EU may make some difference as far as their reformist policies are concerned. But to a revolutionary movement that aims at abolishing the wages system and establishing a classless society it does not matter in the least.

Socialists will be writing 'World Socialism' on voting papers in the referendum (this is emphatically not an abstention), and we urge all workers to do the same. But of course we urge workers not just to do that but also to consider the case for a society without capitalist clubs like the EU, without countries and without classes.

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Lights out, inaction...

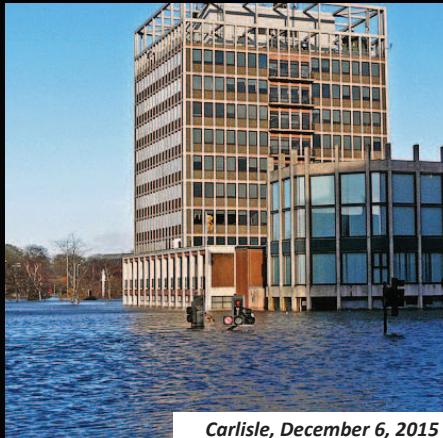
AS UK readers will recall, people in the north-west of England had an interesting time of it just before Christmas courtesy of Storm Desmond. It was quite something to see the local town centre under water, and those not actually flooded out of their houses still had the unique experience of spending two or three winter nights without heating or power. With nothing but a candle for company when it gets dark at 4pm you quickly realise just how interminably long a December night lasts. There'll be a regional baby boom next September, in all probability.

One might have thought that heating and lights would be uppermost in people's minds, and certainly it wasn't fun for those all-electric households which had only bread and cold water for dinner. But one can manage on the whole fairly well without basic amenities, so long as it's not permanent. What one can't manage without – and this is not obvious until you experience it – is information.

People were in the dark in more ways than one. No power meant no TV, no radio, no internet, and no mobile phones. It's hard to overstate, in our hyper-connected world, just how disorienting this is. It was as if a black shell of silence had descended on the area, shutting out all noise from outside. Hungry for news, or perhaps rediscovering the importance of human contact, people left their houses and poured into the city centre to find out whatever there was to find out. Every food shop was closed, and anywhere you might conceivably purchase a candle, but Claire's Accessories was incongruously open for business and so was Ann Summers. The town authorities seemed not to have quite grasped what was going on, and it did not occur to anyone to set up a central news point. On being asked for information, the duty officer in the well-lit counter booth at the central police station smiled innocently and said 'What about?'

An early rumour was that the nuclear power station had gone down. In an information vacuum every Chinese whisper is amplified to a shout of alarm. There was a rumour (rich irony) that the water was to be cut off. The bridges were closed (why?) and many roads out of town (why?). Continuing her whimsical attempt to be helpful the station duty officer enquired 'Did you want to go somewhere?'

Police officers on the street, drafted in



Carlisle, December 6, 2015

from other counties, seemed uniformly uninformed. One directed people to walk miles to an out-of-town supermarket which was closed. Asked if he would use his radio to check what food services might be functioning, another officer simply laughed. Police radios are only for important things, apparently.

Showing more presence of mind than the constabulary, staff from the local flooded Sainsbury's began doling out free bread and a queue formed across the large car park, redolent of Soviet Russia. Similar queues grew around the few functioning public telephone boxes, anachronistic installations nobody had even noticed the day before.

It wasn't the end of the world, and people knew it, because M&S still had its Christmas lights on. There was good humour and bonhomie, and a complete lack of the sort of panic which those in charge like to pretend populations are prone to. There were jokes too. These were terrorist floods, people said. Isis have been stuffing toilet rolls into the storm drains to block them up. It's a conspiracy by the carpet firms. It's a Tory plan to turn the North-West into a London reservoir ready for the next summer drought.

But it was sobering, all the same, to realise how fragile modern society is and how we can be so easily disconnected from it, and how upon disconnection that same social reality so quickly comes to look like the dreamed 'reality' in the film *The Matrix*. A few nights of blacked out streets, where even the street and traffic lights don't work, is not enough time for social order to disintegrate (though there was a spike in burglaries), but it is enough time to reflect on the blinding meaninglessness of reality TV, X Factor shows, Facebook and a million other things we think are real and important and interesting.

It wasn't the end of the world, but one couldn't escape a feeling that the

end of the world, if it ever came, would look something like this. People would pour out of their dark, cold houses, their phones dead and useless, suffering an almost existential crisis of ignorance, while authority figures stood around vaguely, pretending to be in charge but not much the wiser. The end of the world would not be caused by a mere power cut. But it would certainly start with one.

The acid test of a society is how it copes when things go wrong. Socialists are not inclined to be melodramatic, but we do think about the big questions, like what kind of social structures humans would need to survive into the far future. We're certainly not alone in the conviction that capitalism is spectacularly not equipped to ensure that.

It's not just the chaotic casino economics. A key problem with property-owning societies is that they form rigid vertical hierarchies whose only purpose is to preserve the status quo, and this is an intrinsic weakness because it makes those societies non-adaptive. The people trapped in them are also non-adaptive. They are not encouraged to cope in adversity, they're encouraged to be weak, to be clueless and defenceless and over-specialised, because this is what protects the hierarchy. They are trained from infant school to rely on authority, to do all that is ordered and nothing that is prohibited. All the glare and dazzle of the information society, with its 24/7 news channels and its movies and its myth-making, obscures the essential fact that the majority of people are perpetually in the dark, out in the cold and disconnected from power. For capitalism to be perpetually strong, we must be perpetually weak. This is all good for capitalism but it is a survival flaw for humans. A flaw like this killed the dinosaurs. A meteorite caused havoc and shut out the sun, but what really killed them was their inability to adapt.

This is what the authoritarian Leninist Left doesn't understand, any better than the proto-fascist right-wing.

That's why socialists talk about the future society as a 'horizontal hierarchy', an organisational structure which allows a maximum diversity of skills without the coercive weight of vertical stratification. It's not just a lofty obsession with egalitarianism. Such a society, unrestricted by the steel bonds of social rank and position, would be mobile and adaptive, able to respond to changing circumstances, able to survive long term, and probably a damn sight better organised when the lights go out.

PJS

Goals and Penalties



In September the UN adopted seventeen Global Goals, intended to build a better world by 2030 (www.globalgoals.org). These include such aims as ending poverty and hunger, promoting clean water and renewable energy, achieving gender equality and combatting climate change. All very worthy, and at least the global nature of problems and solutions is recognised, but let's step back a bit and look at the background and history of such efforts.

The Global Goals are a follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set by the UN in 2000 (www.un.org/millenniumgoals), though with 1990 often taken as a benchmark. There were just eight MDGs, from eradicating extreme poverty and hunger to reducing child mortality and combatting HIV/AIDS. For a discussion of one aspect of this, see *Material World* in the August *Socialist Standard*.

The UN's report on the progress of the MDGs was published in July this year. This speaks of 'profound achievements', but, even if we accept the claims at face value, what emerges is at most a series of qualified successes. Among the achievements (all quoted from the report):

- The number of people living in extreme poverty has declined by more than half, falling from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015
- The number of out-of-school children of primary school age worldwide has fallen by almost half, to an estimated 57 million in 2015, down from 100 million in 2000
- The global under-five mortality rate has declined by more than half, dropping from 90 to 43 deaths per 1,000 live births between 1990 and 2015

Since 1990, the maternal mortality ratio has declined by 45 percent worldwide, and most of the reduction has occurred since 2000.

Yet as the report also notes, 'the poorest and most vulnerable people are being left behind'. For instance (again quoted from the report):

- About 16,000 children die each day before celebrating their fifth birthday, mostly from preventable causes
- In the developing regions, children from the poorest 20 percent of households are more than twice as likely to be stunted as those from the wealthiest 20 percent

About 800 million people still live in extreme poverty and suffer from hunger

• In Latin America and the Caribbean, the ratio of women to men in poor households increased from 108 women for every 100 men in 1997 to 117 women for every 100 men in 2012

• By the end of 2014, conflicts had forced almost 60 million people to abandon their homes – the highest level recorded since the Second World War.

Thus it would seem that the fifteen-year project established in 2000 was so successful that another fifteen-year project, covering many of the same aims, was set up when it came to an end. Extreme poverty, for instance, was reduced but it had certainly not been eradicated, as the goals had it. As far as hunger was concerned, the true aim was not that nobody should go hungry but that the proportion in developing countries suffering from hunger should be halved between 1990 and 2015. The reduction allegedly achieved was in fact from

23.3 percent to 12.9 percent, which is not quite a half. This was against a background of higher food prices, extreme weather events, natural disasters and the economic recession. Much of the reduction was in China, as the economy there saw short-term expansion and the country became a source of cheap labour power for global capitalism. But progress was much slower in the Caribbean, Oceania, Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. South Asia alone has 281 million undernourished people.

So what conclusions do we draw from this? That the new Global Goals will not deliver either? That the whole enterprise is a charade intended to cover up the continuation of poverty and inequality? That the UN is hardly the best organisation to oversee such projects? That yet more such projects will be needed subsequently?

A more appropriate response would be to say that in technological terms it is perfectly possible to meet the real goals of ending poverty and so on, and to do so straightaway: that the planet and its inhabitants are perfectly capable of growing enough food for everyone; that maternal mortality can be significantly reduced if the required resources are put to it; that no child needs to grow up hungry or stunted or illiterate or abused; that the environment can be properly nurtured. In other words, the current suffering and premature deaths are quite simply unnecessary. But it will take a revolution to achieve all this, not tinkering within the present system.

PB

Letters

Dear Editors

The article on the Labour Party in the December *Standard* clearly exposed their failures. That's not how the Labour Party themselves see it of course, claiming that their actions in government 'have revolutionised the lives of the British people' (www.labour.org.uk/pages/what-is-the-labour-party).

Even after several Labour governments, the lives of workers in Britain still involve exploitation and varying degrees of poverty. The revolution is yet to come.

Paul Bennett, Manchester

Revolution or Resolutions?

THERE'S NOTHING the devout Christian likes more than a righteous feeling of guilt and sin. Fortunately Christianity gives its punters plenty to feel guilty and sinful about.

And although their god, like most others, is all-seeing and nothing escapes his attention, guilt-ridden Christians happily torment themselves with their sinfulness to their heart's content, safe in the knowledge that although the invisible man in the sky is fully aware of every guilty secret, every bit of illicit pleasure and every sin committed, he will forgive them.

To regularly remind him, though, that their sins are to be forgiven, they occasionally need to demonstrate their repentance and remorse. Lent, the forty days leading up to Easter, for example, is traditionally spent miserably fasting and reflecting on these sins. And the New Year offers a wonderful opportunity for further repentance and misery by the drawing up of lists of New Year's resolutions to torture themselves with.

And this year, for any Christians

sanctimoniously agonizing over what New Year's resolutions impose on themselves, the *Halo-Halo* column is here to help. Forget about giving up fags and booze, it's not very original and you're not going to stick to it anyway. Here's something you can really feel guilty about. How about giving up your religious delusions? It seems you have more to be ashamed of than you thought.

A recent study by the University of Chicago indicates that children from religious families are less likely to share with others than were children from non-religious families. A religious upbringing is also associated with more punitive tendencies in response to anti-social behavior.

The results 'challenge the view that religiosity facilitates prosocial behavior, and call into question whether religion is vital for moral development – suggesting



the secularization of moral discourse does not reduce human kindness, in fact it does just the opposite' said Prof Jean Decety (*Science Daily*, November 2015).

And a previous, but similar study by Royal Holloway, University of London found that 'When subconsciously exposed to religious ideas and concepts, religious people are far more likely to actively punish those they believe are acting selfishly and unfairly' (*Science Daily*, November 2010).

It's a funny old world. As any socialist who has ever tried to reason with a Christian knows, if you try to describe a future society without poverty, hunger, homelessness etc. and call it socialism, the Christian will call you a dangerous communist. Ask them to describe heaven and, if they can give an answer at all, they'll describe pretty much the same thing. (Except with harp-playing angels and temples with pillars of gold).

The Christian, it seems, (in spite of his self-declared sinfulness) expects to go to heaven and be forgiven, but at the same time, reserves the right to be selfish, and to punish those of us who argue for a world without poverty here on Earth. NW



cooking the books



Osborne, Mao, same struggle

IT WAS a good idea to twit George Osborne about his new-found love for the dictatorship in China to make the point that, when it comes to finding markets and investment outlets, ideology doesn't matter. What does instead is the material, economic interest of the capitalist class, and that Osborne, as one of their governmental representatives, served this interest on his recent visit to China, despite it being a dictatorship and, to boot, one that (falsely) claims to be socialist.

But, in his response to Osborne's 25 November Autumn Statement, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell, fluffed it by choosing to quote from Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book* and offering 'Comrade Osborne' a copy. What was he thinking? He must have known that this would have been misinterpreted by a hostile media to paint him as a supporter of Mao, as one 'Marxist' quoting another. Of course neither Mao nor McDonnell are Marxists, and if anything McDonnell has been more of a fellow traveller of Trotskyism than Maoism.

The passage he quoted wasn't very

appropriate either. It was something Mao said in 1949, just after his party had won the civil war in China and assumed power there, about the need to learn how to run industries from those who had been running them under the previous regime (echoing what Lenin had said just after the Bolsheviks had seized power in Russia), ending with the trite punchline 'we must not pretend to know what we do not know.'

Actually, the *Little Red Book* does contain some more appropriate sayings that could have been applied to the Tory government's Five Year Austerity Plan. One section is headed 'Building Our County Through Diligence and Frugality'.

In 1955 Mao said:

'Diligence and frugality should be practiced in running factories and shops and all state-owned, co-operative and other enterprises. The principle of diligence and frugality should be observed in everything. This principle of economy is one of the basic principles of socialist economics. China is a big country, but she is still very poor. It will take several decades to make China prosperous. Even then we will still have to observe the principle of diligence and frugality.'

And again in 1957:

'To make China rich and strong needs several decades of intense effort, which will include, among other things, the effort to practice strict economy and combat waste, i.e., the policy of building up our country through diligence and frugality.'

In those days there would have been billboards and compulsory workplace meetings shouting 'Build Our Country Through Diligence and Frugality', i.e. work hard and live on as little as possible. Maybe 'frugality' wasn't the best translation of whatever the Chinese word was. A more appropriate one might have been 'austerity'.

Hard work and austerity was what the workers and peasants of China got under Mao as their consumption was held down to build up state capitalist China's industrial and military might. Since Mao's death in 1976 China has evolved towards a more conventional kind of capitalism, with private capitalist firms, billionaires, a stock exchange and all the rest, but still under the dictatorship of the so-called 'Communist' Party. Not that that's a problem for Osborne when it comes to doing trade and investment deals. Nor would it be for McDonnell if ever he became Chancellor of the Exchequer. Labour governments too have known all about how to look after the interests of British Capitalism plc.

'I feel I am a slave'

THERE ARE now 53 million domestic workers worldwide, 1.5 million domestic workers in Saudi Arabia alone, where recruitment agencies fly in 40,000 women a month to keep up with demand.

In the Gulf, the International Trade Union Confederation says that 2.4 million domestic workers are facing conditions of slavery. Rothna Begum of Human Rights Watch says that 'in many houses these women have absolutely no status – they have been bought'. The International Domestic Workers Federation estimates that families save \$8bn (£5.1bn) a year by withholding wages from their domestic workers. 'With kafala and other legal systems around the world that give no labour rights to migrant women, you are giving almost total impunity to employers to treat these women however they like,' Begum says, 'It's startling what cruelty can emerge when one person has complete control over another.'

Marina Sarno explains 'I had no time off, no time to rest ever. Even when I was trying to eat, she would be calling me: 'You are not here to rest. I paid a lot of money for you.' To her, I was a slave. I was not a human.' Marina told her agency that she was being mistreated, but they said she had to stay until the end of her contract. "They said, 'Your madam has paid good money for you'" (*Guardian*, 24 October).

Yet we should not consider such conditions as only applicable to the Middle East. In the UK there is the 2012 Domestic Worker's Visa, designed for cleaners, chauffeurs, cooks and nannies from outside the European Union, who are accompanying overseas employers to the UK. It too is a system that ties overseas domestic workers to just one employer refusing them the right to change their employer in the UK. 15-16,000 Overseas Domestic Worker visas are issued to private households each year (around 200 visas are issued annually to those working for diplomats). The charity Kalayaan, which helps migrant domestic workers believes it facilitates and institutionalises the domestic

servitude of workers. The old system allowed them to change employers once they were brought here, giving them a straightforward escape route if they experienced bad treatment. They could find a new job and apply to get their visa renewed. This system was praised as a model of fair play. The UN described it as 'instrumental in facilitating the escape of migrant domestic workers from exploitative and abusive situations'.

The UK's government position is that only a tiny proportion of those here as domestic workers are abused and exploited. However, Human Rights Watch said it had found serious abuses of migrant workers by foreign employers in the UK. 'We have documented the forced labour of domestic workers; they have been made to work extremely long hours without breaks or days off, paid very little or not at all, psychologically abused and not provided with food,' said Izza Leghtas.

'Alia' came to the UK as a maid. She said her passport was taken from her, she was made to eat scraps of food and sleep in a cupboard. 'They promised me they were going to pay me more, but they didn't pay me. I started in morning at 06.00 until midnight. I didn't have any break and they

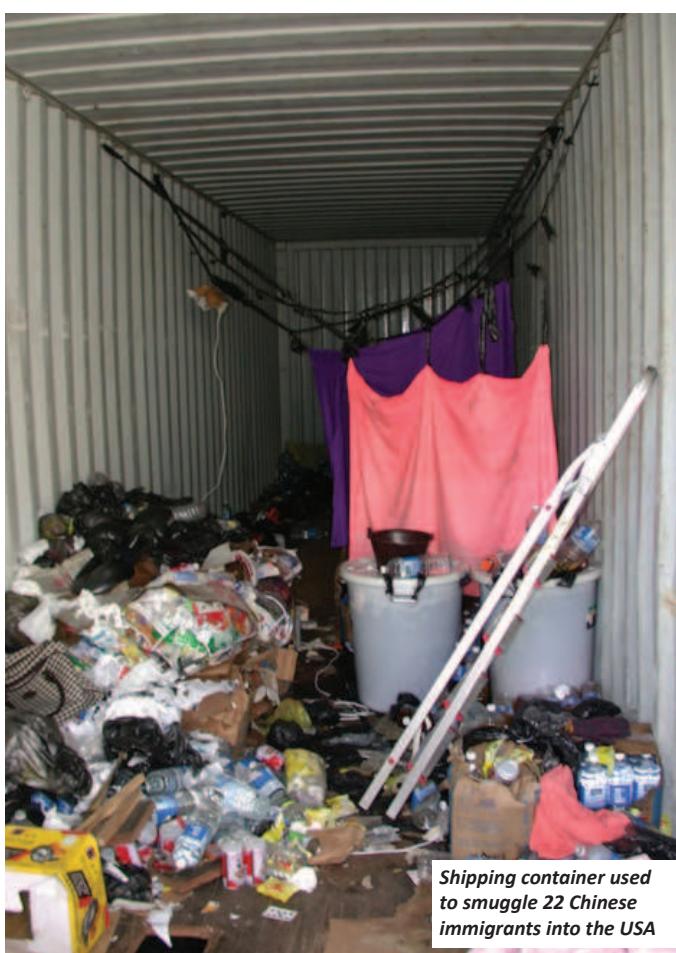
never let me go out,' she said. 'I feel I am a slave, they told me you have no right to be questioning us because you are just a housemaid,' she recalled. Alia eventually managed to escape, but by leaving her abusive employer she breached immigration rules and is now an illegal migrant. Her only option is deportation.

The Joint Committee on the Draft Modern Slavery Bill reported that 'In the case of the domestic worker's visa, policy changes have unintentionally strengthened the hand of the slave master against the victim of slavery'. The now 2015 Modern Slavery Act only provides for a six month period of leave for those domestic workers conclusively identified as trafficked. For someone who has been trafficked he or she is expected to find employment within 28 days (the time limit specified by the rules) and during this time the worker has no recourse to public funds so may be destitute. They have to apply for the six-month visa having secured employment so need to search for and find employment with no clear immigration status. The worker needs to find an employer who will agree to employ them in their private household in spite of the six months limit to their visa and who will support an application

to the Home Office. Last September the campaign group the Migrant Rights Network argued:

'We are left with a provision which hasn't taken account of the promised review and which offers so little leave it is worthless in practice. Worse there is a likelihood that these workers, still not fully recovered from the effects of the trafficking, left with no evidence of their right to work, destitute and with the same pressures to support their families which led them to migrate in place, will be pushed into exploitative employment or even re-trafficking.'

ALJO



Shipping container used to smuggle 22 Chinese immigrants into the USA

Contact details

SPGB Media: spgb.media@worldsocialism.org

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

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

MIDLANDS

West Midlands Regional branch. Meets last Sun. 3pm, the Briar Rose pub, 25 Bennetts Hill, Birmingham B2 5RE. (Check before attending). Contact: vincent. otter@globalnet.co.uk. 01242 675357.

NORTH

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Cumbria. Contact: Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG.
Rochdale. Contact: R. Chadwick. 01706 522365.
Yorkshire Regional Branch. Contact:
Edward Craggs, Sutton Farm, Aldborough, Boroughbridge, Yorkshire, YO51 9ER. 01423 332781.

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Kent and Sussex Regional branch. Meets 2nd Sun. at 2pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ. Contact: spgb.ksr@worldsocialism.org 07973 142701.
South West Regional branch. Meets 2nd Sat. Railway Tavern, Salisbury, 2pm (check before attending). Contact: Shane Roberts, 86

High Street, Bristol BS5 6DN. 0117 9511199.
Canterbury. Contact: Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB.
Luton. Contact: Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP.
Redruth. Contact: Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1PB. 01209 219293.

East Anglian Regional branch. Meets 2nd Sat. on alternate months (see 'Meetings' for details). Contact: Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billericay, CM12 0EX. n.deutz@btinternet.com.
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Newtownabbey. Contact: Nigel McCullough. 028 90852062.

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Edinburgh branch. Meets 1st Thurs. 7-9pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh. Contact: J. Moir. 0131 440 0995. JIMMY@jmoir29.freeserve.co.uk Branch website: <http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>
Glasgow branch. Meets 3rd Weds. at 8pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Contact: Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. 01355 903105. peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk.
Dundee. Contact: Ian Ratcliffe, 12 Finlow Terrace, Dundee, DD4 9NA. 01382 698297.
Kilmarnock. Meets last Thurs. 7-9pm at the Wheatsheaf pub (2 minutes from bus station). Contact: Paul Edwards 01563 541138. rainbow3@btopenworld.com.
Lothian Socialist Discussion @Autonomous Centre Edinburgh, ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Meets 4th Weds. 7-9pm. Contact: F.Anderson 07724 082753.

WALES

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Healey and Howe

'VICTORY IN war, as in politics, often goes to the side which makes fewer, or less serious, mistakes' was how it was summed up by one with searching experience of both types of human activity. Denis Healey held the most exposed and demanding jobs in British politics after serving time in the army, including a spell as Beach Master for the Allied forces storming ashore in 1943 at the Italian port of Anzio. He ended the war as a major and when emerging into what was known as peace quickly attained a superior ranking on the Westminster Front Bench rather than in the warm sea of that Italian beach. So all things considered it was not an insult, or necessarily damaging, to be described by him as resembling a casualty of the farmyard.

Because those words were aimed, as accurately as any of the projectiles at Anzio, at the Conservative bastion Geoffrey Howe while Healey was Labour's Chancellor of the Exchequer, a post in which it was vastly preferable to make the fewer mistakes. Healey remembered this well and it went down in some kind of history: 'In one debate he had raised some difficult questions in his opening speech. I did not want to be distracted from my own argument by answering them, so I dismissed them by saying that I found his attack "rather like being savaged by a dead sheep"'. This response to a considered opposition argument by resorting to childish insult was a part of Healey's need at the time to disguise the fact that his policies as Chancellor were directed at dealing with the current crises of British capitalism through debasing the living standards of workers. Howe referred to the incident in 1983 when he responded to Healey congratulating him on being reluctantly appointed by Margaret Thatcher as Foreign Secretary (it was in fact more of a demotion) by burbling that it was 'like being nuzzled by an old ram'. Which Healey accepted as a welcome enlivening of a dull afternoon; he liked and respected Howe as one who also grappled with the impossible labours of making sense of capitalism's insanity economies.

Bow Group

Howe was too young to match Healey's authentically managerial experience of the war so he had to be satisfied with drilling the school Home Guard and

setting up a National Savings group. Just before the end of the war he was conscripted into the army and reached the heights of a commissioned officer. After demobilisation he went through what was carefully known as a 'judicious marriage' and set himself to qualify in law, eventually reaching the levels of a high-earning QC. Politically active, he became chairman of the Bow Group and contributed to a pamphlet which argued that the trade unions were too powerful and enjoyed some privileges

which should be cut back (a policy which Prime Minister Harold Macmillan thought would be 'inexpedient'). After two expected doomed efforts to get elected into Parliament at Aberavon in 1955 and 1959 Howe succeeded in the more welcoming Babington from 1964 until 1966 when he was defeated. It was easier for a Tory to contest

the comfortably leafy seat of Reigate, where he remained the Member from 1970 until he retired from Parliament in 1992. After the Conservative victory in 1979 Thatcher plucked him from the back benches to be her Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was typically a time of severe economic crisis, the flavour of which was inflation running as a continuous threat to working class conditions with the purchasing power of wages, pensions and the like continuously eroded. In response Howe could offer no more than some outworn policies fashioned roughly from the assumption that the trade unions were the crucially self-destructive factor. Against the opposition of many established economists he imposed 'monetarists' policies, which could offer no remedy to the unemployment which was reaching an historic high; in January 1982 it exceeded 3 million, in some areas affecting almost 20 per cent of the liable population, with particular damage to areas suffering from the decline of established industries such as car production, textiles...

Smug

Meanwhile relationships between Howe and Thatcher were uneven; 'On your

own head be it, Geoffrey, if anything goes wrong' was a typical comment from her in 1979 about a clutch of policies which included the abolition of exchange controls. Matters came to a head in 1983 when she moved him to Foreign Secretary. Howe was not entirely happy about this; apart from anything else it deprived him of the right to use luxurious accommodation in Carlton Gardens in London and Chevening House, the 17th century stately home in Kent where Howe and his wife had very much enjoyed playing hosts at smart social events. In June 1989 Howe accompanied Nigel Lawson, who was his successor as Chancellor of the Exchequer, to an early morning meeting at Ten Downing Street when they more or less threatened to resign if Thatcher persisted in her opposition to their proposal of British membership of the exchange rate mechanism of the European Monetary System. She refused to be cajoled in this way and what she witheringly described and a 'nasty little meeting' ended with Howe looking 'insufferably smug'.

Reshuffle

It was soon after this that her first act in a reshuffle was to inform Howe that she intended to replace him as Foreign Secretary with John Major. Howe resisted, which led to some lengthy and abrasive negotiations settled only by the offer of the use of another stately home and the post of Leader of the House of Commons and Deputy Prime Minister, which ensured that Howe would always sit on Thatcher's left at Cabinet meetings. Such symbolism is clearly vital to the smooth working of capitalist politics. But the arrangement soon crumbled away when Howe resigned with a speech which has endured as an example of bilious revenge. It was on 13 November 1990, soon after Thatcher had boasted how she would dismiss the proposal of a single European currency: 'The bowling's going to get hit all round the ground. That's my style'. To which Howe responded that he was resigning because being in Thatcher's government was like an opening batsman whose bats had been broken before the game by the team captain.

Denis Healey died on 3 October 2015.

Geoffrey Howe died on 9 October 2015

Two more examples of the resolve and talents often applied to condition the inhuman plunder of this system of capitalism and to deceive millions of others that there is no other way.

IVAN

'We'll always have Paris...'

Paris, France



There was a good deal of optimism doing the media rounds after the Paris climate talks last month ended in a new global agreement, and no wonder. It's almost the first time all or nearly all the countries of the world have managed to agree on anything, even if only in principle and even if they are not bound by it.

Make no mistake, this is a breakthrough. Despite the best efforts of climate change deniers and corporations to offer up spurious arguments to baffle the public, obscure the issues and obfuscate the debate, the politicians of nearly 200 countries have gone with the scientific consensus. This was by no means a done deal. Far-right parties across Europe, worryingly successful at the polls recently in the UK and in France, may differ on other points of policy but are universally located in the climate sceptics camp. In Britain, UKIP has made this scepticism abundantly plain (or you might call it canting ignorance), while Marine Le Pen has done the same in France and Donald Trump, the man causing a Republican meltdown in the US, is unsurprisingly of a similar view. Clearly there is something in the right-wing political agenda that is anti-science, and presumably the supporters of these parties are anti-science climate sceptics too, or at least not uncomfortable with the outlook.

The politicians in Paris were therefore, knowingly, going against a large tranche of public opinion. We don't often have cause to praise any capitalist politician in these pages, but to see them make common cause for once, and at the risk of votes, is something to be acknowledged.

Not to be underestimated too were the obstacles to a settlement, even given a universal will to agree. The COP21 talks did not, as one might suppose, involve just the foreign ministers of each country, but something over 38,000 delegates representing NGOs, charities, universities and corporations too. The weighted delegation selection procedure meant that some tiny countries were disproportionately represented, so that Tuvalu had one delegate for every 253

islanders while India had one delegate for every seven million people. Morocco sent 439 participants while France, the host, made do with just 395, China scraped along with a paltry 326 and the UK sent a laughable 96 (carbonbrief.org). In addition, countries arranged themselves in blocs according to their perceived common interest. The opportunities for disagreement between, say, AOSIS (Alliance of Small Island States) and BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China), or LLDC (Landlocked Developing Countries) and CfrN (Coalition for Rainforest Nations) must have been as hard to resist as they were legion. To get something they all wanted, everyone had to come away without something they wanted.

Easily pleased

But still, the media hoopla says more about the global background mood of gloom and pessimism than it does about any genuine progress at Paris. People who are accustomed to expecting nothing are easily pleased by anything. This is how it was after Kyoto too. Back then, in 1997, it was only a few rich countries, not all of them. They did not offer to do much, and what they did offer to do they subsequently mostly failed to do, or pulled out of the agreement like Canada and the US, or refused like China to sign up in the first place. But you'd never have got that impression from the way the news media was bigging up the story. As they told it, Kyoto was a historic event, a watershed moment, a landmark agreement. A few politicians had got together and nodded in the right places over pious statements none of them needed, or intended, to stick to, and the media went crazy with delight.

So anyone tempted to criticise Paris as a box of empty promises needs to put it in context. It's better than Rio or Kyoto. It's definitely better than the Copenhagen disaster. At least it shows willing. But, let's face it, that's still not much. The agreed aim to keep global warming below 2°C is already too late and the additional aspiration to try to keep it below 1.5°C looks positively fanciful, requiring in the words of one





climate scientist 'a true world revolution' to stand any chance of success (*New Scientist*, 12 December). There has been zero progress on adopting a universal carbon tax, widely seen as the only way of bringing environmental 'externalities' into the balance sheet or, in plain words, forcing polluters to cough up the cost of polluting. No targets are specified, because concrete imposed targets are thought to be what sank the Copenhagen talks. Instead countries declare their own targets, called individual nationally determined contributions (INDCs). However none of this legally binding (how could it be?) and there are no penalties for failing to keep to the INDCs.

Worldwide, fossil fuels still produce around 80 percent of the energy, while renewables account for around 1 percent. The problem is not just weaning the world off the one and onto the other, which partly depends on better energy storage technology and economy of scale, it's also about the practical obligation of managing to maintain trading equilibrium in a volatile market within the existing fossil fuel economy.

Thus, when oil and gas prices crashed last year, countries including the UK found themselves subsidising the fossil fuel industries to the tune of around £500 billion, around six times their investments in renewables, while simultaneously cutting back even further on those renewable investments. Even as the world's delegates were heading for Paris, many of their governments were in full flight in the opposite direction. Turkey, for example, is building more coal power stations than any other OECD country and could double its carbon emissions in the next 15 years (*Guardian*, 12 November).

Logic of capitalism

Insane? No, it's logical, at least within the circular logic of capitalism. And that's just the trouble. People don't really understand how capitalism works. A *New Scientist* article recently cited as an example of unrealistic optimism a statement by biologist David Attenborough, to the effect that 'One thing would halt climate change – if clean energy became cheaper than coal, gas or oil' (1 December). Quite correctly,

New Scientist pointed out that there is such a thing as being too cheap, and that if renewables follow their present path of becoming rapidly cheaper (since 2009 wind energy costs have dropped by 60 percent and solar by 80 percent), they may no longer yield a profit and therefore start to haemorrhage investment. Meanwhile if fossil fuel demand falls, prices will fall too, leading paradoxically to a surge in both. We're seeing something like this at the moment, where we are supposedly running out of easily-extractable oil yet the price of oil has collapsed.

Anti-fracking advocates are similarly deluded into thinking their campaign is succeeding in the UK while the truth is that cheap oil is keeping investment away from alternative technologies.

It's enough to give anyone a headache, but this is the weirdly unpredictable rollercoaster of capitalist supply and demand, against which no government or policy statement has any defence. And this headache should surely give David Attenborough and others pause to consider that the market really doesn't work, at least not for the purposes of our collective human benefit, and that any proposed solution which involves the market is ultimately going to be fatally undermined by the operations of that same market.

What is being played out at the moment is a global Tragedy of the Commons, and Paris was the moment where all countries officially recognised it. But this Tragedy is not being caused by people commonly owning the planet and commonly ruining it, but by private wealth owners acting in their own interest and against all other competing interests, the very principle upon which capitalism is built and which it can never overcome.

As the COP21 talks were taking place in Paris, huge crowds assembled in the streets to focus the attention of the delegates on the task at hand. Some of their placards read 'System change, not climate change'.

They are more right than they know.

PJS





HBOS: the horse that bolted

In 2001 the former Halifax building society which had turned itself into a bank merged with the Bank of Scotland to form HBOS. In October 2008 HBOS failed and was merged with Lloyds Bank in which the government took a major share. The Bank of England and the new Financial Conduct Authority have now issued a 400-page report on *The Failure of HBOS PLC (HBOS)*.

The Report says that HBOS made some unwise lending decisions, investing disproportionately in commercial property and stakes in businesses (hindsight is such a benefit). Even currency cranks who think that banks have the power to conjure up the money they lend out of thin air concede that a bank can get into trouble by making bad loans. What they cannot accept is that a bank can also fail through not being able to secure the funding behind its loans. Some currency cranks (those who think that for a deposit of £100 a bank can lend many times that amount) accept, it is true, that if deposits fall a bank has to cut its lending, but not that every loan has to be funded. The Report, however, takes it for granted that this has to be the case. In his Foreword Andrew Bailey, one of the Bank of England's Deputy Governors, says that the Report is 'the story of an institution that became unsustainable through its poor risk management, in respect of the credit risk on the assets side of its balance sheet, and on the liabilities side in respect of the vulnerability of its funding. These are, of course, the fundamental building blocks of banking' (emphasis added).

Those running a bank have to ensure both that the loans they make will be repaid and that the source of funding for these is secure. As essentially financial intermediaries, banks get their income from borrowing money at one rate of interest and re-lending it at a higher rate.

Accessing 'wholesale financial markets'

After the merger, the Report says, HBOS pursued a policy of rapid growth, aiming to make a return on its capital of 20 percent. This involved increasing its lending but to do this it had also to increase its funding. Banks have two main sources of funding: what is deposited with them (in the jargon 'retail' borrowing) and the money market ('wholesale' borrowing). Deposits from customers are considered safer but they cannot be increased at will, if only because of competition for them from other banks and from building societies. It is easier to have recourse to the money market, i.e. borrowing from other banks and financial institutions. This is considered more risky because the interest rate is less predictable – if this goes up it squeezes the margin between the rate a bank borrows at and the rate at which it relends – and in a financial crisis can dry up.

To try to grow more in pursuit of greater profits, HBOS had increasing recourse to the money market:

'The rapid expansion of its balance sheet placed pressure on HBOS's ability to fund itself. HBOS's retail funding struggled to keep pace with the Group's lending growth, with customer deposits growing at an average annual rate of 5% a year during the Review Period, compared with a customer loan growth rate of 10%. As a result, HBOS increasingly accessed wholesale financial markets as a source of funding, raising its wholesale borrowing from £187 billion at the end of 2004 to £282 billion at end-2007.'

Bankers and their regulators use as a measure of a bank's dependence on the money market the 'loan-to-deposit ratio' (which some currency cranks misunderstand as a measure of how much a bank can lend without having to cover it with funding, whereas it is actually a measure of what proportion of loans are covered by 'wholesale financial markets' over and above what is covered by customer deposits). The

Report says that by 2008 HBOS's loan-to-deposit ratio had reached 192 percent; in other words, it was lending nearly twice as much as its deposits, the rest coming from 'wholesale financial markets'. This, the Report notes, was second only to that of Northern Rock.

When the financial crash came and the money market froze HBOS, like Northern Rock, couldn't renew its borrowing from it except at impossibly high rates and so couldn't renew the coverage for all its loans, with the result, the Report records, that:

'By the end of September 2008, HBOS was no longer able to meet its needs from the wholesale market and was facing a withdrawal of customer deposits.'

Yet another example of how the Report, written by practical bankers, takes for granted that a bank 'needs' to have funding for its loans. No nonsense here about a bank being able to conjure money to lend out of thin air since, of course, if it could, why would it need to go the money market to try to get funding? On 1 October HBOS was bailed out by the Bank of England.

The new paradigm that wasn't

The top management of HBOS may well have taken more risks than most of its rivals but at the time they were acting as profit-seeking, capitalist enterprises always do in a boom – assuming that it will continue. In his Foreword Bank of England Deputy Governor Andrew Bailey writes that 'both the strategy and operation of HBOS, and its supervision by the FSA, were creatures of the time' and that what happened took place 'against the backdrop of almost uninterrupted growth over a long period and the rapid development of financial markets'. The Report elaborates:

'Halifax and Bank of Scotland merged during a period of heightened corporate activity, in the middle of an economic cycle that had begun in the early 1990s. UK domestic economic growth had been relatively steady since the recession of the early 1990s, resulting in an extraordinarily long period (around 60 quarters) of continuous expansion. The growth in the financial services sector was more than twice as fast as the economy as a whole, averaging 6% per annum in the decade preceding the crisis, and increasing its



Bank of England Deputy Governor Andrew Bailey

share of nominal gross domestic product (GDP) to around 10%. Confidence in the future prospects of the economy was reflected in both bank and non-bank equity prices, which rose steadily from the start of 2003 until 2007. As the benign conditions persisted for longer and longer, many perceived that a new paradigm of economic stability had been established.

One of the many who 'perceived' this, in fact shouted it from the rooftops, was of course Gordon Brown who, as Chancellor, proclaimed the end of the boom/slump cycle. He even recommended HBOS's chief executive, James Crosbie, for a knighthood. When the crash finally came, and exposed him as a latterday King Canute who imagined that he could command how the capitalist economy worked, he had become Prime Minister.

Andrew Bailey writes that 'the criticism in the Report is not that management failed to predict that there would be a global financial crisis' but in effect that's it what it is. How else does he expect a commercial bank, which is a profit-seeking capitalist enterprise like any other, engaged in a particular business activity, to have acted in conditions that were 'benign' for profit-making? To have held back and let its competitors gather more of the hay while the sun shone? He must have more experience of how capitalism works than to be that naïve. HBOS did not become 'unsustainable through its poor risk management' but because the boom ended. If the boom hadn't ended HBOS would have survived and no doubt more knighthoods would have been handed out.

The story of the rise and fall of HBOS is a particular case of how all capitalist firms behave when faced with profit-making prospects they 'perceive' are going to continue. They go for it but have to face the consequences when, as a result of the collective activity of all the competing firms involved, these conditions come to an end due to overproduction (or, in case of banks, overlending). It's happened many times before under capitalism and is a regular feature of the system. It will happen again, even in the field of banking despite the regulations now being put in place after the horse has bolted.

ADAM BUICK



God and the price of copper

A socialist in Zambia explains how politicians and governments in countries like Zambia that export one basic commodity are at the mercy of world markets

Zambia is currently gripped by an economic crisis, characterised by falling copper prices, the depreciating kwacha, and electricity blackouts. Prices of essential commodities have shot up due to the depreciation of the kwacha. Sensing danger, President Edgar Lungu of the ruling PF despatched his deputy secretary-general Mrs Mumbi Phiri to the ZNBC, where she gave an assessment of the significance of the economic problems facing the country.

The radio interview took place on 14 September and the public were invited to ask her questions through phone calls.



Molten copper at Mopani Mine in Zambia



She explained that the reasons why Zambia was facing social and economic problems was because of falling copper export prices to China – the largest purchaser of Zambia's copper exports. She went on to assure listeners that the reason why Zambia was experiencing electricity blackouts was due to low water levels in the Kariba North Bank hydro-power station occasioned by poor rainfall. The depreciation of the kwacha, she said, took effect after the death of President Sata in September 2014 and was due to reasons other than the fall in copper prices.

However, the Kariba North Bank hydro-power station was initially designed to generate power for up to three years regardless of poor rainfall received in the previous years. At the inception in 1976 the power station had four turbines with a capacity to generate 600 MW of power (150 MW each). During 2011 the turbines were upgraded to 180 MW each, bringing the total to 720 MW. Further expansion of the facility initiated through the Kariba North Bank Expansion Programme saw the addition of two turbines of 180 MW each, bringing the total generating capacity to 1080 MW.

The real reason why the Kariba North Bank power station is experiencing low water levels is because the turbines are being overused – they are run at longer hours than they were initially designed for. That is to say that the engineers at ZESCO have been operating the known peak units beyond the normal three to four hours a day, thus resulting in increased water usage and ultimately low water levels in the Kariba dam.

Falling copper prices

The copper mines consume much of the power, with domestic consumers accounting only for a small fraction. Power supply to the copper mines has been cut to 30 percent. This had led to production costs increasing 40 to 60 percent as the power deficit worsens.

Zambia is a capitalist country dependent on copper exports from which it derives 90 percent of its revenue (in taxes and royalties). The drop that has now taken place in the price of copper exports in the international market has had a great influence upon political developments taking place within

Zambia. The price of copper originating from international political and economic events is in fact the main reason affecting the history of politics in Zambia.

During the 1980s there was a letdown in inflation in western Europe that led to the fall of 'Communism' in Eastern Europe, and later spread to Africa where single-party political dictatorships were hastily replaced with multi-party political systems. When the MMD came to power in 1991 copper prices were at an all-time low – the privatised copper mines failed to make any impact on the liberalised economy. Both Wanslea and Konkola copper mines were closed down due to falling copper prices. The Chinese state capitalist investors saw a chance to open up new copper mines and went forth to set up NFCA and Chambishi smelters in Kitwe.

In 2008, after the death of President Mwanawasa, a bank mortgage crisis began in the USA and later spread to every part of the world. In Zambia copper prices tumbled to their lowest on the London Commodities Exchange. People lost confidence in the MMD and voted for the PF under President Sata in the 2011 presidential elections.

It is fair to point out the vivid fact that when Sata came to power in 2011 the banking crisis that had struck the USA and western Europe was on the wane. China was catching up with the USA in terms of international trade and investment. Thus Sata thought he had found a trusted political and economic partner in economic development.

The social changes initiated by Sata were mostly carried out by Chinese state-controlled companies. The price of copper was rising on the export market – this led Sata to revise tax incentives of copper mining companies in 2013. However, this increasing of the mineral royalty taxes upon the copper mines had a deleterious effect upon the operations of the copper mines, resulting in job losses.

The economic slowdown that has since taken place in the Chinese economy has contributed in total to the collapse of copper prices in Zambia today and thus the diminishing profitability of copper mining.

The fact is that the significance of social and economic

policies pursued by any political party in Zambia can only succeed in relation to the prevailing copper prices on the international market,..

Turning to God

In late August 2014 there was a sudden collapse of copper prices in China which caught President Lungu unawares. The foreign exchange rate relative to the USA dollar sunk to the lowest ebb. Facing incessant criticism from both the church and the political opposition, President Lungu found himself helpless. He turned to God for help. He appealed to the people of Zambia in strong terms and told them to fast and pray to God on 18 October for him to bless the nation.

People responded to the President's appeal and duly converged in their respective places of worship and paid homage and reverence to God. Some congregations reported having seen a rainbow envelope the Sun during the said occasion.

Whether God did answer the prayers that took place remains to be seen, but it is certain that the prayers of those people with political careers and private property will have been duly answered. But for the workers, peasants and students the prayers seem to have made them less emotionally and spiritually bewildered.

The fact is that the kwacha has kept on depreciating and electricity blackouts remain unresolved. And the price of copper remained depressed.

In our scientific prognosis of capitalism – we in the WSM are of the view that the economic factor plays a major role in determining political, intellectual and religious whims of a given society. Our message to the workers, peasants and students in Zambia remains the same: capitalism cannot offer a permanent solution to social, political and economic crises.

Voting for another set of recycled politicians into parliament is not a solution. The workers must utilise the limited political freedom granted it through the medium of the vote to vote capitalism out of the world. Vote for socialism – the alternative to capitalism.



Who decides what and how?



Does complexity rule out meaningful democracy?

When socialists speak of democracy we mean something very different from the concept the mainstream media provides. Instead of giving you permission to vote for some toff or careerist to serve and define your political interests (improbably) for five years we insist that any meaning democracy must entail the involvement of the community at every level in political/economic decision making.

When confronted by this definition of democracy our rulers and their media are incredulous and produce a torrent of reasons why this is impractical at best and political madness at worst. Most of the objections are ideological and do not deserve any serious consideration but there is one that has to be discussed: Does our technological culture depend almost entirely on the expertise of a minority of specialists whose knowledge cannot be easily understood by the 'layman' and is therefore inaccessible to democratic debate and decision? Are these 'technocrats' the only ones with the talent and ability to make decisions concerning, for instance, scientific research and technological application?

What happens today

Before we attempt to answer this let us consider how such decisions are made in the present economic system. Science and technology are usually financed in two ways within capitalism – either via the state (universities and the military) or through so called 'private' investment by big business. These two approaches are motivated essentially by the same desired end – to enhance the wealth and power of the capitalist class. Any benefit enjoyed by the wider community is merely a by-product of this economic dynamic. Over the years within many industries scandals have been exposed as a result of the contradiction between the economic imperatives of profit and the integrity of scientific research. Scientists are human and as such are subjected to the same cultural and political pressures as the rest of us. When science is subverted by economic and political interests then disaster is always a possibility.

Although the owners of the capital that is invested in these industries do take some notice of their tame 'technocrats' they listen much more attentively to their accountants. When couched in such phrases as 'cost benefit' in terms of the

expected return on investment it sounds almost rational – if we are prepared to tolerate the obfuscation and inevitable dangers this entails. The point being, in terms of this debate, that it's not primarily the 'experts' who make decisions about research and technological application but investment advisors (motivated solely by the need to enhance their clients' investment portfolios).

Politicians share this perspective when deciding how their masters' tax dollars are to be spent in terms of state investment in science and technology. In other words, in this respect, the technological experts have no political power at all. It would seem that this particular criticism of socialist democracy is specious since whenever the experts' advice conflicts with economic expectations they are side-lined or ignored completely.

How it could be

Would socialism represent an improvement in the rational application of science and technology to production for need instead of profit?

The decision of the allocation of resources within socialism would have three stages: Dissemination of information, debate and vote.

The first part would rely on the expertise and talent of those involved within the relevant industries, in this case scientists and technologists. Because of the absence of political pressures they would be free to articulate candidly about the benefits and risks of developing certain productive technologies. There would have to be an element of trust in taking this advice but as in criminal trials this will be balanced by experts who take a different perspective.

A debate by the wider community would then take place using this information and evaluating possible contrasting opinions. Again, as in present day trials, the community will be asked which course to take based on their assessment of which evidence they find the most compelling. As is the case now mistakes will be made but at least they will be the result of honest error rather than Machiavellian political intrigue and corruption which is so ubiquitous today. Within this political culture scientists (and their spokesmen/women) will not exhibit the sometimes arrogant and elitist attitudes they do today – after all their future and that of their children will depend on the decisions made. Being a scientist will mean incorporating the ability to communicate about their work with others (as indeed some of the greatest scientists do presently).

Undoubtedly the level of education, both political and general, would be much higher within socialism – we do not concur with the elitist position that only a minority of the community will ever have the intelligence to make these important decisions. Again, if we live in some kind of elitist meritocracy (as the propaganda would have us believe) then the obvious political and scientific disasters that decorate capitalism's history would imply the failure of this illusory bourgeois approach to 'democracy'.

We maintain that no meaningful democracy is possible until the decisions concerning the production of the means of life are taken under the democratic control of the whole community. That this is a possibility will make the motivation for democratic activity so much more exciting – in contrast to the obvious impotent and cynical gatherings which parish, county, regional and national councils/governments now represent. Production for profit is the antithesis to democracy because it can only ever work in the interests of the parasitic minority. Democracy is still a concept that waits patiently in the wings of history's theatre, ready for the consciousness that will finally bring it to centre stage. **WEZ**



Worked to Death

A look at cases of people being killed or injured because of their work, and at why such things happen

Over the last two decades at least twenty thousand sugar-cane cutters in Central America have died of kidney failure, caused by dehydration, heat exposure and physical stress (*New Internationalist*, November 2015). This is not the usual kind of industrial 'accident', but it was clearly their work that was responsible for these people's deaths.

A more common kind of workplace death is exemplified by the case of Cameron Minshull, a 16-year-old apprentice killed at a factory in Bury in 2013. Cameron, who earned just £3 an hour, was dragged into a lathe and died of head injuries. There was no safety regime at the company; young workers were untrained and unsupervised, and had to clean the lathes while they were still running. The firm's owner was sentenced to eight months in prison, the company admitted corporate manslaughter and was fined, and the recruitment agency (which had been paid by the government for placing Cameron at the firm) was also fined. His mother said, 'He should never have died for doing the right thing, for going to work to earn a living and to be trained to become an engineer.'

In 2014–5 a total of 142 workers were fatally injured in Great Britain; this was lower than the average for the last five years but slightly higher than the figure for 2013–4. In addition 102 'members of the public' were killed in work-connected incidents in 2014–5 (excluding rail suicides).

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) makes much of the fact that, since the introduction of the Health and Safety at Work Act in 1974, fatal injuries to employees have fallen by 86 percent and reported non-fatal injuries by 77 percent. On the other hand, deaths from asbestos-related diseases increased by a factor of ten between 1974 and 2012, largely because of exposure to asbestos prior to 1980. So it is not purely a matter of being killed or injured while at work; deaths and injuries arising from work must also be considered (as the example of the cane-cutters shows).

Agriculture (including forestry and fishing) is the most dangerous industry sector in Great Britain, according to the HSE. Only one worker in a hundred is in agriculture, but one fatal injury in five occurs there. The number of fatal

injuries has been reduced since 1974, but much less than in other industries. In 2013–4, there were 27 workplace deaths among agricultural workers, the most frequent of which involved being struck by a moving vehicle; in addition, four members of the public were fatally injured. Furthermore, about ninety deaths a year among those who work or worked in agriculture are attributed to occupational carcinogens. Non-fatal incidents are common too, with 292 major injuries to agricultural employees in 2013–4 (this figure excludes the self-employed, who make up about half the agricultural workforce, and it is generally accepted that there is a high level of underreporting of non-fatal injuries).

In construction, there were 35 fatal injuries in 2014–5, almost half of them caused by falls from heights. The fatality rate per employee was 3.5 times the average across all industries, though far less than that in agriculture. And in any year, around 69,000 construction workers suffer from an illness they believe was caused or made worse by their work (around 40 percent of these are new conditions started during that year).

In the US, workplace deaths are much higher, with 4,679 fatal work injuries in 2014, the highest figure since 2008. Deaths in the oil and gas industries have risen dramatically, but construction remains the most dangerous industry, with one worker death in five occurring there. The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) emphasizes that, since its creation in 1971, workplace deaths have been reduced from 38 a day to twelve, but this is still an astonishingly high figure (over thirty times that in the UK, with a population only five times the size).

In April 2013 the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh collapsed, killing well over a thousand people who worked in garment factories in the building, making clothes for international brands such as Gap and Benetton. At least 500 Indian workers have died in Qatar while building the infrastructure for the 2022 World Cup. Sadly, similar examples could be listed almost without end.

In 2014–5 there were 258 cases of prosecution related to health and safety in the construction industry, 243 of which resulted in a guilty verdict for at least one offence;

nearly £4m was levied in fines. The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act of 2007 expanded previous legislation and made it possible to convict a company if it could be shown that senior management had committed a gross breach of duty of care. But by April last year there had



The Rana Plaza building after its collapse

been just eleven convictions for corporate manslaughter in the five years since the Act came into law. In the US, the OSHA has in over forty years achieved just twelve criminal convictions of errant companies.

The HSE notes that in 2014–5, the equivalent of 1.7 million working days were lost in construction because of

workplace injuries and work-related illnesses. The ‘total economic cost to society’ (i.e. to the capitalist class) in 2013–4 was £0.9bn; across all industries the cost was estimated at £14.3bn. This is a crucial point, that workplace deaths and injuries give rise to costs for the specific employer and the wider employing class, in terms of health care and lost profits. Safety regulations exist partly to ensure that such costs do not get out of hand. And enforcement is often more about appearing to have done something than about actually performing rigorous inspections.

It is clear that much work is potentially dangerous, such as anything involving chemicals, machinery or working above ground. But that does not by itself explain why there are so many injuries, fatal and otherwise. While ‘accidents’ cost money, regulations and enforcement are expensive too. All impinge on profits, which are the main reason for production under capitalism. Companies will say that they take health and safety seriously, but they have to take profit most seriously of all. We cannot say that there would be no workplace deaths or injuries in a Socialist society, but we can be sure that the safety and well-being of those who produce the goods and services will be paramount. There will be no shortcuts, no cheap and nasty solutions, no forcing people to work in unsafe situations. Producing in the interest of the whole community will include making production as safe as is humanly possible – something that capitalism simply cannot deliver.

PAUL BENNETT



Capitalism goes into space

THE DUTCH Marxist, Anton Pannekoek (pictured), once wrote that because the Earth’s size was limited so would capitalism be, implying that when capitalism had extended to the whole of the globe it would come to an end. This conclusion might have been reassuring, but it was never a rigorous argument. The Earth’s size has nothing to do with the lifespan of capitalism. But, if it had, Pannekoek had overlooked the possibility of capitalism extending itself beyond the Earth; surprising since he was a professor of astronomy, but he was writing in 1942.

Fast forward to today and an online article on 25 November (tinyurl.com/nq9csxn) suggests that we too might be behind the times when we talk of ‘world’ socialism:

‘President Barrack Obama today put his signature on a law supporting the rights of space miners to extract, use and sell resources from asteroids, the moon, Mars and other celestial bodies.’

The US law exploits a loophole in the 1967 Outer Space Treaty which banned weapons of mass destruction (but not other weapons) in space but which also laid down that ‘outer space, including

the Moon and other celestial bodies, is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means.’ This meant only that no state could claim territorial rights over parts of space but did not rule out corporations or individuals exercising private property rights over them.

The 1979 Moon Treaty did attempt to prevent this, declaring (Article 11) that ‘the Moon and its natural resources are the common heritage of mankind’ and banning any state, corporate or private individual ownership of them. Since this treaty was not signed by the US or by any other country likely to send a mission to the Moon this clause was without effect. Now the US has enacted a law permitting the exercise of private property rights there and beyond.

It was passed as a result of lobbying by capitalist corporations that are already investing in the possibility of exploiting the natural resources of the Moon and near-Earth asteroids.

They were over the moon about it. ‘This is the single greatest recognition of property rights in history,’ exaggerated Eric Anderson of Planetary Resources. ‘In the long view of history,’ enthused Rick Tumlinson of Deep Space Industries, ‘it is the sort of positive action that changes civilization’. It, added Hannah Kerner of

the Space Frontier Foundation, ‘extends our free market values into space.’

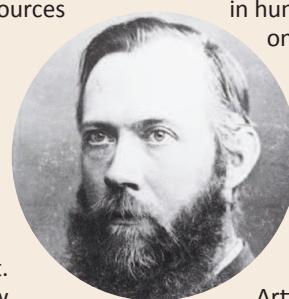
Actually, in the long view of history, it is more likely to be seen as a disaster and a disgrace as extending into space private property rights and the production for profit that caused such havoc on Earth. There is nothing wrong with making use of the natural resources of the Moon, Mars and asteroids. It’s an exciting prospect and will be an advance in human civilisation, but it will only be done rationally and in the interest of humanity if carried out under conditions where these resources, together with those of the Earth, really are ‘the common heritage of mankind’.

These are conditions which Article 11 of the Moon Treaty

could be adapted to describe:

‘Neither the surface nor the subsurface of the Earth, the Moon or other celestial bodies, nor any part thereof, shall be the property of any state, international intergovernmental or non-governmental organization, national organization or non-governmental entity or of any natural person.’

Fortunately, Pannekoek was wrong about capitalism having physical limits since space is so vast that, if he’d been right, capitalism would potentially be able to last forever.





'Socialist Opposition to the First World War'

THIS IS the title of a display held until last month at the Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1, and organised by them in conjunction with 'Workers' School'. It is now moving to other locations inside and outside London until the end of March next year.

More apt is the subtitle 'An exhibition on working class men and women resisting the war' as, perhaps advisedly, there is little about the various 'socialist' groups of the era. And much of the information that is provided about these groups is faulty, specifically about the British Socialist Party (not to be confused with the Socialist Party of Great Britain—our opposition to the war from day one doesn't get a mention).

The exhibition is exclusively visual and is presented on twelve glossy, well-

arranged panels. The images selected are dramatic and well-selected and are particularly good at contrasting the dichotomy between 'their war' (senseless suicide of workers on the orders of their 'bettters') and 'our war' (self-organised activity in the factories and in the streets). The text concentrates on the events of Red Clydeside and related themes (three panels) and on anti-war women



The Marx Memorial Library

activists, including Sylvia Pankhurst (five panels). Although there is a necessity to demonstrate that history is not just 'his story', the emphasis placed on the latter might be regarded as rather overegging the pudding.

Given the origin of the display, there are surprisingly few references to the Communist Party and Lenin, which will

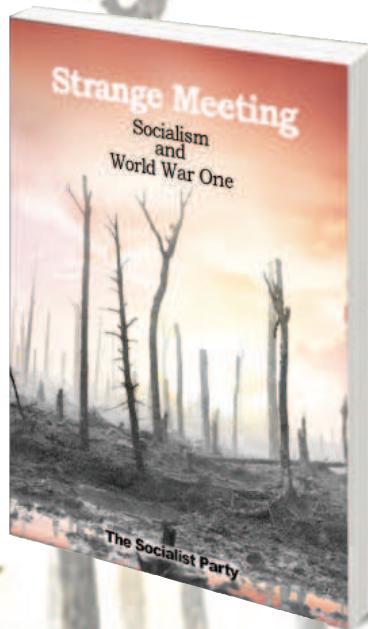
come as a relief to many. The organisers, Mary Davis and Angus Reid, are to be congratulated on their hard work, which will be of interest both to socialists and to members of the general public interested in the period. Viewers must be warned, however, not to allow the images of mass meetings to cloud their understanding of the era. Working class resistance to the First World War was patchy, possible on a large scale only in areas remote from the centre of state power (Glasgow) and often dealt with effects (such as high rents and low wages) rather than the war itself. Steeped from birth in nationalistic poisons, the British working class were on the whole enthusiastic supporters of the war, which makes class-conscious opposition to the not-so-Great War, and indeed all wars, all the rarer and all the more to be celebrated.

KAZ

For our party's opposition to the war see our pamphlet *Strange Meeting: Socialism and World War One*, obtainable (price £4.50) from: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN.

Strange Meeting: Socialism and World War One

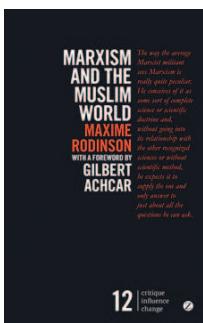
The First World War was one of the bloodiest conflicts in human history. Socialists pointed out at the time that there were no working class issues at stake in the war: rather, it was fought as a consequence of rivalry among capitalist powers for markets, trade routes, raw materials and politico-military influence. Strange Meeting contains articles from the *Socialist Standard* between 1914 and 1918, which set out our principled opposition to the war, together with other material giving an overview of the war, its causes and its effects on working-class lives.



Copies from the Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 for £4.50 including P & P. Cheques to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'. Available on-line at <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/catalog/pamphlets/strange-meeting>

Marxism and the Muslim World.

Maxime Rodinson with a foreword by Gilbert Achcar. Zed Books. 2015. ISBN 9781783603367



This book is a collection of essays by the French Marxist scholar of Islam and the Middle East, Maxim Rodinson. The essays originate from the 1950s, 60s and 70s, and so are showing their age, but have a certain value in demonstrating

concerns and debates within the left at the time. They are also a demonstration of an independent Marxist thinker's work who is worth reading, even to disagree with.

The central thrust of the essays is the course of de-colonisation in the Middle East from the 1940s onwards. One essay looks back at the twists and turns of the Communist Parties as they followed the instructions of Moscow in the 1930s, shifting and turning on their approach to nationalism and national independence in the Middle East – with an historically interesting note on how this lead to a generally anti-Israeli orientation that prevails among much of the left to this day.

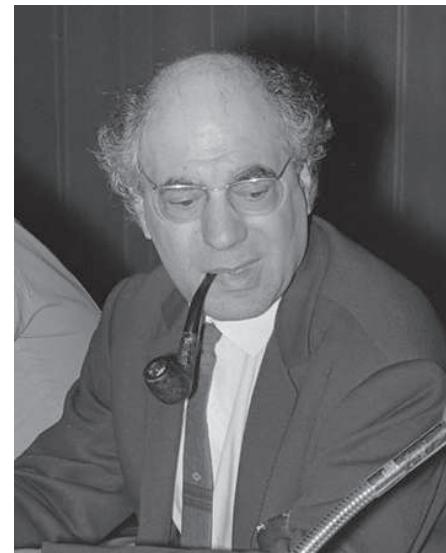
As part of this, much of the work is about an analysis of ideology, which (refreshingly) Rodinson views in practical terms. Ideologies for him are about mobilising and motivating movements, and they include a mythological/utopian element as well as immediate programmatic implications. Significantly, he objects to the term 'historical materialism' seeing Marx and Engels' works as, rather, a rejection of 'historical idealism', and this, perhaps, allows him to escape dogmatism and the schematism seen in the French academic Marxism of the period.

He sees in Marxism not so much an

idea that will liberate humanity (indeed, he maintains that despite its 'ideological' proclamations, Marxist sociology shows us that there will never be a final liberation and a conflict-free harmonious society) but an opening to scientific sociology that will allow us to examine society and better weigh ideologies and their potential effects. 'Every society and every group, every "class", even any individual, needs to find an answer to the truly important questions: what is Man in the Universe?' It is the series of chosen answers to that question and the range of choices it throws up that, for Rodinson, defines an ideology.

Chiefly, he sees nationalism as the chief organising feature of society during the period he was writing, although he notes the inherent dangers of limited nationalism in an interconnected world. When he comes to prescriptions, however, as a leftist, he does suggest that Marxism needs to appropriate the mobilising idea of nationalism and development in the de-colonising world. In assessing the similarities between Marxism as a mobilising idea, and Islam, he sees them both as movements to realise their own image of a just society. His premise is that 'we can move away from the idealist conception of religion as a set of ideas floating above earthly realities and constantly animating the spirit and actions of all its followers. We can assume, on the contrary, that all religious ideologies, like all ideologies, have a concrete and real basis in the constantly competing human groups who share out the planet between themselves or form the different strata of society.' It would be a useful idea for many contemporary politicians to absorb, as they continue to talk about 'poisonous ideologies' and seem to suggest they just fall from the sky on susceptible heads. He notes that there is no constant Islamic culture, and the character of the Middle Eastern region comes from the persistence of human civilisation there, rather than from any Islamic doctrine,

indeed, noting that things such as face veils were an accommodation of Islam to existing practices. He notes, 'there is no such thing as *Homo Islamicus*. The history of the Muslim world is specific, it has its own style and colour, it is an incomparable part of human diversity.' He demonstrates how, for examples, Islamic states have permitted lending and borrowing at interest, with barely a murmur from their populations. Indeed, he writes: 'Hostility towards much-hated innovators,



Maxime Rodinson

especially foreign ones, often appear in the guise of religious misnomer. I remember a case of a Muslim cemetery in Beirut during the French Mandate; the Beirut Muslims invoked religion in their fierce opposition to and redevelopment of the land. Once independence was achieved, however, the cemetery was soon disposed of and the plot used to build a cinema or some such other building.'

He notes, that although there is a consistent core to Islam, it has changed and adapted throughout the ages, and there is no reason to suppose that it could not cope with the state ownership of the means of production he supported. This core of Islamic values, includes precepts over charitable giving and inheritance that suggests that ultimately, as an idea, Islam must support the idea of private property, and be opposed to socialism as we understand it; but then, the resilience of ideas suggests that it and other religions could, in the end, mutate to accommodate some version of themselves surviving in a world with a socialist majority. Rodinson takes this anti-idealistic viewpoint to the extent that he states 'I have often said that, under present circumstances, purely religious ideology cannot stand in as a mobilisatory ideology.'

Given the rise of the religious Islamic parties in the Middle East, the Muslim

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Brotherhood, Al-Qaeda and its offsprings, and of course, Islamic State, has his analysis been invalidated?

Of course, just as with the Muslim cemetery Rodinson described, these movements contain distinct elements of nationalism, and anti-colonialism. Al-Qaeda is directed against American hegemony, just as much as it is against the ruling elites of the region.

Rodinson has a refreshing approach to imperialism, rejecting any idea of it as an abstract self-motivating force, preferring to look instead to the direct interests and needs of states, classes and strata who benefit from military expansion, just as he rejects a similar role for any self-motivating abstract Islam. Behind all civilisations, ideologies and movements are people, living daily lives and creating their circumstances. The members of ISIS have brains that are practically identical to that of every other human being. It is their circumstances and the way their lives and minds are created and recreated that leads them to think that the expressed

creed of ISIS and its brutality, torture, rape and atrocity is a good idea. Whilst, as Rodinson suggests, Islam (and religion) are not the purely mobilising factor in the Middle East, it's clear that it has managed to take the role of being at the forefront of the nationalism that he envisaged some form of state capitalism taking.

The important thing that socialists can take from this book is that opening up movements and ideas to close analysis helps sweep away the distortions that led to both talk of 'war of civilisations' and its inverse of denying that ISIS have

any connexion to a 'true' Islam. There is no 'true' Islam, there is just the endless variety of ways humans try to interpret their world in order to act in it.

The materialist understanding that changing the way we live will change the ideas is liberating, and it brings to the fore the very idea that the resolution to the conflicts of the Middle East lies in the humans behind the ideas finding a new way to live. Rodinson was incorrect to see some sort nationalism as the answer, instead we need to look to a genuine worldwide movement that offers the prospect of establishing a genuine global community through common ownership of the wealth of the world. He is right in that this will not end all disagreement and conflict. What it will do is enable us to turn any conflicts into democratic arguments among equals, instead of pawns in the service of the owners and shifters of mobile wealth.

PIK SMEET



REGGIE YATES has carved out a career taking us on insightful journeys into niche cultures, like a more chummy and relaxed version of Louis Theroux. His latest documentary, *Reggie Yates' Extreme UK: Gay And Under Attack* (BBC3) is part of a series examining 'the extreme edge of modern British masculinity', also featuring obsessive body builders and anti-feminists. In this episode, Yates investigates why for some people in black and Asian communities, being gay or transgender is taboo or considered wrong. These attitudes still persist in the wider community, but seem more prevalent in groups which, ironically, have themselves experienced prejudice and discrimination.

Yates meets gay and transgender people of west African and Pakistani descent who have experienced more rejection than acceptance from family members and their peers. Max was thrown out of the family home when he came out, while Sahil's mother said she could accept him if he was a murderer, but not as a homosexual.

Prejudice and Pride

Reggie Yates' Extreme UK: Gay And Under Attack (BBC3)

Although Tallulah's relatives have been largely accepting of her being transgender, she risks abuse from others every time she leaves the house. Many black and Asian LGBTQ people, more so than their white counterparts, face intimidation and violence from their communities, and consequently are less open about their identities. Yates suggests that some non-white people feel that they would have 'too much to lose, too much to fear' if they attended Pride events.

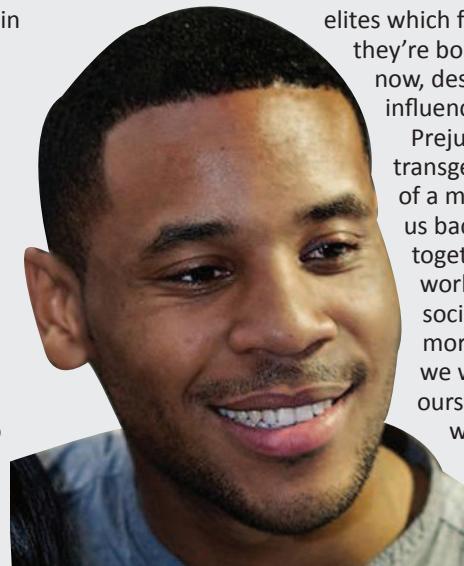
The issue isn't really about ethnicity, but about culture and religion. Our attitudes are first formed by our upbringing and environment, rather than our skin colour.

Yates cites lyrics in some Jamaican dancehall songs which normalise and trivialise homophobia, reinforcing the belief that homosexuality is 'the white man's disease', which is wrong on at least three levels. These attitudes tend to originate from traditional,

literal interpretations of Islam and Christianity which have indoctrinated people for centuries. Strict forms of Islam say that people become gay as a punishment from god for committing evil, and they deserve to be killed. And in the documentary, a Seventh Day Adventist pastor says that joining his church means accepting a particular lifestyle which doesn't include homosexuality. Having a religious outlook tends to go hand-in-hand with stubbornly sticking to reactionary views, however brutal. A god's job description doesn't include adapting its principles to fit in with society's changing attitudes. The views in the Bible and Koran reflect the elites which first enforced them, so they're bound to be out of step now, despite their continuing influence.

Prejudice against gay and transgender people is part of a mindset which holds us back from working together to make a better world. Even though society is becoming more accepting overall, we won't completely rid ourselves of prejudice without confronting the institutions which create it.

MIKE FOSTER



Reggie Yates



50 Years Ago

Prospects for 1966

THE SOCIALIST standing on the brink of 1966 must survey the social scene with mixed feelings. It is depressing that the landscape should still be dominated

by the ugly facts of Capitalist society, with its inequalities, exploitation, poverty, violence and neuroses. From another point of view, there is relief that the scarred body of humanity has at least survived. By itself, survival creates a fresh opportunity to do better in the future, but it is only an opportunity. The bitter experience of the past guards against undue optimism.

It is a time of ferment. There is a general will towards a better life. Social consciousness is on the move. Controversy, frustration and discontent abound. There is one thing that cannot be done with Capitalism. Capitalism cannot be made to work in the interests of the whole community. In the context of history, Capitalism is a condemned society.

In spite of everything, there is encouragement. With modification of the crude assumptions of religion a dent is

being made in the barrier of superstition. Organised religion is on the defensive. Recent discussions about homosexuality, abortion and contraception indicate that sexual attitudes are freer from taboo.

To embark on a full-scale war this year, the Government could not rely on crowds outside Buckingham Palace chanting "we want war". The propaganda machine would be required to work hard in producing convincing pseudo reasons for the fight. The politicians' watchword in his relations with the voter is caution. The technical gains of the sixties have extended man's control of his environment and emphasised the contradiction between the potential abundance and actual poverty of production. These are peripheral gains that help to create a more receptive atmosphere for Socialist ideas.

On the other hand frustrations still tend to be diverted into attitudes of hate. The incidence of racism is ominous. Above all, that steady statistic 10% of the population owns 90% of the wealth, still forms the background of class ownership that dominates life. To the modern commercial animal, profit still remains the yardstick of virtue and success. Property is his God. The lingo of advertising and the subtle mechanics of the hard sell is his new theology.

(from editorial, *Socialist Standard*, January 1966)



J P Getty, one of the 10%

ACTION REPLAY

Michelle Payne: harbinger of equality?

MICHELLE PAYNE is the latest female jockey to prove that women can compete on equal terms with men in the saddle. However the form book evidence suggests that her Melbourne Cup success on 100-1 outsider Prince of Penzance will be a false dawn rather than a harbinger of gender equality in horseracing.

Men can continue to expect a near monopoly of the best opportunities in all the main racing nations, and it's telling that Michelle got her moment of glory aboard a 100-1 shot. If a female jockey is ever booked to ride a hot favourite in a £2 million race, then we could consider whether equality really has been achieved.

Meanwhile, it is sobering to reflect that in the 235-year history of the Epsom Derby; just two runners have been ridden by women, both outsiders.

There continues to be something exotic about a woman taking part in a big race, a depressing

state of affairs given that female jockeys have been making headlines at intervals for decades.

In 1993, Julie Krone rode the winner of the Belmont Stakes, the final leg of the US Triple Crown, while over jumps; Gee Armytage rode two winners at the 1987 Cheltenham Festival. Three years earlier Ann Ferris had won the Irish Grand National. Kate Walsh became the third woman to win this race in April this year and has also finished third in the Grand National run at Aintree.

Hayley Turner, Britain's most successful female flat-racing jockey has retired at the age of 32, opting for a career change, in broadcasting. She has always taken the view that female jockeys will be used if they can prove they are good enough. Her 42 winners in Britain this year put her 48th in the jockey's league table and is the only woman in the top 50.

Richard Perham senior jockey's tutor at the British Racing School recently said that some trainers and owners 'were still living in the dark ages' in their refusal to employ female jockeys. So it seems.

KEVIN

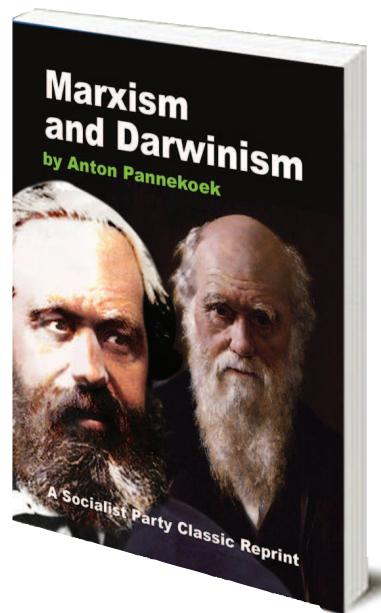


Michelle Payne

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Declaration of Principles

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

Object

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

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

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

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

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

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation

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

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

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

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

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

Kent and Sussex Regional Branch
Sunday 10 January 2016, 2.00 p.m.
Branch Meeting
The Muggleton Inn, 8 High Street,
Maidstone ME14 1HJ

Brighton
Wednesday 13 January 2016, 7.30 – 9.30 p.m.
The Ecology and Socialism
Guest Speaker: Brian Morris
Venue: The Brighthelm Centre (Pelham Room - First Floor - lift available), North Road, Brighton BN1 1YD

Liverpool
Thursday 14 January 2016, 7pm to 9pm,
'Discussion: Party activity in Liverpool.
Project Room, Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Ln, Liverpool L1 3BT (3 mins walk from Liverpool Central station).
Socialist Party contact: 0789 0089 399

West London
Tuesday 19 January 8pm
IS INEQUALITY BAD FOR YOU?
Speaker: Vincent Jones
Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall,
Heathfield Terrace, London W4 4JN

London Economics Debating Society
Monday 25 January 2016, 7.00pm
'Scarcity and Infinite Wants: The Founding Myths of Economics'
Speaker: Adam Buick (Socialist Party)
Venue: The Cock Tavern (upstairs), 23 Phoenix Road, London, NW1 1HB

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 6 February** at Socialist Party Head Office. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

Labour, Lib-Dem, Tory



The Socialist Standard examines their case

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Afwerki's boot

Socialists are not fools: we prefer the limited democracy to be found in some capitalist countries over dictatorship. The 99 percent suffer worldwide, but in some places more than others. As huge numbers of Eritreans continue to flee the country, Isaias Afwerki's regime is increasingly retaliating against their families. The government already demands payments from families whose children have escaped—50,000 nafkas (US\$3,333) per child. Families who can't pay are jailed. Now the government is demolishing houses and seizing property, too ... Experts say Afwerki needs a constant supply of young people to maintain his police state. A June 2015 UN Commission on Inquiry report on Eritrea documented in detail the regime's indefinite military conscription. The military has drafted children younger than 15, tortured its own members and engaged in the systematic sexual abuse of women. But despite the report's conclusion of possible *crimes against humanity*—and an Eritrean government official's recent admission to a Wall Street Journal reporter that the regime engages in torture—some countries and right-wing political parties in Europe are jostling to send a signal to Eritreans: Don't come here anymore' (thenation.com, 2 December).