

socialist standard

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



**ESTABLISHMENT PUPPETS
LOST IN A**

**POLITICAL
WASTELAND**



**Peter Joseph
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socialist standard

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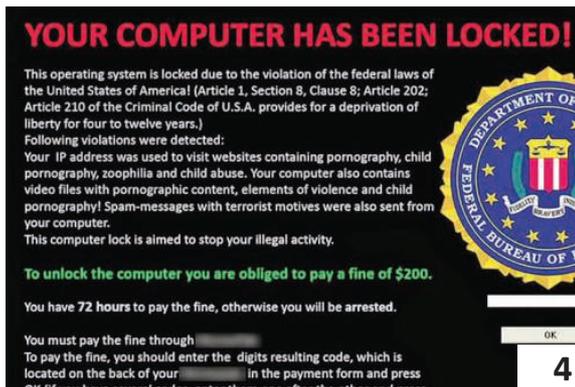
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Introducing the Socialist Party

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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Jeremy Corbyn's reformist programme

ON 16 May, Jeremy Corbyn unveiled his General Election manifesto entitled 'For The Many Not The Few'. On the BBC Daily Politics Show, on 12 May, a party representative was asked why the Socialist Party does not support Corbyn's Labour Party. A similar question was also put to us by a Danish journalist. After all, the other so-called 'Socialist' Parties, including the 'Trade Union and Socialist Coalition', support Corbyn, and he is a 'Socialist', isn't he?

In his manifesto, Corbyn proposed higher taxes on incomes over £80,000 per year, raising corporation tax and introducing a tax on certain City deals. The extra income raised was to be spent on schools, infrastructure, childcare, the NHS, reversing the benefits freeze and abolishing tuition fees. It also pledged to bring back into state ownership the railways, the water industry, the National Grid and Royal Mail, and there were also proposals on helping small businesses and enhancing workers' rights.

Whatever their merits these measures are not socialist. In the fifties and sixties,

Conservative governments accepted the principle of progressive taxation and were generally in favour of high social spending. About twenty years ago, the Labour government imposed a windfall tax on the utilities and the banks, and nobody can accuse the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, of being a socialist. Renationalising key industries isn't socialist either. This merely transfers ownership from private companies to the state. Shareholders become bondholders and the workers continue to work for a wage. In the past, nationalised industries have been beset with strikes and redundancies.

The implementation of this manifesto would come up against the profit limitations of capitalism. Many high earners may seek ways to avoid paying the extra taxes and some capitalists may move their operations abroad where the tax regime is more favourable. If the economy is doing well and profits are high, then the capitalist class may tolerate the extra costs. If, on the other hand, should there be an economic downturn, then the government would have to make

compromises and even backtrack and reduce public spending. The media and politicians would then cite these failures as proof that socialism does not work.

The history of previous governments' attempts to reform capitalism in favour of the working class is not promising. François Hollande in France fell on his sword after attempting a more modest redistribution of wealth. Labour governments in the sixties and seventies also came to grief.

Even if a Corbyn government is a success, power and wealth would not be transferred to the working class, they would only receive more crumbs from the capitalist table. The only way to achieve a society that is 'For The Many Not The Few' is for a socialist working class to abolish capitalism and establish a society of common ownership and democratic control of the means of production.

So, in this general election the Socialist Party will not be supporting Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party. On the contrary, we are standing against him again in his own constituency of Islington North.

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I'm putting on my Black Hat...

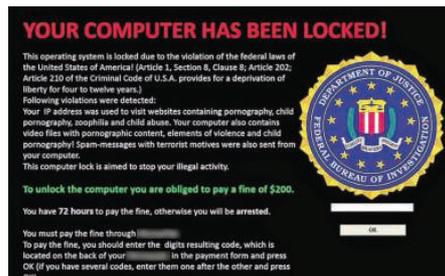
IT'S PROBABLY not the first question you need to ask about the practical workings of socialism, but given the recent panic about NHS trusts suffering 'ransomware' cyber-attacks you might be tempted to wonder what a future socialist society would do about a potential cyber-induced system shutdown. Leaving aside the fact that hopefully socialists wouldn't be as daft as some of these trusts are alleged to have been in ignoring repeated warnings and not upgrading their obsolete operating systems, there is the question of why anyone in a free and cooperative non-market society would launch such an attack in the first place. In socialism there would be no money to extort from victims, and it seems difficult to envisage anyone being so zealously antisocial as to try to take out a hospital for the sheer hell of it.

But still we can't be sure. On the face of it, socialism once established would be highly inclined to apply the same principle to its cyber systems as to any other of its systems, which is to say open and accessible, without locks, passwords, public or private keys, codes or captchas. Would this be asking for trouble? Maybe. Socialism in its infancy would be wise to take precautions against petty reactionary vandalism. But the way that mature socialism would work would tend to militate against vulnerability.

First, one of the reasons the Windows operating system is so hard to defend against attack is that its source code is kept secret, for business reasons, and therefore friendly 'white hat' hackers are kept out of the loop and unable to help spot flaws. Contrary to what Apple acolytes so often claim, the reason Apple rarely gets hit is not because it is superior but because it locks out all non-Apple software while Windows is an open platform, and because relatively few people use its desktop operating system so 'black hatters' are not so tempted to tinker with it.

Second, in socialism there would be no financial or other incentive to refuse or forget to update obsolete systems. If anti-virus software was deemed necessary, it would be state-of-the-art and automatically installed and updated. One of capitalism's more minor stupidities is putting the financial onus on individuals to protect themselves and thereby society against digital or biological infections, where common sense would dictate making such protection free and universal.

Third, though it would make sense to standardise hardware to maximise repair and reuse, socialism could choose to adopt



a diversity policy over software similar to agriculture, the idea being that monocrops spread plague whereas diversity diminishes their effectiveness. There isn't just one way to write a program, there are potentially hundreds or even thousands, but capitalist competition tends to destroy all variants until only one is left. Socialism, to immunise itself, could in theory do the exact opposite and encourage as much cyber-diversity as possible, though such redundant complexity would not be without its own problems.

Lastly, there is the matter of widespread anonymity in the capitalist web, surely an affront to the socialist ethic of transparency. Hackers hide behind elaborate mazes of their own making, which socialism would have every reason to demolish. Such openness might make people nicer online too. An interesting study has shown that trolling behaviour is generated where two conditions are met: first, the online environment is hostile so that users feel antagonised, and second, the users are anonymous. Where there was no anonymity, the hostile environment still triggered some trolling but not as much, and where anonymity and hostility were both absent, a 'virtuous circle' resulted, where well-behaved peers encouraged good behaviour in turn (*New Scientist*, 13 May). There's no reason to think that socialism wouldn't do something similar.

It's alive, it's ALIVE!

Sex dolls that make small talk, recognise your face and get jealous of your Facebook friends? Yup, they're now on sale at

around \$10,000 (BBC Online, 15 May). That's great news for agalmatophiliacs everywhere. Pygmalion eat your heart out. Of course, the dolls don't have much of an emotional range or even very sophisticated vocabulary, but then that probably suits the buyers very well. Many of them view their acquisition in terms of a 'relationship'. One says 'I can go out shopping for her and look for clothes – it is like having somebody in my life without having to deal with making mistakes. If I like a hat on her, she doesn't say that she doesn't like it.' No indeed, because of course you can program their moods for them, even choosing to allow them to be moody, angry and jealous. Oh, and of course you can customise their bodies too, according to taste. But social acceptability is another matter and it may be a while before the happy hat-buyer is willing to go out shopping *with* his doll instead of *for* it.

Ethically it would be less accurate to say that the jury is out than that the jury has not been sworn in yet. Last time we mentioned this horizon tech (October 2015) things were still very much at the prototype stage, but already some academics were crying foul and calling for an outright ban. Now one of them has changed her mind, deciding that dolls aren't really the problem, we humans are, in particular our ugly habit (that is to say capitalism's ugly habit) of turning us into objectified and disposable machine tools. Meanwhile other academics guardedly suggest such developments might be a good thing if they help lonely and unhappy people with little chance of a real relationship. Maybe so, but the plot thickens when you start talking about child sex robots. If none are currently in secret development, one wonders how long it will take capitalism to pounce on the possibility.

Here's a happier thought – what if they start designing politician sex robots? We could program them to be honest, truthful, incorruptible, selfless and competent. Silly idea, we know. But at least then we'd be screwing them instead of them always screwing us.

PJS





happen when we work together', it is an utter sham. Likewise, when he asks, 'What if communities got a share of the profits? What if everyone could win from this?' he neglects to mention that last year the share handed to 'the community' (in lieu of tax) was only 2p out of every £10.

The recruitment of artistic talent to sell such messages has become the holy grail of companies, and it was a great coup that they had this film directed by one of our greatest living film makers, Shane Meadows (*Made In England, Dead Man's Shoes, Somers Town, A Room for Romeo Brass*), well known for his working-class realism and affinity. Rather than carp from the sidelines, however, we can rely on the self-description from the horse's mouth, as it were. The director of the Co-op brand, Helen Carroll, has praised the style of this new campaign, as it 'doesn't feel like advertising at all. It shows the power of community'.

In using that power to sell products and make millions for people like Niall Booker and Liam Coleman, the Co-op has shamelessly copied a series of adverts run shortly before by a rival bank, also with false pretensions to being less bank-like than other banks, the Nationwide. Those ads featured a whole range of 'cool' and popular young performance poets, telling us through their rhyming sermons that Nationwide is another bank devoted to sharing, caring, community, responsibility and fairness. But try going to either of these banks if you have just been made redundant and can no longer pay your mortgage or rent. Ask them to show a bit of community spirit by covering it for you for a couple of years. Let us know their response.

All of those poets were either incredibly stupid and gullible, or ambitious and easily bought. The Nationwide, like the Co-op Bank, is a capitalist institution, committed to invest in order to accumulate surpluses. It stands right at the heart of the most exploitative system ever to curse the human species. Is this what music and lyrics are for, to praise banks? If only these artists had possessed one tenth of the decency and principle of Ricky Gervais, who once turned down a million pounds rather than advertise something he found tacky and undesirable – and that was at a time when he was not yet wealthy himself. What those cheap, venal sell-outs bought into was the modern trend in which capitalist corporations do not advertise the products they are selling, but rather their proclaimed decency and high moral values. Of course, they protest too much. The people and organisations who really devote themselves to caring about people and working for the community do not need to spend millions of advertising dollars insisting how nice they really are.

CLIFFORD SLAPPER

Songs of Praise

The Co-operative bank has had various scandals in recent years, financial and otherwise. The Co-op 'brand' has decided it needs to clean up its image. The result is a current television advertising campaign which is as preposterous as it is insulting to our intelligence. The television ads are voiced by Russell Brand's former radio show on-air commentator, George The Poet, who utters ponderous platitudes as if these capitalist high-street banks and supermarkets were some kind of socialist utopia. In fact, of course, today's Co-op bears hardly even a trace of the idealism of the Rochdale Pioneers of 1844. Like the John Lewis Partnership, it has long succumbed to the pressure to act just like any other profit-hungry, hierarchical corporation within a capitalist world.

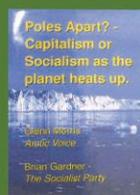
In 2016 a total of £16 million was allocated nationally by the Co-op to community projects and 'good causes', out of a group turnover of £7.1 billion. Just three of their bank directors (Niall Booker, Liam Coleman and John Baines) that year shared an income of £4 million, a quarter of the entire national community causes budget. So when George The Poet intones 'let's work together and strive for unity' as 'great things

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Russia 1917: as we saw it

The 'usurper of the Socialist name' who was made Minister of War was Alexander Kerensky.

THE POSITION as we conceive it is as follows. The capitalists of Russia, long squirming under the irksome restrictions placed upon their expansion by the feudal nobles, found in the conditions arising out of the war, a situation full of promise and they proceeded to exploit it. The Russian Army, they calculated, essentially an army in arms under duress, could have no love for the powers that drove them to the shambles, while the people at large, groaning under the misery of the universal chaos, would accept the overthrow of the nobility with acclamation. So far they appear to have calculated correctly. They accomplished their *coup d'état*.

Having got safely so far, of course, the Russian capitalists were greeted with the applause of their fellow capitalists the world over. But, as the history of many revolutions shows, the job is only half complete largely upon a disaffected army and people — an army and people writhing under the torture of this cruellest of wars, naturally find it no easy matter to keep the war machine a fit and efficient instrument for further

prosecuting the war.

The simple Russian soldier, once the hand of the militarist bully relaxed its grip upon his throat, gave expression to his real feelings with regard to the war by fraternising with the "enemy" by battalions, and by deserting in myriads. The simple Russian peasants, to whom "Russian aspirations in the Straits" was a meaningless phrase, and the pan-Slav question empty vapouring; to whom the enemy was the now deposed authority who had directed usurious taxation against them, holding their ungrateful crops in mortgage to force them, broken and destitute, from their lands, offered no force moral or physical, to restrain the "unpatriotic" to the path of duty. Hence we find the Provisional Government engaged in the task of hunting around for some force wherewith to compel obedience to their commands, while the capitalist world looks on, its heart torn with anxious fears, wondering if they will find it. (...)

As in England and France and Germany the capitalist class have turned to the pseudo-Socialist and other labour fakers to aid them to their bloody victory, so in Russia the enemies of the working class find their agents in the ranks of the working-class leaders. Who fitter than a "Socialist" to harangue an undisciplined

army? Who fitter than a "rebel" to lure other rebels from their rebellious ways? Who fitter than a "leader" of "democracy" to represent the shadow of democracy as the substance, and to inflame the "democratic" passions to the defence of liberties which do not exist? So they made a usurper of the Socialist name Minister for War, and sent him, hot-foot, to do work which no Socialist, in any country, could or would do.

So, having secured this agent to divide the workers, the Russian capitalists feel that they are strong enough for a bolder move, and have announced their intention of establishing a sort of travelling Courts with soldiers to execute their orders, though for the moment fear of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates Committees constrain them to hold their hands. Meanwhile they are straining every nerve to create a force, both of public opinion and military, powerful enough to strike at those who dare to challenge their right to rule, and when they have secured this, then the butchery will commence — the real bloodshed of this revolution starts.

(*Socialist Standard*, June 1917. Full article: <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/socialist-standard/1910s/1917/no-154-june-1917/russian-situation>)



Women, work and wages

IN AN interview with the magazine section of the Mail of Sunday (26 March), the author and playwright Fay Weldon provocatively claimed that, through women going out to work, 'the feminist revolution' had led to 'halving the male wage, so it no longer supported a family.'

It is of course absurd to attribute women going out to work to feminism. That resulted from capitalism's need to overcome a labour shortage. In fact, if anything, it will have been women going out to work that led to the rise of feminism. In any event, there is nothing wrong with women going out to work, apart, that is, from under capitalism this being as wage slaves (Weldon's objection is the old-fashioned one that this means that children are brought up by nursery staff rather than their mothers).

This said, is there any substance in her claim that women going out to work has reduced the male wage? This is not as implausible as it might at first seem.

In Marx's day and for many years after, when few married women went out to work, men's wages had to cover the cost of maintaining a wife and children. So, Marxian socialists defined the value of labour power as what it cost for a male worker to reproduce his working skills and also to maintain a family.

In time those administering capitalism came to realise that this meant that unmarried men were being paid too much, and a campaign was launched for 'family allowances' as a payment from the state to workers with children. The trade union movement was wary about this as they realised that this would exert a downward pressure on wages, by relieving employers of the need to include an element in wages to cover the cost of maintaining a family and raising a new generation of workers.

We in the Socialist Party had something to say on the subject in a pamphlet we brought out in 1943 *Family Allowances: A Socialist Analysis*. This endorsed the trade unions' reasoning, pointing out 'that once it is established that the children (or some of the children) of the workers have been 'provided for' by other means, the tendency will be for wage levels to sink to new standards which will not include the cost of maintaining such children.'

Once married women went out to work, drawn into it by capitalism's need to make a fuller use of those capable of working, the next logical economy for employers in the payment of wages would be to no longer pay married male workers enough to maintain a non-working wife. In this sense, married women going out to work would exert a downward pressure on male wages.

Nowadays, the wage paid by employers has come to be enough to maintain only a single worker, whether man or woman, married or not. The norm now, for raising a family, is for both partners to go out to work and pay for this out of both their incomes. To this extent Weldon has a point but it is an exaggeration to say that male wages have been halved, if only because equal wages for men and women has yet to be achieved. It will, however, have had the long-run effect that wages will not have gone up as much as they would otherwise have done.

This is not an argument either against women going out to work or against equal pay, but rather one against the whole wages system under which workers, male and female, have to sell their working abilities for a wage or salary reflecting costs determined by market forces.

General Election

News and information on the coming election Thursday 8th June



Standing in Swansea West

BREXIT: DOES IT MATTER?

Will BREXIT – whether hard or soft – do anything to solve the problems people in this country are suffering from - job insecurity, inequality, poverty, crime, poor healthcare?

The answer has to be ‘no’. And the reason is that these problems don’t come from particular constitutional arrangements. They come from the way society is organised – production for profit and ownership of the vast majority of the wealth by a tiny minority of people: the global system of capitalism.

The other parties

This is the system all other political parties exist to administer. They have different ideas on how that system can best be maintained, but all agree it must be retained.

Many of their supporters have good intentions but are unaware that, in campaigning for these, they are helping to maintain this built-in system of minority privilege. So, however different Corbyn’s policies may seem from May’s, they offer no alternative to the present way of running society.

No matter how well-meaning politicians may be they can’t control that system – it controls them. The best any government can do is try to ride its storms.

Standing in London too

The Socialist Party is also standing in London, in Battersea and in Islington North. The candidates are Danny Lambert and Bill Martin.

Islington North, where we also stood in 2015, is Jeremy Corbyn’s constituency. At that time he was just an ordinary leftwing Labour MP. In the meantime he has become the Leader of the Labour Party. This hasn’t changed our attitude

So what’s the alternative?

We propose an alternative to the society based on ownership of capital and market forces that currently exists in the UK, Europe and worldwide. This alternative is a society of common ownership that we call socialism.

Not ‘socialism’ as you may understand it. Not the type of dictatorship that collapsed in Russia and elsewhere – which were forms of state capitalism in fact. Not any of the schemes for state control advocated by some in the Labour Party.

For us socialism means something completely different and something much better. We are talking about:

- a world community without states or frontiers based on participatory democracy
- a society without buying and selling where everyone has access to what they require to satisfy their needs, without the rationing system that is money
- a society where people use the earth’s abundant resources rationally and sustainably, and contribute their knowledge, skills and experience freely to produce what is needed



towards him or the Labour Party. We have always been opposed to the Labour Party and have never seen it as a vehicle for socialism.

Battersea is the next door constituency to Vauxhall which we normally contest. It is not far from our Head Office in Clapham High Street which is being used as our election rooms.

To sum up:

- If you don’t like present-day society – with or without Brexit.
- If you’re fed up with the way so many people are forced to live – hanging on for dear life to a job that gives little satisfaction and doing it just for the money
- If you are sick of seeing grinding poverty alongside obscene wealth
- If you are sick of the Earth being abused by corporations who don’t care about the future or the environment
- If you think the root cause of most problems is the market system and the governments that maintain that system . . . then you’re thinking like we are.

What can you do?

The new society is one without leaders just as it is one without owners and wage-slaves. It is a wholly democratic society, one which can only be achieved when you – and enough like-minded people - join together to bring it about peacefully and democratically.

If you agree with this, you will want to cast your vote for our candidate. In voting for Brian Johnson, the Socialist Party of Great Britain candidate, you will be voting for the socialism you – and we – stand for.

Election manifesto of our candidate in Swansea West

Copies of the manifesto in London can be obtained by a sending a stamped addressed envelope to: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. Also available are “I’m Voting for World Socialism” stickers.

Offers of help, phone 0207 622 3811 or email spgb@worldsocialism.org.

Greasy Pole is on holiday



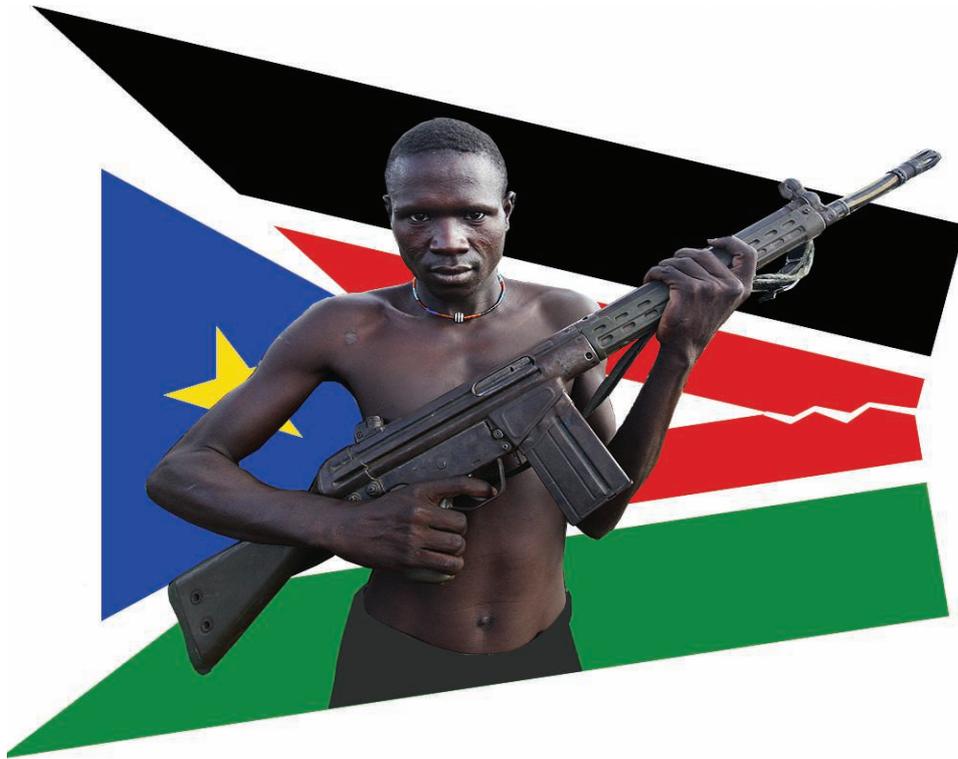
South Sudan – another failed state

SOUTH SUDAN, the world's youngest nation, was plunged into civil war in 2013, just two years after gaining its independence from neighbouring Sudan, after President Salva Kiir dismissed his deputy, Riek Machar. During the first two years of independence, the country was producing nearly 245,000 barrels of crude oil per day, raking in billions of dollars in revenue annually which paid for this trade. South Sudan's ruling class, responsible for atrocities, have managed to accumulate fortunes while the people suffer under a civil war.

The country's competing privileged elites are sacrificing their own people's lives to secure the political and economic benefits derived from control of the state. Peace remains a distant prospect, with Kiir and Machar seemingly hell-bent on a military solution.

The conflict has divided the nation along largely tribal lines. Kiir told the UN general assembly back in September 2014 that 'The conflict in South Sudan is purely a political struggle for power, not an ethnic conflict as reported.' Yet violence has broken out along ethnic lines in many parts of the country, pitting forces loyal to Kiir, a Dinka, against those of his former deputy Machar, a Nuer. Festus Mogae, a former Botswanan president, who tried to broker a peace, said, 'We were trying to persuade him [Kiir] that they were leaders and they should think of the welfare of the people, but they failed to do that.' The United Nations reported that government militias raped women essentially as a form of payment, under an agreement that allowed them to 'do what you can and take what you can.'

More than 3 million people have fled their homes out of a population of 12 million. The UN has declared a famine in some parts of the country and nearly half its population face food shortages. Kiir's government has continued to make arms deals even as a famine was declared. In March UN humanitarian chief Stephen O'Brien reported that in South Sudan 'more than one million children are estimated to be acutely malnourished across the country, including 270,000 children who face the imminent risk of death should they not be reached in time with assistance.' We now witness the return of the old colonialists but instead of pith helmets, they are donning the blue helmets of the UN. 400 British troops will eventually



be deployed to provide engineering and medical support to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS.)

It is true to say that this is a human-made famine but it would be more accurate to describe it as capitalist-created famine. Hunger in South Sudan is the work of politicians and elites. Up to 75 percent of the country's land area is suitable for farming. South Sudan has vast fertile lands, abundant water and climate suitable for production of a wide variety of food and cash crops. Experts estimate that up to 300,000 tonnes of fish could be harvested on a sustainable basis from its share of the River Nile swamps and tributaries. What food South Sudan produces often is left rotting in the bush due to poor road networks to transport

the commodities to the market yet chicken arrives from Brazil. Tomatoes, onions, maize flour, cooking oil, dairy products and beans are imported from neighbouring Uganda. Every year, South Sudan spends between US\$200-300 million on food imports, according to estimates for 2013 provided by the Abidjan-based African Development Bank (AFDB). 'South Sudan currently imports as much as 50 percent of its needs, including 40 percent of its cereals from neighbouring countries, particularly Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia', according to AFDB.

Nationalism and sovereignty are frequently promoted as solutions to many social ills but only too often, the reality is very different. The Republic of South Sudan was declared an independent nation on 9 July 2011. The new national flag was raised, the band played the new national anthem and the countdown clock flashed 'free at last.' African nations do not share many things in common except the forcible grouping together of tribes. In the

past when the continent didn't have artificial boundaries such as there are today, wars and hatred were not as rife. Nationalism imposes the idea of the nation to legitimise both the state and class rule. The problems of exploitation and exclusion that once came from the government of Sudan are now replicated in South Sudan. The *Socialist Standard* has often cautioned workers to be wary of simplistic nationalistic solutions. The oppressed very quickly become the oppressors.

ALJO

Early Christianity and communism

When our representative was interviewed on BBC2's Daily Politics Show in the context of the general election, Polly Toynbee commented that socialism seemed like early Christianity (see: www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/video/socialist-party-bbc-daily-politics-12th-may-2017). But there is a difference: they were only concerned with communism in consumption while modern socialism is about common ownership of the means of production.

Omnia sunt communia ('all things in common') is attributed to Thomas Müntzer, a radical theologian who during the German Peasants' War, in February 1525, took control of the town of Muhlhausen where he imposed a 'communist' community in the name of Christianity. It was an epoch where itinerant preachers preached 'the Kingdom of God on Earth' which was biblical language demanding that the common lands the nobility have taken for themselves be restored to the community and the end of serfdom. *Omnia sunt communia* expressed the idea that everything belongs to everyone or in modern parlance, common ownership.

Some, such as James Connolly in *Labour, Nationality and Religion*, argued that early Christianity was originally 'communist'-inspired, citing some of the church fathers.

'What thing do you call 'yours'? What thing are you able to say is yours? From whom have you received it? You speak and act like one who upon an occasion going early to the theatre, and possessing himself without obstacle of the seats destined for the remainder of the public, pretends to oppose their entrance in due time, and to prohibit them seating themselves, arrogating to his own sole use property that is really destined to common use. And it is precisely in this manner act the rich!' – St. Basil the Great.

'The use of all things that are found in this world ought to be common to all men. Only the most manifest iniquity makes one say to the other, 'This belongs to me, that to you'. Hence the origin of contention among men.' – St. Clement.

'Nature furnishes its wealth to all men in common. God beneficently has created all things that their enjoyment be common to all living beings, and that the earth becomes the common possession of all. It is Nature itself that has given birth to the right of the community, whilst it is only unjust usurpation that has created the right of private poverty.' and *'The earth belongs to everyone, not to the rich.'* St. Ambrose

'The earth of which they are born is common to all, and therefore the fruit that the earth brings forth belongs without distinction to all.' – St. Gregory the Great.

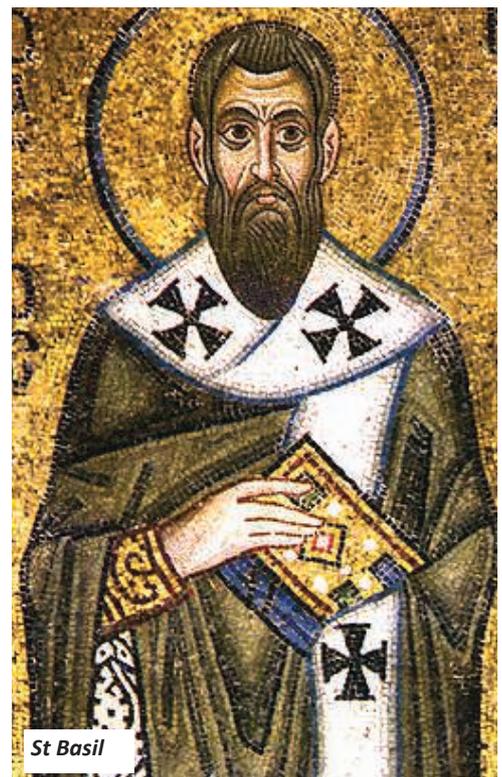
These ideals re-surfaced in the Middle Ages when John Ball a preacher in the Peasant's Revolt, was reported as declaring:

'When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman? From the beginning all men by nature were created alike, and our bondage or servitude came in by the unjust oppression of naughty men. For if God would have had any bondmen from the beginning, he would have appointed who

should be bond, and who free. And therefore I exhort you to consider that now the time is come, appointed to us by God, in which ye may (if ye will) cast off the yoke of bondage, and recover liberty'

In the 15th century, in the town of Tabor in Bohemia, there arose a religious sect, the Taborites, who tried to put these ideas into practice. They went one step further than most, *'Everything will be common, including wives; there will be free sons and daughters of God and there will be no marriage as union of two — husband and wife.'* Historians describe how *'Every one who came was 'brother' or 'sister,' as all social distinctions were unrecognised. The priests shared the work among themselves; some preaching in designated places (men and women being kept apart), others hearing confessions, while a third part communicated in both kinds. Thus it went on till noon. Then came the consumption in common of the food brought by the guests, which was divided among them, the want of one being made good by the superabundance of another; for the brothers and sisters of Mount Tabor knew no difference between mine and thine.'*

The Taborites taught that *'In these days there shall be no king, ruler, or subject on the earth, and all imposts and taxes shall cease; no one shall force another to do anything, for all shall be equal brothers and sisters. As in the town of Tabor there is no mine or thine, but all is held in common, so shall everything be common to all, and no one own anything for himself*



St Basil

THE Declaration and Standard

Of the Levellers of England
 Delivered in a Speech to his Excellency the Lord Gen. Fairfax, on Friday last at White-Hall, by Mr. Everard, a late Member of the Army, and his Prophecies in reference thereto; shewing what will befall the Nobility and Gentry of this Nation, by their submitting to a Community; With their invitation and promise unto the people, and their proceedings in *Windfor park, Oat in is park, and severall other places*; also, the Examination and confession of the said Mr. Everard before his Excellency, the manner of his deportment with his Haron, and his severall Speeches and expressions, when he was commanded to put it off. Together with a List of the severall Regiments of Horse and Foot that have call Lots to go for Ireland.



Imprinted at London, for G. Lamberton, April 23. 1649.

The Diggers, woodcut by William Everard

Germany. Their duties were to organise and manage the various institutions of the Brotherhood, and regulate the connection between the several communities, as well as the relations of these with the outer world.

During the Reformation, various religious sects arose that advocated equality 'in the sight of God'. Karl Kautsky in his *History of Christianity* described the Anabaptists as 'the forerunner of the modern socialism.' An Anabaptist advocate, Jan Matthys, took control of the town of Munster. Since the New Testament said money was the root of all evil these Christians abolished private ownership of money. Instead, it was collected and put in the hands of the Church which used it to hire 'outside' workers. The food was also collectivised and rationed out by the Church. Communal dining-halls were created and private homes were declared public property open to the countless poverty-stricken seeking God's kingdom. Another sect at the time, the Hutterites said, 'private property is the greatest enemy of love.'

When the English Civil War erupted, it was the custom of the times for the Bible to be quoted on every occasion with meanings read into the text and the political writings were cloaked in religious phrases. The Digger, Gerrard Winstanley, used the 'Good Book' to advocate a socialistic society.

'Every tradesman shall fetch materials... from the public store-houses to work upon without buying and selling; and when particular works are made... the tradesmen shall bring these particular works to particular shops, as it is now the practice, without buying and selling. And every family as they want such things as they cannot make, they shall go to these shops and fetch without money... The earth is to be planted, and the fruits reaped and carried into barns and store-houses, by the assistance of every family. And if any man or family want corn or other provision they may go to the store-houses and fetch without money. If they want a horse to ride, go into the fields in summer, or to the common stables in winter, and receive one from the keepers; and when your journey is performed, bring him where you had him, without money. If any want food or victuals, they may either go to the butchers' shops, and receive what they want without money; or else go to the flocks of sheep or herds of cattle, and take and kill what meat is needful

alone. Whoever does so commits a deadly sin.'

Any layman might become a priest. The members of that order were chosen from the community, and they, in turn, elected the bishops; but they were financially dependent on the community. Their functions, like those of the medieval priesthood in general, were in the main similar to those of the present state and municipal officials and teachers in

for their families, without buying and selling.' (The Law of Freedom)

'...buying and selling is the great cheat that robs and steals the earth from one another. It is that which makes some lords, others beggars, some rulers, others to be ruled; and makes great murderers and thieves to be prisoners and hangers of little ones, or of sincere hearted men.' (A Declaration from the Poor Oppressed People of England.)

Another Leveller, William Walwyn, explained that the only true religion consisted in helping the poor:

'What an inequitable thing it is for one man to have thousands and another want bread! The pleasure of God is that all men should have enough, and not that one man should abound in this world's goods, spending it upon lusts, and another man (of far better deserts and far more useful to the commonwealth) not to be worth twopence.'

He said that 'the world shall never be well until all things be common.'

Then, there were the Ranters. 'Have all things in common, or else the plague of God will rot and consume all that you have.' declared Abiezer Coppe while Thomas Tany maintained that all religion was 'a lie, a fraud, a deceit, for there is but one truth and that is love.' He demanded that the people's lands were rendered to the people.

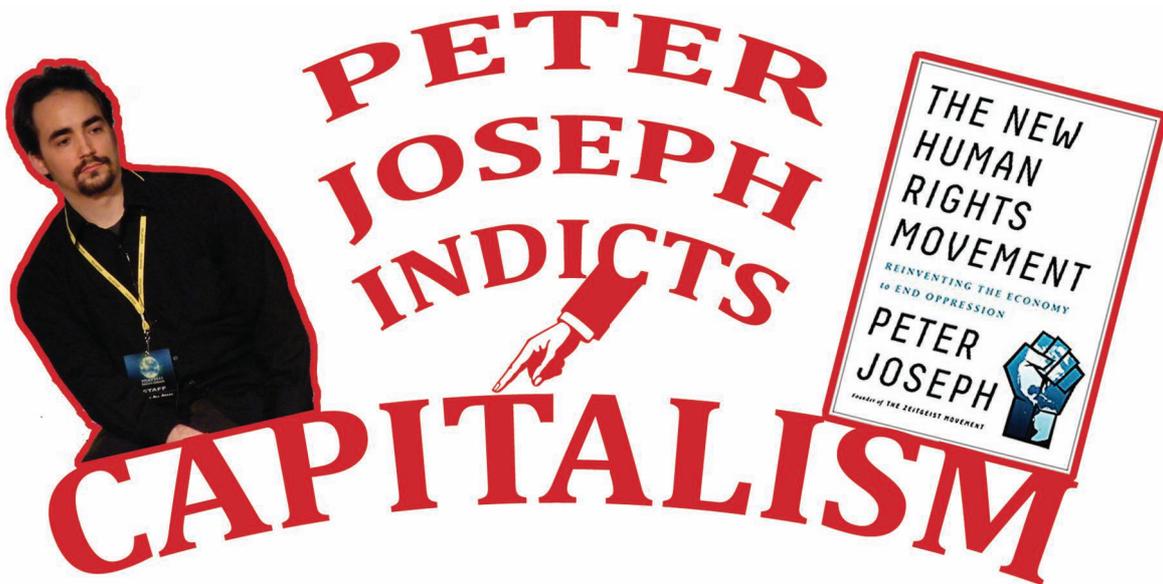
Had these movements succeeded they may well have become themselves some sort of theocracies such as the puritanical state the religious radicals of the English Revolution imposed, for as Engels pointed out in *The Peasant War in Germany*, talking about Thomas Munzer, 'The worst thing that can befall a leader of an extreme party is to be compelled to take over a government at a time when society is not yet ripe for the domination of the class he represents and for the measures which that domination implies... Thus, he necessarily finds himself in a unsolvable dilemma. What he can do contradicts all his previous actions and principles, and the immediate interests of his party and what he ought to do cannot be done. In a word, he is compelled to represent not his party or his class, but the class for whose domination the movement is then ripe. In the interest of the movement, he is compelled to advance the interests of an alien class, and to feed his own class with talk and promises, and with the assertion that the interests of that alien class are their own interests. He who is put into this awkward position is irrevocably lost.'

There are two essential aspects of socialism. One involves the common ownership of the means of production. The other involves the distribution of the means of consumption according to their needs. It was the latter 'consumption communism' which prevailed in those early social movements and they were unconcerned with common ownership in the sphere of production. The Taborite 'communism', for instance, was based on the needs of the poor, and not on production. While the needs of the poor engendered the struggle for 'communism', there existed the persistence of private proprietorship in production and these owners grew less willing to relinquish their surplus for the benefit of the poor.

What was lacking for a fully functioning socialist society was the capacity to provide for the needs of individuals and the community. But today we have the technology to supply everyone and as Sylvia Pankhurst explained, 'Socialism means plenty for all. We do not preach a gospel of want and scarcity, but of abundance... We do not call for limitation of births, for penurious thrift, and self-denial. We call for a great production that will supply all, and more than all the people can consume.'

Modern socialism is concerned with who should own the means of production and distribution. The answer is everybody and nobody.

ALJO



In his new book *The New Human Rights Movement: Reinventing the Economy to End Oppression* Peter Joseph has come a long way since his first Zeitgeist film in 2007 with its conspiracy theories and crude currency crankism (although he still adheres to a version of the ‘thin air’ theory of banking). Gone too are the technocratic views of his then mentor, Jacque Fresco.

He now realises that he is up against an entrenched class that is opposed to the sort of society he wants to see introduced, and unambiguously identifies the capitalist system of production for sale on a market with a view to profit as the root cause of the social ills, not just material but socio-psychological too, that afflict society today.

The first chapter, whether intentionally or not, is virtually a statement of the materialist conception of history. He defines a social system as ‘the means by which society organizes itself to facilitate survival, prosperity, and, ideally, peaceful coexistence’ and points out that ‘how a society organizes its resources, labor, production, and distribution is by far the most defining and influential feature of its culture.’ And ‘... it will be found that the most influential characteristic of a civilization is the kind of technological means it has and how it is applied. When very large changes in applied technology occur, human culture and behavior tend to change as well.’

Class War

Joseph describes capitalism as ‘a social system based on property, exchange, labor-for-income, competitive self-regulation, and the capacity to profit from scarcity and deprivation’ and sees it as the latest manifestation of hierarchical class society ushered in by the Neolithic Revolution that the practice of agriculture represented. Although he does write of an ‘ownership class’ contrasted to ‘the wage working majority’ and of ‘wage slavery’ and ‘the general economic slavery of the majority’, his emphasis is more on the rich contrasted to the poor.

Starting from the more common view of society as stratified into classes by wealth and income levels, he argues that the inequality of wealth, power and esteem built into capitalist society leads to the oppression of ‘the lower classes’ (his term) by ‘the upper class’ by inflicting on them worse health and earlier death. He describes this as ‘structural violence’,

a ‘class war’ against them. Hence one of his indictments of capitalism:

‘Evidence shows ... that social class and the inferior-superior relationship inherent in it is simply bad for social and personal health. Hence capitalism, which is the embodiment of this market-created hierarchy, is really a poisonous social construct’ (p. 206).

This is certainly a feature of capitalism, in fact of all class societies, but his ‘class war’ is not the same as the ‘class struggle’ that Marxists see as taking place between classes defined by their relationship to the means of wealth production, in capitalism between the minority capitalist class who own and control them and the non-owning class forced by economic necessity to operate them for a wage or a salary less than the value of what they produce.

To see the upper class as oppressing the poor (as they in effect do, as Joseph argues) is not a complete picture, as it leaves out those who are neither capitalists nor poor (in the conventional sense), most workers in fact. They, too, suffer from capitalism and are economically exploited for surplus value, and also suffer discrimination when it comes to consumption even if not as much as the poor. Not, it needs to be added straightaway, out of any good will on the part of the capitalist class but because it is in their interest to have a relatively healthy and so more productive workforce.

But there is no need to get into a big argument about which – the lot of the poor or the exploitation of the producers? – is the worst aspect of capitalism. Peter Joseph is as much opposed to capitalism as Marxian socialists are.

He sees the way out, or, as he also puts it, humanity’s ‘next evolutionary step as an intelligent species’, as ‘an economic system that actually has no market’, a propertyless, marketless, moneyless world society of ‘sustainable abundance’:

‘... the end goal of achieving a truly sustainable, post-scarcity economy would logically be one that has no trade or money at all, but rather focuses on design and management procedures that have become democratic and made participatory’ (p. 295).

This is recognisably what we mean by ‘socialism’, although Joseph himself does not use this word to describe it, sticking to the confusing conventional view that ‘socialism’ means government intervention in the market economy.



‘There is,’ he points out, ‘no technical reason for any human being to starve, be without water, or exist in poverty as we know it.’ This is backed up by a technical appendix prepared by the Zeitgeist Movement which he founded and of which he is still the president (whatever that implies).

Fruitless

Because he shares the materialist analysis of social systems as having an economic basis, Joseph is fully aware that the social ills resulting from capitalism’s economic basis of inequality of wealth ownership and production for a market with a view to profit cannot be removed while that basis remains. The problems of public health and environmental degradation on which he concentrates but also others he mentions such as crime, violence and war are all symptoms of the system. ‘Society,’ he writes, ‘is constantly battling symptoms, not causes,’ with the result that there is not much constructive or lasting that is achieved. Because these problems are structurally linked to the capitalist economic system, they cannot be solved within the system:

‘The negative forces preserving the status quo are not substantially affected by street protest, public outcry, media exposure of corruption, or other traditional methods. It is fruitless for us to demand an idealized or “more just” behaviors from our existing institutions, since they have been built around a value and incentive system that thrives on the very behaviors we wish to change. Only deep system changes will prove to have long-standing effects’ (p. 96).

Elsewhere, he describes these ‘deep system changes’ as ‘large and dramatic leaps’ and ‘a large, giant shift of our social system.’ In other words, what we are not afraid to call a social revolution, as a radical change in the basis of society.

But how is this to come about?

Not gradually:

‘... even if only partial transitions were made toward the ideal goal expressed, it would still improve things. However, the more one examines the implication of these changes, the more it will become clear how they work against the current economic system’s incentives and structure. This means the ideal of a step-by-step transition (and improvement) is improbable’ (pp. 265-6).

Nor will it be handed down from above:

‘The change I speak of will not originate from existing authority but rather from the raw masses. As noted, those who reach high levels of power and opulence in the world are usually conditioned to favor the mechanisms of their reward. As such, it is up to the average majority to realize this change can only come from the ground up’ (p. 299).

He doesn’t spell out how such a movement is to win. In fact he seems to have studiously avoided discussing winning political control as a preliminary to changing the basis of society. He may well see a role for elections but, if he does, he doesn’t say so.

Transitions

Joseph lists various transitional measures that could be taken once the radical change has ‘the overall sanction of society, meaning that the majority would seek these changes, with little political or establishment resistance.’ These include a universal basic income (to break the link between work done and consumption) and immediately making as many goods and services as possible free.

We cannot anticipate today what immediate measures would be implemented once a socialist majority was in a position to impose its will. That would depend on the exact circumstances and on the democratically-expressed preferences of those having to deal with the matter at the

time. Joseph, however, extends the argument beyond this and says that the movement to establish a propertyless, marketless, moneyless society should put pressure on existing institutions to adopt such measures, even before a majority in favour of it exists:

‘Public appeals to directly reduce socio-economic inequality and stop environmental degradation are always going to go against the grain within a market system, which will resist every step. Regardless, we should constantly demand things such as Universal Basic Income, maximum wage and wealth caps per person, government subsidies to incentivize cooperative businesses rather than hierarchical ones, universal standardization of goods components by industry sector to reduce waste, and other socializing and income/wealth equalizing means, basic public health services, as common to Nordic countries, should also be pushed to ease social stress while larger strides are made. These are not solutions in and of themselves, but they will help’ (p.297).

His envisaging such a wish-list of desirable reforms is disappointing. While some of them, if implemented (indeed, if implementable under capitalism) might help mitigate things, there is danger in an anti-capitalism movement advocating them. We know, from the experience of the pre-WWI Social Democratic parties which claimed to be Marxist, that what happens when you try to combine advocating social revolution with reforms within capitalism is that you attract the support of those who want only those reforms; and in the end you become the prisoner of these non-revolutionary supporters and eventually the party becomes a simple, left-wing reformist party.

The strategy Joseph suggests here would likely have the same result. On the other hand, the other activity – surveying



the planet’s and localities’ resources and drawing up detailed, technological plans on how to produce ‘sustainable abundance’ – that he suggests that the movement for the new society should do in the meantime while waiting to get majority supports is unobjectionable and, indeed, something to be encouraged.

Perhaps Joseph’s book will achieve the same sort of status as Piketty’s *Capital in the Twenty First Century*, David Graeber’s *Debt* and Paul Mason’s *Postcapitalism*. That would widen the debate considerably.

ADAM BUICK

Northern Exposure

Socialists have a long history in the north of Britain. The Party's first ever meeting was in Burnley, Lancashire. To many people, the north conjures up images of slate-grey skies, broad drawls and coal faces, ranks of pokey houses stretching down hillsides, wasp-tongued matrons, factories, fog and squalor. It's an old stereotype now permanently fossilised into a soap opera, but in truth you can still find traces of it if you go to some north-western former mill-towns on a bad weather day.

The north was certainly grim once. Slum clearances beginning in the 1930s gave way to out-of-town 'modern' housing estates and tower blocks in the 1950s that became the new slums, their windswept Brutalist architecture growing graffiti, syringes and crushed Special Brew cans like urban weeds. The pubs closed in all the poorest areas as cheap 'offies' stole their business and communities disintegrated to the point where even the concept of 'community' disappeared. Sink-estate lad-gangs exercised their ire on each other in mass battles while litter filled the streets and parks like tumbleweed, left by people with no cause for civic pride. Mothers called their wayward children in for tea with the universal warcry "You! Fookin' get in 'ere, now!" On Friday nights at chucking-out time the streets filled with strobe-flashing squad cars and riot vans. Not that the north was anything special in that respect. The same scenes could be found repeated all across the south like a low-rent franchise chain. The Sex Pistols, a London band, captured the mood of the country in enraged 4-chord rants and razor-slashed fashion statements. If the 1930s was 'Love on the Dole' the 1970s was just the dole. In the Thatcher years that followed,



the rage boiled over.

Socialist Party members went out posterfing for meetings with buckets of wallpaper paste and brushes, furtively throwing up hand-drawn posters while keeping a lookout for coppers. Risking arrest was part of the deal. Splattered in sticky slop we afterwards went and had a pint of fizzy keg ale until the nerves had subsided, hoping the meeting attendance would justify the effort, though often it didn't. Every available wall and window of every closed-down shop was festooned with layers of posters, the new atop the old, screaming the political life of the towns, the concrete and sheet-steel social media of the 1980s. We had an 'honour' policy not to cover over in-date posters from other groups, even the Trot groups, though they didn't always return the favour. We took the *Socialist Standard* round the pubs, selling dozens of copies to half-pissed would-be rebels, disaffected Labourites and the occasional bemused National Front supporter. Meetings reflected the age – fiery speakers and no-quarter rhetoric – which visitors either warmed to enthusiastically or cowered from in fright. It was crude, and sometimes as ugly as the concrete shopping arcades. But there was no doubt that it was

alive, that the towns were alive, that politics had two fists and was prepared to use them.

And then it all changed. A creeping gentrification took over the country. Our council stopped the flyposting with a simple trick. If you flyposted a meeting for a named pub, the council threatened to fine the pub £400, and £40 for every day the posters stayed up. The pubs promptly panicked and refused to host any political meetings. Fearing retaliation by far-right groups, the pubs also banned paper sales. Councils started refusing to allow paper sellers on the streets, ordering the police to move them on, while privately-owned shopping precincts insisted on trading licences which they then refused to



Riot police, Handsworth, Birmingham, 1985

grant. The handful of council-maintained public noticeboards, now the sole locations for legal advertising, became warzones of competing groups. All 'honour' policies went out of the window in a Darwinian fight for exposure. Finally the council, reacting to alleged citizen complaints that the noticeboards were unsightly, removed them altogether.

Complaints to our local council about the dereliction of their civic responsibilities yielded the response: "Why don't you use the internet?" Yet when the council wanted to advertise its own programme of arts events it ignored this passive medium and instead planted giant billboards mounted on lampposts all along the main thoroughfares. Calling attention to this hypocrisy had no effect. Asked who at the council was responsible for the implementation of the Local Government Act which included a responsibility for community group support, council staff had no clue, and less interest. They didn't much care that local groups could no longer advertise their meetings to the general public. It wasn't their concern if the democratic process had effectively been silenced. People preferred their home videos anyway, didn't they? No wonder public meetings went out of style, and radical politics went underground.

Nowadays, when you look at some parts of the north, you see an aspiration to ape the more prosperous bits of the south: private houses which were once council houses, expensive cars in drives, well-kept lawns, litter-free streets, boutique shops, gastro-pubs, hair and nail bars, upscale vernacular new build, and money. But the walls and the windows are blank and silent. Nobody has got anything to say, or any way to say it. Everywhere the debate has moved online and left the quiet towns to their dormitory slumbers. The physical landscape has been lobotomised in the interest of taste, of civic pride and good appearances. A digital generation has grown up with no experience of public meetings, and no exposure to open debate. Instead, all the talk today is of virtual echo-chambers where people only hear the sound of their own opinions reflected back at them. Even where people still gather in the few remaining pubs, they're all simultaneously on their phones as if checking in with a higher power. If they talk at all, it's mostly a confection of airy gossip, TV catch-ups and supercilious wise-cracking. People don't want to argue politics because they don't want to upset anyone, because it's more important to have friends than to challenge them. Victorian taboos have returned for the Facebook era.

This is the creeping censorship of the modern capitalist elites. This is how they win, not with well-marshalled facts and arguments, because they haven't got any, nor even with 'alternative facts' and bogus propaganda, because people are learning not to trust them. They win when they seduce us into a suffocated torpor, our class consciousness sapped by attention-deficit amnesia, our hunger for change sugar-soaked in celeb culture, vacuous clicktivism and pseudo-radical posturing. They don't have to be right, they only have to shut us up with a barrage of noise until we forget that we had anything to say.

Times change, fashions change, but the class struggle is still the class struggle, and we are still there, even if we've given up the sticky paste and brushes and the crappy hand-drawn posters. We've had to find other ways to operate, but we still meet and discuss and we still manage to have a laugh or two along with it. Capitalism won't give up, but neither will we. So here's our message to new readers. Wherever you are, north or south, if you're the kind that doesn't give up, come and find us, help us, and join us. It's the only thing that will work. In the end, it's how socialism will win.

PJS

Communist measures?

In the Guardian (10 May), Ellie Mae O'Hagan wrote of Marx, 'plenty of his proposals – just as radical when he wrote them – are common sense today. These include free education, abolition of child labour, a progressive income tax, a national bank, and closing the gap between town and countryside.' This is true but these, taken from the Communist Manifesto weren't what he meant by 'communism', as we explain here.

The main thing to realise about the *Communist Manifesto* is that it isn't. It was originally published in German in 1848 and its title was *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*). The *Manifesto* was issued in the name of the Communist League, a loose grouping of German refugees in London, and no author was credited. In the previous year the Central Committee of the League had commissioned Marx to

write a statement of general principles and issued him with editorial guidelines. The Central Committee then authorised it for publication. There was no Communist Party as we now understand that term but there can be little doubt that their *Manifesto* was a rallying cry for such an organisation.

The *Manifesto* was published in late February 1848, at about the same time as the revolutions of 1848 began – first in Paris, then in Berlin and many other European cities. The occurrence of widespread uprisings throughout Europe owed nothing to the *Manifesto*, though members of the League were not alone in anticipating such an event. The contributory factors were food shortages and starvation brought about by the spread of potato blight, chronic unemployment and falling wages caused by recession, frustration at the feudal bastions of reaction in government and revolutionary nationalism. In most cases it fell to members of the 'petty bourgeoisie' (shopkeepers, artisans, small farmers) to organise revolution. They had suffered economic hardship in the last few years, had the most to gain from a more progressive regime and potentially had the political clout to bring it about. The big capitalists had no such incentive, having done well in the recent capitalist industrialisation sweeping Europe, and so tended to ally themselves with the forces of conservative reaction. It was in this context that Marx and the League issued their *Manifesto*.



Chartist riot, engraving, 1886



In the Chartist weekly newspaper *Red Republican*, in 1850, Helen Macfarlane produced the first English translation — only they gave it the title ‘German Communism: Manifesto of the German Communist Party’. To the Chartists, at least, the insertion of ‘German’ twice in the title indicates that the purpose of the *Manifesto* was obvious. In Macfarlane’s translation the *Manifesto* begins: ‘A frightful hobgoblin stalks throughout Europe’. After 1848 it was soon translated into numerous languages and in different countries. It was again translated into English by Samuel Moore (who had translated volume 1 of *Capital*) and ‘revised in common’ with Engels for the ‘authorised’ 1888 edition. In that edition Engels claimed joint authorship, but he was not involved in writing the *Manifesto*. In the ‘authorised’ edition the opening declaration ‘A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of Communism’ was something of an exaggeration. Marx borrowed this already well-known imagery from Lorenz von Stein’s book on communism in France, published in 1842.

The *Manifesto* claimed to ‘not set up any sectarian principles of their own’. But what about Chartism? Chartism was a mass working class organisation demanding universal suffrage and other reforms. The *Manifesto* argued that ‘Chartists are infinitely closer to the communists than the democratic petty bourgeoisie or the so-called Radicals’. And yet, at this point, while the League did see themselves sharing some common ground, they were sufficiently different from Chartism to form a separate organisation. Despite what the *Manifesto* said, communists could be opposed to other working class organisations if there were important issues at stake. In fact the League had a communist objective which was not shared by Chartism, though some individuals in that organisation did share that objective. At this early stage of their political career, Marx, Engels and others used the term *communism* for their objective. Later they would use *socialism* and *social democracy*, but they all meant the same thing.

The theoretical concerns of the *Manifesto* are universal, but the concrete demands of the *Manifesto* were German. In the *Manifesto*, the League ‘turn their attention chiefly to Germany, because that country is on the eve of a bourgeois revolution.’ That is the context within which the *Manifesto* was issued. Later in 1848 the Central Committee of the Communist League issued its ‘Demands of the Communist Party in Germany’. This

seventeen-point programme updated the *Manifesto*’s immediate demands to the changed German conditions. It argued: ‘It is to the German proletariat, the petit bourgeoisie, and the small peasantry to support these demands with all possible energy.’ In short, Marx, the League and the *Manifesto* were encouraging a bourgeois-democratic revolution.

In the circumstances of the time it seemed logical to Marx and the League that they should accept that for the moment their interests coincided with those of the bourgeois democrats, until such time as the absolutist regimes had been overthrown, and should then continue their struggle against the

new bourgeois regimes. It was assumed that ‘the bourgeois democratic governments’ could be placed in the situation of immediately losing ‘all backing among workers’ (Marx’s Address to the Communist League, 1850).

At the end of its second section the *Manifesto* lists ten measures which ‘will, of course, be different in different countries’. And when the *Manifesto* was reprinted in 1872, Marx and Engels stated in the Preface that ‘no special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures proposed at the end of Section 2. That passage would, in many respects, be very differently worded today.’ Germany had become a unified bourgeois state the year before. In fact, some of the measures at the end of Section 2 have since been implemented within clearly capitalist and state capitalist regimes.

Many commentators on the *Manifesto* only have eyes for the historically specific reformist demands (‘A heavy progressive or graduated income tax’) and are blind to the universally specific communist demands (‘the Communistic abolition of buying and selling’). For instance, in his Introduction to the Pluto Press edition of *The Communist Manifesto* (2008), while purporting to be sympathetic, David Harvey argues for the universal applicability of some of the reform demands while ignoring communism entirely (*Socialist Standard* book review, November 2008). His one word response to our astonishment was: ‘Predictable’.

Understanding context is important when reading historical documents. We will never know how history would have turned out if Marx had not written a *Communist Manifesto*, but the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* continues to create confusion as well as enlightenment.

LEW





"The sacrosanct fetish of today is science. Why don't you get some of your friends to go for that wooden-faced panjandrum – eh?"

The above quote is from Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent* within which the employer of an 'agent provocateur' is attempting to persuade his employee to destroy an architectural symbol of science which he believed to be part of the iconography of bourgeois culture. Certainly during the nineteenth and early twentieth century this perspective is persuasive given the identification of science with the accelerating technological forces of production. There's little evidence that the ruling class ever understood or took any interest in the intellectual rigours or origin of scientific analysis but many of them certainly believed it to be a symbol of the 'progress' that they thought of themselves as representing. Does science still possess this iconic status as a symbol of capitalism and the ideology of the class that bears its name? Or has the dialectical wheel turned to a point where science is now directly subversive of all that it once seemed to represent culturally and politically? Has science now turned against its own technological progeny and, in doing so, does it now represent an ideological challenge to the market/profit shibboleths of 21st century capitalism?

Although some, including many within its own community, have made grandiose claims for science as the definitive form of knowledge (mathematics as the language of nature and/or god etc.) it is as well to remember that science is created and sustained by the labour of human beings (scientists). We may well see it as one of our greatest achievements but we must resist any attempt to dehumanise it and raise it to the level of some type of quasi-religion. As our creation, it is subject to all of the cultural and political influences that exist within all human endeavours. We can see this clearly within the arena of the law courts. 'Expert witnesses' will appear for both defence and prosecution and after confirming their exhaustive scientific credentials they will proceed to interpret the forensic evidence in often directly contradictory ways.

In the past we have seen such experts confidently assert that nicotine is not addictive and that tobacco can have positive effects on the health of those who smoke. Indeed some commentators have dated the end of the love affair between capitalism and science to December 1953 when the Tobacco Industry Research Committee (TIRC) was created in the US. This organisation was a pseudo-scientific front for the tobacco industry which employed those scientists who were 'sceptical' about the connection between smoking and serious heart and lung disease. It set a precedent for a way in which companies could deal with 'unhelpful' scientific data – they would not directly confront the evidence but would highlight and emphasise the inherent scepticism within the scientific method itself. We can ridicule such things in retrospect but remember that those who deny 'global warming' as a result of

industrial activity (including some scientists) and those who desperately still look to science to demonise substances like marijuana are still playing the same game. It is not that they are necessarily consciously lying but rather that the cultural and political pressures to make the evidence fit the needs of the dominant ideology are sometimes irresistible.

Socialists are materialists and as such we attribute the success of science to its ability to represent, more or less accurately, the world in which we live. It can be seen as part of humanity's ongoing project to understand itself and its world alongside philosophy,

anthropology and history, etc. The results of scientific enquiry can be described as 'correspondence truths'. As we have noted, these 'truths' seemed to consolidate the political validity of the capitalist class of the past; now they seem to have turned on their owners with a vengeance. Historically we have seen a similar phenomenon in religion as the Protestants of the Reformation turned on their former masters (the Catholic hierarchy) and used the same biblical scripture in the forefront of their struggle against Rome. As has happened with science today, the Christian faith was subverted by the specific political needs of the rising European nation states of that period. Some socialists called their more rigorous materialist approach 'scientific socialism' in an attempt to completely confiscate the beloved panjandrum of the bourgeoisie. Today we are more aware of the ideological component within the scientific method and so do not believe it to be the definitive description of the world that some once did.

Placing science and scientists within an historical and political context gives us a greater insight into its nature and how it has contributed to both conservative and revolutionary ideas. It is tempting to hope that science can still aspire to a value-free conception of nature (and of the culture that created it) but this now seems increasingly naive. Is this a counsel of despair or, ironically, an example of the very same scientific approach that its conclusions seem to undermine? As we socialists are prone to say: only history will tell us. What we can say with confidence is that the political struggle will continue as long as poverty, privilege, exploitation and war thrive. That both sides will continue to use all of the intellectual weapons available to them is also inevitable. After the revolutionary resolution of this struggle it is unlikely that anyone will proclaim the victory as being that of 'science' or any other single component of human knowledge. What we can hope for from science is that no socialist revolutionary will die with any idealistic illusions, including those provided by its own panjandrum.

WEZ



*'Back in the Day'
When Smoking was Cool*

The Environment



Summer School 2017
21st – 23rd July
Fircroft College,
Birmingham

These days, concerns about the environment tend to get pushed into the background by issues like Brexit, Trump's presidency and ongoing austerity measures. But climate change, pollution and extinctions don't go away just because the headlines are filled with other events. 2016 was the warmest year on record, with implications for sea levels and habitats; more and more waste is produced for future generations to deal with, and many hundreds of species continue to become extinct every year.

Legislation places some restrictions on the use of dangerous materials, hunting and waste disposal, for example. However, legislators can only work within a system which is structured to safeguard the interests of the wealthy elite, rather than everyone. And of course laws don't always prevent environmentally-damaging methods from being used if they save or make money. Capitalism turns the natural

Janet Surman: **World Military versus The Global Environment**

War is one of the most profitable arms of capitalism. This session investigates the negative impacts of militarism on the global environment.

Paddy Shannon: **The Vegans are Coming!**

Attitudes to meat production and consumption are changing. This session explores the various arguments with a view to clarifying what our position as socialists ought to be.

Carla Dee: **One World, Our World- A Quiz**

What do you know about climate change, the natural world and urban environments? Test your knowledge here.

The event will also include a bookstall, an exhibition about the SPGB's approach to environmental issues over the decades and an exclusive publication.

world into a resource to be exploited for a profit.

The Socialist Party argues that the environment can only be managed responsibly if society as a whole is managed co-operatively and in everyone's interests. If our industries and services were owned and run in common, then we would be able to produce what we need and want in the most reasonable, sustainable way.

Our weekend of talks and discussions looks at the current state of the environment, and its prospects for the future we make for it.

Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £100. The concessionary rate is £50. Day visitors are welcome, but please book in advance.

To book a place, send a cheque (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) to Summer School, Sutton Farm, Aldborough, Boroughbridge, York, YO51 9ER, or book online at spgb.net/summerschool2017 or through the QR code. E-mail enquiries to spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk



Oh no he didn't

ANDREW MARR, in his 7 May Sunday morning show on BBC1, interviewed Labour's Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell. One of the questions Marr put to him was about his alleged 'Marxism'. McDonnell, who has moved in Trotskyist circles, fended off the question by saying that many non-Marxists thought Marx's *Capital* worth reading. Then, the following exchange took place:

'Marr: The great prediction in Capital ... is that capitalism as a system will come down with an enormous crash. There will be a crisis and the entire system will fail.

McDonnell: That's where Marx got it wrong.'

Marx never predicted any such thing. So where did Marr and McDonnell get the mistaken idea that he did? Marr himself used to move in Trotskyist circles too, and one possibility is that they got it from the time in the 1980s when the both of them were members of a Trotskyist front organisation, the 'Socialist Campaign for Labour Victory'. Trotskyists have been known to hold some strange ideas about what Marx thought.

This exchange made Marx a

minor election issue and prompted BBC journalist, Brian Wheeler, to write an idiot's guide to Marx's *Das Kapital* (www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2017-39837515). He didn't explain why Marx should have become an election issue, though something he wrote hinted at it. Marxism, he wrote, 'also became a byword for totalitarianism – as one-party states and dictators proclaimed Marxism as their guiding philosophy'.

This was why sections of the media brought Marx in. They wanted to smear the leadership of the Labour Party, Corbyn and McDonnell in particular, as 'Marxists' seeking to establish in Britain something similar to what used to exist in Russia, with for example cartoons showing them sporting hammer-and-sickle badges.

It is unlikely to work these days. Wheeler himself went on to point out that 'some argued that this was a perversion of Marx's ideas and that the Soviet Union ... was really just a form of state capitalism, where the factory owners had been replaced by government bureaucrats.' Some did indeed.

Wheeler summarised Marx's views: 'In simple terms, Marx argues that an economic system based on private profit is inherently unstable. Workers are exploited by factory owners and don't own the products of their labour, making them little better than machines. The factory owners and other capitalists hold all the power because they control the means of production, allowing them

to amass vast fortunes while the workers fall deeper into poverty. This is an unsustainable way to organise society and it will eventually collapse under the weight of its own contradictions, Marx argues.'

Marx did see capitalism as based on the exploitation of the workers for profit, but not that under it workers would 'fall deeper into poverty' (only that the capitalists would get richer relatively to the workers). He did also see capitalism as an unstable system under which production continuously veered from boom to slump and back again. But Wheeler seems to have been influenced by the exchange between Marr and McDonnell about Marx allegedly being wrong to say that capitalism will eventually 'come down with an enormous crash'.

Marx certainly thought that capitalism was riven by contradictions, the two main ones being that between the already socialised nature of the process of production and the sectional ownership of what was produced and the class struggle between the producers and the owners. It was this struggle, ending in the 'expropriation of the expropriators' (as he put it in the last-but-one chapter of *Capital*) by conscious political action, that would, he thought, bring about the demise of capitalism, not some catastrophic economic collapse.



Slave To The Algorithm

PANORAMA'S RECENT expose of Facebook's darker side was scarier than *Doctor Who*, and like a *Black Mirror* episode come true. In *What Facebook Knows About You*

(BBC1), reporter Darragh MacIntyre looks into what information about us Facebook gathers, and the sneaky ways it's used.

A cavalier attitude to our profile's privacy settings can mean that more people have access to embarrassing uploaded photos of us than we might realise. But we can't change the settings to keep ourselves private from Facebook itself, which collects and uses a worrying amount of information about our lives. As MacIntyre says, 'Facebook may know more about us than any organisation in history'. Our date of birth and location from our Facebook profile are matched with details of our online purchases, and this data is used to let advertisers target us. In fact, this isn't just targeting, but 'micro-targeting', i.e. sending us adverts specific to our interests and locale. So if you've been looking on the internet for fishnet stockings, for example, then adverts for them might pop up next time you log on to Facebook. It has become 'the world's most powerful advertising tool'.

We aren't just targeted by companies wanting to flog us stuff, but also political groups hungry for our support. And the more they pay, the more people get their message and the more votes they get. Major parties invested heavily in Facebook advertising during the Brexit referendum and US presidential election, and social media were 'decisive' in the results. The Republican campaign spent around \$70 million on Facebook adverts, including micro-targeted ones, while the election as a whole reportedly earned Mark Zuckerberg and his chums \$250 million. Facebook says 'it wants to be the most open and transparent company', but has been cagey about divulging its finances related to politics, and how closely it has worked with the main parties.

Facebook is also reluctant to reveal much about the mysterious algorithms which are running unseen billions of times a day. It is these algorithms which log our online activity and match it with our personal details, ready to be used by advertisers eager to target us. Apparently, these algorithms are so complicated that no-one understands them enough to come up with a workable way of how they can be regulated. Labour's Chi Onwurah

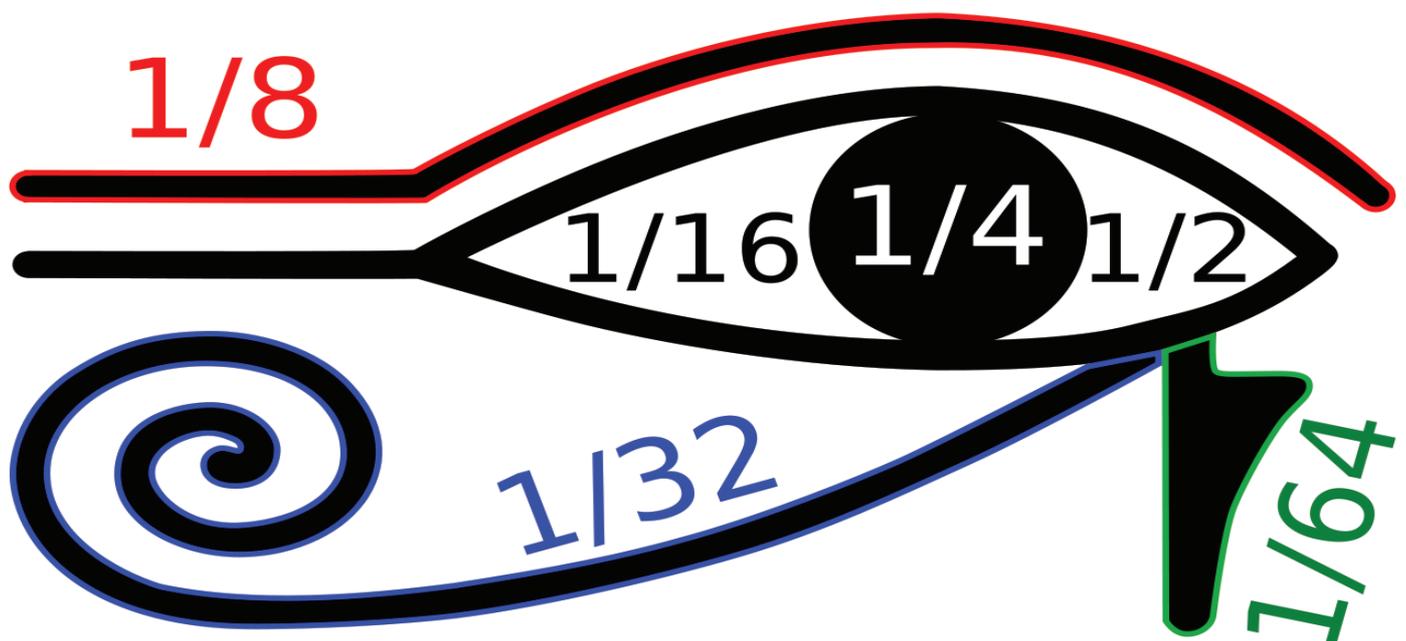
advocates more controls, saying that without these she can see a future 'when we are too tied in to Facebook as citizens, where we're scared to move for it because it's got all our data'. Facebook is driven by the money it can rake in through selling advertising space, and this tendency will remain whatever regulation might be brought in.

What Facebook Knows About You stretches its remit to also discuss Facebook's role in spreading fake news. It's unclear whether the programme's producers did this just because fake news is still in fashion or because they couldn't get enough information about the top-secret algorithms or advertising strategies (even after a trip to a remote forest in northern America to meet Facebook's former Product Manager). Either way, it's understandable that the BBC wants to take as many pot-shots as it can at Facebook, given that it's an ever-growing competitor for our attention and what 'content' we consume.

These days, more of this content is fake news. While the BBC peddles its own fake news through its biased acceptance of the status quo, Facebook is a main platform for more obviously made-up stories. In the US presidential election, most fake news shared on Facebook was about Hillary Clinton, linking her falsely to sex scandals and murders, and this may have influenced more gullible voters towards Trump. Also circulated were bogus adverts cheekily announcing that Republicans and Democrats should cast their votes on different days. Fake news is in Facebook's interests, as bonkers stories shared by friends grab our attention until we're distracted by an advert which Facebook has received dosh for. When questioned, Facebook representatives have downplayed the extent to which it has been a platform for fake news; Facebook's corporate drone Policy Director says that the amount of fake news is 'very small' and they've made a 'negligible' amount of money from it. The organisation says it takes down false stories when reported, but there have been complaints that it's been too slow in removing both fake news and other inappropriate content. Facebook has been a magnet for revenge porn, online bullying and footage of violent acts.

So, the programme is a useful reminder that Facebook is more than just somewhere we can watch videos of breakdancing cats and share photos of what we ate in Nando's. As MacIntyre says, 'It's a media company that doesn't check most of what it publishes, it's an advertising company that no regulator fully understands, and it's a political tool that seems beyond regulation'. No wonder it's sucking in money like there's no tomorrow, and in a particularly underhanded and devious way. The market is shaping Facebook quicker than we can get our heads around it, turning what should be a handy way of keeping in touch with other people into just another cash cow.

MIKE FOSTER



Book Reviews

The World in Crisis. Edited by Guiguelmo Carchedi and Michael Roberts, Zero Books, 2017

Karl Marx believed that capitalism had a tendency for the rate of profit to fall, and that this is 'the most important law in political economy'. The Socialist Party has been non-committal on this 'law', partly because of its unfinished state (basically notes edited for publication by Engels after Marx's death), and partly because the 'law' seems to be questionable due to what Marx called 'counteracting factors'. Also, some leftists have invoked a tendency for the rate of profit to fall as the cause of capitalism's inevitable collapse (not heard so often these days, they are capitalism's falling rate of prophets).

This collection of essays from writers around the world examines the evidence from states around the world (including China) using Marx's theory of value. Marx's 'law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall' (LTRPF) can be stated in a couple of sentences:

Capitalism is based on the competitive accumulation of profits through technological innovation.

Technological innovation increases output but reduces the value of commodities and therefore the profit of what is produced.

This, in one form or another, is the explanation for the cause of capitalism's inherent economic crises. What the writers here refer to as the 'Great Recession', which began in 2008, was the LTRPF manifesting itself as a financial crisis. The LTRPF is also a rejection of explanations of crises in terms of a general lack of purchasing power (Keynesian economics), high wages or government spending (the right wing) or inequality (the left wing).

Against the LTRPF Marx identified five counteracting tendencies which raise the average rate of profit:

Increases in the intensity of exploitation (getting more out of the same or fewer workers).

Reduction of wages below their value (in money wages or in real terms through inflation).

Increasing unemployment (depressing wage levels and holding back wage rises).

Cheaper constant capital (less money spent on productive assets).

Foreign trade and investment (new markets and export opportunities).

Marx mentioned other possible counteracting tendencies but did not go into detail. For Marx and the authors in this book the counteracting tendencies are insufficient to prevent a long-term fall in the average rate of profit. The long-

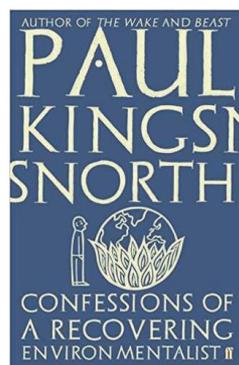
term trend is downwards (in the UK since the late nineteenth century), punctuated by upsurges brought about by the counteracting tendencies. The main part of this book is a detailed statistical analysis of evidence from around the globe. It is, the editors admit, 'often dense in analysis and flush with figures and numbers'. But for anyone looking for the hard data which backs up Marx's LTRPF, here it is.

Marx was in no doubt that 'permanent crises do not exist' and the writers here agree. So what of the future? The intensification of class struggles and further bouts of austerity for the working class, alternating with booming economies, seems the most likely. All in the name of a declining rate of profit. Perhaps the most important consequence of the analysis in this book is that there are no reformist solutions. As long as the profit system – capitalism – remains, the future for the working class is a world in crisis.

LEW

The Recovery Position

Paul Kingsnorth: *Confessions of a Recovering Environmentalist*. Faber & Faber £14.99.



This consists of a series of essays written between 2009 and 2016, most previously published in newspapers and magazines or online, which trace the author's disenchantment with

environmental activism. He originally wanted to save nature from people, but he gradually came to see the problems inherent in what he was doing. For one thing, the movements he was involved in were increasingly unsuccessful: every environmental problem identified at the 1992 Earth Summit had got worse in the years since. Ineffective action, he concludes, leads only to despair, and false hope is worse than no hope.

In addition, the green movement had changed. It was once eco-centric but

shifted to become more about people, about social justice and equality for humans, having been taken over by the left: 'green politics was fast becoming a refuge for disillusioned socialists, Trots, Marxists and a ragbag of fellow travellers'. Unfortunately this kind of vague and unsupported generalising is typical of much of the book. This is a pity, as there are some interesting claims here, for instance that many greens still see a motorway across a downland as bad but would be quite keen on a wind farm in the same location.

Moreover, his depiction of green politics is at best a half-truth. The Green Party do speak of 'a political system that puts the public first' but also of 'a planet protected from the threat of climate change'. Friends of the Earth talk about protecting the bee population (partly because humans need them, admittedly) and also about preserving nature, advocating approaches such as agroecology and permaculture. Greenpeace oppose deadly air pollution, but also aim to defend the oceans and protect forests.

Kingsnorth is particularly scathing about sustainability, which he views as meaning 'sustaining human civilisation at the comfort level that the world's rich people – us – feel is their right'. Clearly he has no idea who the world's truly rich people are. He also objects to the alleged single-minded obsession with climate change, and to seeing it as a challenge to be overcome by technological solutions. Capitalism, he claims, 'has absorbed the greens', but there is in fact no reason to think they were ever anti-capitalist. He never seems to ask why green movements have failed, nor raises the possibility that their lack of success might be due to capitalism and its emphasis on profit.

The book closes with a couple of pieces on 'uncivilisation', a supposed alternative described only in very general terms as rejecting theories and ideologies and political or social 'solutions'. Don't come up with big plans for a better world, Kingsnorth says, but take responsibility for a specific something: he currently lives with his family on a two-and-a-half acre site in Ireland in an attempt to escape from 'the urban consumer machine'. Rather than becoming involved in environmental or political causes, he proposes withdrawal and contemplation. He accepts that he does not have useful answers but it is not clear that he even has any worthwhile questions.

PB

Exhibition Review

Never Going Underground

THE SEXUAL Offences Act became law in 1967, the consequence being that sex between consenting adult males in private was no longer a criminal offence. An exhibition 'Never Going Underground' on LGBT+ equality at the People's History Museum in Manchester marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Act (it's on till 3 September). The title is a reference to the use of a logo based on that of the London Underground.

Many gay men had had their lives more or less ruined. For instance, in 1958 Conservative MP Ian Harvey was found guilty of 'committing an act of gross indecency with another male person'. He was fined £5 but, as his counsel noted, he would in fact be paying for the rest of his life. Not that the 1967 Act would have made much difference to Harvey, as his offence took place in a park.

The exhibition covers a number of themes, such as the importance of activism and demonstrations in getting the law changed. The Sexual Offences Act was of course not in itself the end of the campaigning. The age of consent for gay sex was 21 and was only reduced to 16

(the same as for heterosexuals) in 2003 in England and Wales. In 1988 an amendment to the Local Government Act, the notorious Clause 28, barred local councils from 'promoting' homosexuality (which was given a very wide interpretation); this was repealed in Scotland in 2000 and in the rest of the UK in 2003.

It is also clear that there have been arguments within the LGBT+ community on various matters. One was whether it was acceptable to have the police, the armed forces and big business involved in Pride Parades. Another was whether legalising same-sex marriages represented a kind of liberation or acceptance of an oppressive institution. Also, many gay



black men have found that racism in the gay scene has been greater than homophobia in black communities.

At least two interesting general lessons can be learned. One is that legal status is not by itself sufficient: there has never been any ban on lesbian sex in the UK, but there has

been plenty of anti-lesbian prejudice and discrimination. Another is that solidarity across different causes is important: co-operation between a lesbian and gay group and some South Wales miners played an important role in the 1984–5 miners' strike.

PB

ACTION REPLAY

Comic Relief

COMIC RELIEF is a British charity, founded in 1985 by the comedy scriptwriter Richard Curtis and comedian Lenny Henry in response to famine in Ethiopia. The highlight of Comic Relief's appeal is Red Nose Day, a biannual telethon held in March, alternating with sister project Sport Relief. The idea for Comic Relief came from the charity worker Jane Tewson, who established it as the operating name of Charity Projects, a registered charity based in England and Scotland.

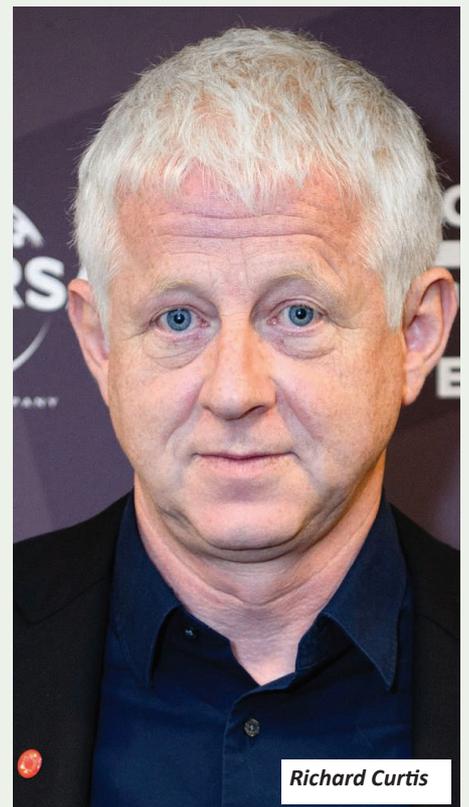
Lenny Henry travelled to Ethiopia to celebrate the first Red Nose Day on the 8 February 1988. The event raised £15 million and attracted 30 million television viewers on BBC1. Richard Curtis and Lenny Henry are still active participants in the Red Nose Day Telethon which continues to raise funds for numerous charities that help children in need and tackle worldwide poverty.

The most prominent symbol of Comic Relief is a plastic/foam 'red nose', which is given in various supermarkets and charity shops such as Oxfam in exchange for a donation to the charity and to make others laugh. People are encouraged to wear the noses on Red Nose Day to help raise awareness of the charity. This year's event took place on Friday 24 March and was broadcast live from Building Six at The O2 in London.

The charity's clearly stated aim is to 'bring about positive and lasting change in the lives of poor and disadvantaged people, which requires investing in work that addresses people's immediate needs as well as tackling the root causes of poverty and injustice'. A fundamental principle operating at Comic Relief is the 'Golden Pound Principle' where every donated pound is spent on charitable projects. All operating costs, such as staff salaries, are covered by corporate sponsors, or interest earned on money waiting to be distributed.

Large amounts of money flow into

continued p.22



Richard Curtis

50 Years Ago:

The Common Market

Socialist Standard



IT WAS no surprise when Harold Wilson described the British application to join the Common Market as a “great turning point in history.” Politicians, especially politicians like Wilson, are fond of such phrases; they know that while the working class have their attention focussed on the horizons of history they are not likely to be worrying so much about their immediate problems like frozen wages.

Of course Wilson is not interested in fundamental changes in history; a turning point from capitalism to Socialism would be altogether too great for him.

His business is to manage the affairs of the British capitalist class as a whole, and it is necessary to sacrifice some industries in the interests of others.

This will probably be one result, if Britain joins Europe. Wilson expects British agriculture to suffer; “Undoubtedly,” he said, “the community’s policy will create problems for some of our smaller farmers.” But he also hopes for an “. . . enormous and growing market for our own more sophisticated and technological products...”

This rosy picture of Europe as an ever-expanding market takes no account of the fact that the countries already in the EEC are by no means free of economic troubles.

West Germany, for example, has just come through a sombre winter in which, although it was not as bad as many observers were expecting a few months back, unemployment rose from 216,000 in November last to 673,600 in February this year, falling to 501,303 in April.

The Common Market cannot solve capitalism’s built-in contradictions. Neither can it ease the problems of the working class. Whether it causes a rise in the cost of living, whether it is Wilson’s great occasion or Michael Foot’s disaster, the workers in this country will not need long to discover what their counterparts on the Continent have had to face. It will make no difference to them at all.

(from “Review”, *Socialist Standard*, June 1967)



Europa and the Bull

from p.21

Comic Relief, for example the July 2010 accounts for charity registration showed grant payments of £59 million, net assets of £135 million, with an investment portfolio held in managed pooled funds and fixed term deposits. The average full-time staffing complement was 214 (with 14 staff paid over £60,000). Remuneration for the year, excluding pensions, for Kevin Cahill, Chief Executive, was £120,410.

On the 13 March 2015, the Red Nose event took place at the London Palladium and raised £99,418,831. At the end of the 2015 Red Nose Day telethon it was announced that in its 30-year history, Comic Relief, the Red Nose Day and Sport Relief appeals had raised in excess of £1bn (£1,047,083,706).

Obviously this is a very well-meaning charity whose stated aim is to improve the lives of people at home and abroad. Many people will experience a sense of wellbeing from donating money to a good cause – feeling that they have made a contribution to ease the suffering of

RED NOSE DAY

others, and this is, in a way, laudable.

However, one does not want to be perceived as a killjoy or to be lacking the ‘milk of human kindness’ but we might ask ourselves why a charity that has operated for over 30 years has not been able to remedy or overcome the problems of famine or bring about real change in the lives of poor and disadvantaged children.

These problems continue to persist despite large sums of money thrown at them. Could it be that well-meaning initiatives like Red Nose Day and their like, deal only with the symptoms of poverty and famine and not the causes? We live in a world where we could produce enough food for all and yet people still starve. We learn from Economics text books that ‘demand’ is identified as the ability to pay – so food, shelter and other necessities of life will not be made available to the starving and dispossessed unless they have the money to purchase them. It’s a crazy system that needs to be replaced by socialism – a world without money where people democratically produce and share the goods and services they create. In a socialist

society there will be no need for Red Nose Day, Sport Relief, Comic Relief or any other ‘sticking plaster’ initiative, however well-meaning, to exist, because we will have created a society where these problems are firmly left in the past.

KEVIN

Meetings

JUNE 2017

CARDIFF

Saturday 3 June, 10.00am to 12.00 noon
Street Stall
Queen Street (Newport Road end), Cardiff, CF10 2BJ

SWANSEA

Saturday 17 June, 11.00am – 1.00pm
Street Stall
Entrance to Market on Oxford Street, Swansea, SA1 3PQ

LONDON

Chiswick

Tuesday 20 June, 8pm

ANOTHER TORY GOVERNMENT: WHAT NEXT?
Venue: Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, Chiswick, London W4 4JN

CANTERBURY

Saturday 24 June 2017 from 12:00pm

Street Stall
In the Parade pedestrian precinct from 12 noon
Phone 07971 715569 for more information.

EC Meeting

Saturday 3rd June, 1pm

52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN
Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

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

July 2017

CARDIFF

Saturday 1 July, 10.00am to 12.00 noon
Street Stall
Queen Street (Newport Road end), Cardiff, CF10 2BJ

SWANSEA

Saturday 15 July, 11.00am – 1.00pm
Street Stall
Entrance to Market on Oxford Street, Swansea, SA1 3PQ

LONDON

Kentish Town

Thursday 20 July, 8.00pm

“The Russian Revolution” a discussion facilitated by Bill Martin
Venue: Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Avenue, NW5 2RX

BIRMINGHAM

Friday 21 July, 6.00pm – Sunday 23 July, 2.00pm

Summer School
The Environment
Venue: Fircroft College, Birmingham

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.

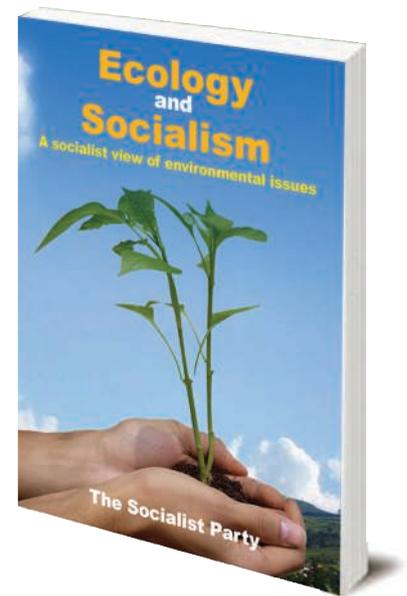
Declaration of Principles

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.



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BBC Newspeak

'When you have covered the story from every angle. When you have reported the facts whatever the obstacles. If you have asked the questions others won't. When you have never taken sides in any war, revolution or election. When you have come under fire from people in power around the world and you have always championed the truth, then you can call yourself the most trusted brand in news.' Sic and repeated ad nauseam currently on the BBC World News television channel. Such vomit-inducing chutzpah! How should socialists react to media lies, omissions, distortions and half-truths, as well as conspiracy theories and alternative facts? We should remember Marx's favourite motto – doubt everything! – and this from his *German Ideology* (1845): 'the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production.' The BBC has a long history of supporting the status quo: in the General Strike of 1926 it clearly sided against our class. This quote attributed to Orwell is also apposite: 'during times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act.'

Down and Out in Manchester

Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844) is a classic analysis of the appalling conditions of our class in Britain during his stay in Manchester and Salford. There have, undoubtedly, been some improvements since then: smallpox has been eradicated and deaths from diseases such as measles, scarlet fever and whooping cough are very rare. In *The Housing Question* (1887) he shows how and explains why reforms within capitalism always come up short. News therefore



of a 'homeless community found living in dark, squalid tunnels... under the streets of Manchester' (thesun.co.uk, 2 May) should not come as a surprise. There are more than enough empty dwellings in Manchester and elsewhere to accommodate the homeless but because houses are produced for profit there is no possibility of a rational approach to housing within capitalism. Engels is clear: 'as long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated solution of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the fate of the workers.'

Moribund May Days

When the Labour Movement was young, the first of May was set aside as a day on which the workers of different countries would suspend their labouring and join in mass meetings to send to each other fraternal greetings and expressions of solidarity in the struggle against capitalist oppression. Their value has, however, long since come into question. A contributor to the May 1936 edition of this Journal wrote: 'for many years now these May Day demonstrations have been held, and the net result of them all is nil, as far as

helping the workers out of their difficulties is concerned.' Were that writer alive today, he would likely die of despair: '...marchers have taken to the streets in several cities across Sweden to call for Muslim women's right to work while wearing the hijab.... Protesters....chanted slogans such as *crush racism, my hijab is not your business and employment is our right*' (aljazeera.com, 1 May). Today, a large number of workers want a visual sign of their ignorance and submission as well as the right to bear the yoke of wage slavery.

Telling the Truth

'Knowledge makes a man unfit to be a slave', said Frederick Douglass. Socialists value free speech and abhor censorship in all its forms. Stephen Fry may be fined for saying 'how dare you create a world in which there is such misery? It's not our fault? It's not right. It's utterly, utterly evil. Why should I respect a capricious, mean-minded, stupid god who creates a world which is so full of injustice and pain' (independent.ie, 6 May). Paying £11,000,000+ for a licence plate is legal yet 'a Canadian Trekkie has had his Star Trek-themed licence plate revoked after his insurance firm deemed it offensive. Nick Troller was driving round with his ASIMIL8 custom plate for almost two years before he was contacted by the Manitoba Public Insurance to say he would have to give it up. The phrase ASIMIL8 refers to the Borgs [sic] – the villains of Star Trek: The Next Generation – who want to assimilate all other alien races into their own' (dailymail.co.uk, 30 April). Let us hasten that glorious day when a majority of us armed with the knowledge of socialism act. The capitalists will know that resistance is futile.

FREE LUNCH

