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ECONOMIC FREEDOM



& THE MYTH OF THE SELF MADE MAN



*also: The Jewish Bund
The Lecturers' Strike
Weather, Water & Borders*



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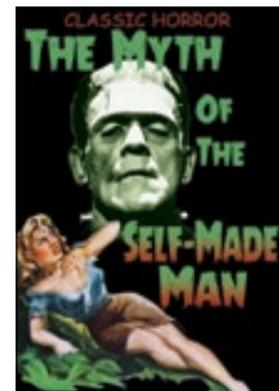
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Editorial

Pandering to Prejudice

Fifty years have passed since Enoch Powell made his notorious 'Rivers of Blood' speech and the current narrative is that the UK has since moved on and that we are now living in a more tolerant and inclusive, multicultural society. London, which is said to be the most culturally diverse city in the world, is governed by a mayor who is the son of a Pakistani bus driver. Even the Royal family has come of age with Prince Harry's recent marriage to a mix-race woman.

However, it seems that Enoch Powell's ghost is haunting the corridors of power. In pursuit of so-called illegal migrants, the government has unwittingly targeted members of the 'Windrush Generation', those who migrated to the UK mainly from the Caribbean between 1948 and 1971. Many of whom were unable to produce documentary evidence, that is now required under legislation introduced in 2012, to prove that they are entitled to live in the UK. Thus, despite working and paying taxes for years, they have been denied access to social services and the NHS and have faced the threat of deportation and in some cases were actually deported.

Once these facts came to light, Amber Rudd, the Home Secretary, came under heavy pressure and was forced to resign. Jeremy Corbyn and others pointed the finger at Theresa May who, as Home Secretary at the time, was the architect of the legislation. May retorted that the last Labour government ordered the destruction of landing cards relating to the Windrush generation. The left has predictably blamed 'Tory racism' and has called for the Tories to be kicked out. Much of the press has put the scandal down to bureaucratic bungling.

In examining the context in which the new immigration rules were introduced, we can see where the real blame lies. In the aftermath of the economic crash of 2008, the government enforced spending cuts in an effort to restore British capitalism's profitability. With falling real wages, high unemployment and reduced funding for the NHS and social services, scapegoats were needed to divert attention from the real causes of austerity. The government sent a van round warning 'illegal immigrants' that they would be caught and sent back. Much of the press ran scurrilous stories about 'bogus asylum

seekers' and 'economic migrants' cheating the benefit system and stealing jobs from British workers. UKIP attempted to garner support with scare stories of the country being swamped by immigrants from the EU. The government, by tightening up immigration controls, were hoping to see off their UKIP rivals and show that they were best placed to control immigration.

Labour governments also play the anti-immigrant card when it suits them. In 1968, the then Labour government introduced legislation to restrict immigration from the Commonwealth countries. Gordon Brown coined the phrase 'British Jobs for British Workers', which was then taken up by the BNP.

Under capitalism, workers are inculcated with nationalism which encourages them to see workers from other countries as foreigners. This, coupled with the poverty and insecurity that workers endure, provides the breeding ground for the toxic virus of racism. Only with the establishment of socialism, can we rid ourselves of this virus and lay the ghost of Enoch Powell to rest.

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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The opposite of binary oppositions

WHAT ARE you 'worth' as a human being? How much does an emotion cost? What is the quantised value of a sunset? What is the binary code for love?

What these apparently silly questions illustrate is a binary opposition – itself an illustration of the phenomenon – that lies at the heart of human culture and observable nature, the incongruity yet universality of the analogue and digital modes of existence.

Look around you and the world is quite obviously analogue in every sense, in the wind you feel on your face, the sounds that you hear, the colours you see, the emotions you feel, the memories you treasure. The analogue world is a world of smooth continuity and variation, error-tolerant, dynamically energetic and weak, a fuzzy world of imprecision and ball-park thinking. The digital world takes reality and cuts up or *quantises* it into separate, discrete blocks, like drawing a grid onto a piece of paper, so that its smooth continuous flow becomes a series of discontinuous *granular* steps. If the steps are small enough, the quantisation effect is not obvious and may even be invisible. Watch a modern TV screen and you do not notice the individual pixels in it. Listen to a CD and you think of the music as analogue. Zoom far enough out of any digital system and it looks analogue. But, paradoxically, zoom in close enough on any analogue system and it starts to look digital. A famous dispute in evolutionary theory, between so-called continuous evolution and punctuated, or step-like evolution, was arguably nothing but a difference in zoom-level perception. Beneath the organic stuff of life is the particulate discreteness of the atomic. In the quantum physical world there is a theory called digital physics which argues that all reality is digital, and that even space-time itself is quantised.

Perhaps not surprisingly, therefore, there is an ongoing debate among scientists about whether reality is truly digital or analogue. Legendary physics luminaries like Freeman Dyson, Lawrence Krauss and others have continued to battle each other for decades over the question (see www.edge.org/conversation/freeman_dyson-is-life-analog-or-digital).

What is the point of this in the real world? The digitisation of existence, driven by the exponential Moore's Law increase in computing power, has given humans a technological capability unimaginable just fifty years ago. Yet there is a political and economic *analogue* to this process that has been in operation for around

two hundred years or so, and it is called capitalism.

What capitalism does is *digitise* reality as part of its process of commodification. When it turns a physical or abstract property or activity into a commodity, it quantises it into a unitary composite called *value*. The unit of value is expressed as money. Capitalism must do this because it cannot account for any phenomenon except by its monetary value. Beauty is meaningless. Love is meaningless. Everything is meaningless unless it can be quantised into money. So capitalism is a digital system where everything is reduced to numbers. Indeed, whatever aspects of reality not so far digitised in this way have been virtually 'medicalised' as problem areas which need urgent attention. Take for instance the very obvious case of pollution. Because the accounting books of industries traditionally only included costs that the industry itself was required to bear, pollution output was never quantified or accounted for, leading to a 'tragedy of the commons' scenario where every industry polluted but nobody was held liable, and society and the environment suffered accordingly.



Quantum Computer

Once accepting the digital mode of capitalism, the logic insists that everything must be equally digitised. So now we bandy about terms like 'natural capital', which attempts to enter environmental features like trees, rivers, mountains and so on as quantised numbers into the capitalist accounting sheet. Equally, 'social capital' is your attempt to digitise your own soft skills, for example interpersonal skills or winning personality, into a number system that capitalism can understand and compute. A recent article in *New Scientist* (12 May) enthuses about 'Treeconomics' which is, you guessed it, a way to view trees in dollars and cents in order to incorporate them into the capitalist accounting landscape.

Perhaps a question arises at this point. Are we suffering from runaway 'digital brain syndrome'? Have we become so obsessed with capitalism's granular, monetary view of reality that we have started to see this world view as the only one of any real meaning? In turning even our own bodies and minds into forms of computable capital, have we become the very definition of those cynics who know

the price of everything and the value of nothing?

The problem and the flaw at the heart of all this is that we are using subjective means – our own concepts of aesthetics, of emotional and functional worth, and so on – to convert these properties into monetary form, and these subjective means are analogue. We are analogue beings pretending to be digital, and pretending to see the world and enumerate it as digital, just so that we can fit in with our incongruous accounting system which doesn't see the world the way we do. The treeconomics article offers two, mutually-exclusive algorithms for computing the value of a tree, so tree experts tend to use both, but in reality, any such algorithm is based on arbitrary, analogue assumptions. In quantising our world for the bean-counters, we are doing nothing but deluding ourselves.

A classic example of digital brain syndrome is a time-honoured objection to socialist theory known as the economic calculation argument (ECA). In this view, socialism can't work because you need money to evaluate everything for accounting purposes. This is a recursive argument which assumes what it sets out to prove. There are two possible refutations to this, one accepting the digital assumption and the other ignoring it. In the former, resource-allocation systems after the manner of *Zeitgeist* could indeed quantise all labour and resources in discrete units for internal computation purposes, but that by no means implies that society would then be obliged to use those units as a form of money exchange. When you look at a Monet or Van Gogh you don't need to know the numerical pixel values contained in its digitised form. The other approach is to revert to an analogue mode of operation and not worry too much about calculation to the nth decimal place. If a town needs a new bridge to be built, what does the population care about the need to calculate the marginal utility of building a new bus depot instead? If an old and well-loved tree is in the way of a proposed new road, does it matter what the tree is worth in computational units? Isn't it more important that locals express their preference in a democratic vote?

Nobody can say, today, how exactly socialism will make its local, regional or global decisions, or by what process the information is collected and formulated to make those decisions. But it may well decide that turning everything into quantised data is not the way to go. After all, humans cannot live by numbers alone.

PJS

Pause in the lecturers' strike

The March *Socialist Standard* reported on how the strike by university lecturers over pensions took the employers by surprise. Of course they were not surprised that a strike should be occurring. After all the lecturers had voted for it – in large numbers and by a large majority. What surprised them – and caught them out – was how long it lasted and how many of their employees actually struck, despite losing significant amounts of salary.

Anger and disruption

In the past, strikes have been one or two day affairs causing the universities little pain, hardly noticed by the students and, when it came to the strike days themselves, not very well supported by the staff. But this one was very different. The lecturers had been well informed by their union, the University and College Union (UCU), about the issues, in particular the fact that, if the pensions changes proposed by the employers went through, they would lose a significant proportion of their pensions – in some cases possibly more than 50 percent. This struck a chord of anger and actually led to hundreds of university staff who hitherto hadn't been union members joining to be able to express that anger by going on strike despite the loss of earnings this would mean. And the lecturers struck in their thousands in adverse weather conditions – rain and snow – and carried out picketing and protest demonstrations.

The university employers didn't take long to become aware of the potential consequences of what was happening: students asking for their money back for lectures undelivered, serious legal consequences and costs if exams were not set or taken. In fact the whole system potentially falling apart. This is an over-dramatic scenario perhaps – and it's actually hard to know quite what would have happened – but the view quickly hardened among the employers that it was best not to take any chances. They realised they had bitten off more than they could chew and effectively sued for peace – something unheard of in the history of industrial action in British universities.

Climbdown

The article in our March issue outlined how their first attempt at offering a deal was unceremoniously rejected by the striking lecturers who were already scenting serious worry on the part of the University bosses, i.e. the Vice-Chancellors. They clearly had the right scent, because the employers came back with a far better offer than before which took the main plank of their own platform, the removal of final salary pensions, completely off the table. They agreed furthermore to an independent examination of the whole basis on which the pension scheme had been valued and declared as showing a large deficit. The union's argument that the scheme's valuation methodology had always been faulty and that, if valued correctly, it would be shown to have a surplus not a deficit, had been contemptuously brushed aside before. Now it was, or so it appears, being taken seriously and would be subjected to serious exploration. In the meantime the pension scheme would stay as it is and there was also a commitment 'to provide a guaranteed pension broadly comparable with current arrangements' – a massive climbdown by an initially imperious employer.



The Left and the ballot

The term 'broadly comparable' was seized upon by some in the union as being open to interpretation and as suggesting that it could still mean significant detriment to members. This was in particular an argument of the 'UCU Left' group who are dominated by the SWP, which habitually seeks to use trade unions as a political weapon

to further their aim of involving people 'in struggle'. They mounted a strong campaign to prevent a ballot of members taking place on the employers' offer and then, when they were outmanoeuvred on this by the union leadership and a ballot was declared, they set up a deafening cacophony to try to persuade members to vote 'no' in the ballot. The ballot of members was, they argued, somehow 'anti-democratic'. They knew of course that the new offer, if put to a one-person one-vote ballot of members and not to some meeting consisting largely of their own supporters, was highly likely to result in an acceptance of the offer – particularly as it was clear that the employers were not only running scared but would now think twice before 're-interpreting' any commitment given the potential for disruption the lecturers had shown they were capable of. And so it was that, when the outcome of the ballot was announced on 13 April, 64 percent of the lecturers voted in favour of the offer, a majority of almost 2 to 1, and the dispute – at least for the time being – was over and in a way that could hardly have been predicted by anyone when it started just a couple of months before.

The lessons

What lessons can be drawn from this strike?

Firstly, though, in most strike situations, the employers have the whip hand because they know that workers who depend on their salaries week-to-week, month-to-month will be unlikely to stay out for long, a strike that is well supported and underpinned by a determination on the part of workers not to suffer a significant detriment being proposed can bring the employer to heel and make them realise that what they are proposing isn't worth the candle. In this, as in any employment dispute – and indeed in efforts to establish the completely different kind of society we advocate – workers' solidarity is an essential element.

Secondly, and following on from the need for solidarity, large-scale participation by workers is a necessary prerequisite of any successful trade union action. And in this respect it may well be that at least one element of the recent anti-trade union legislation brought in by the present government (minimum 50 percent participation in strike ballots by union members) will have the unforeseen consequences of trade unions pulling out all the stops to make sure more of their members participate in strike ballots and so making strikes more effective when called because they will be well supported. In the case of the lecturers' strike, so strong was the feeling against what the employers were proposing that, in the space of just a few weeks, several thousand new members joined the union in order to take part in the industrial action.

Thirdly, the efforts of the Left to dominate trade unions and to glorify strikes for their own sake (i.e. as a 'consciousness raiser') and not just as a necessary defensive measure by workers are most effectively resisted when there is widespread participation by members in all aspects of union activity including ballots and any action which may arise therefrom.

HM

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Mark Carney as vulgar Marxist

Mark Carney, the Governor of the Bank of England, seems to be haunted by the spectre of Karl Marx. In December 2016, when discussing the current longest period of stagnating wages since the 1860s, he referred to Marx's 'scribbling' the *Communist Manifesto*. This April he again referred to Marx scribbling in a speech to the Canada Growth Summit (he is also a Canadian Liberal Party politician). This time, according to a headline in the *Independent* (14 April), he was concerned that 'robots taking jobs could lead to a rise of Marxism'. He was reported as saying:

'The automation of millions of jobs could lead to mass unemployment, wage stagnation and the growth of communism within a generation. He warned "Marx and Engels may again become relevant"'

This, because 'increases in artificial intelligence, big data and high-tech machines could create huge inequalities between high-skilled workers who benefit from the advances and those

who are sidelined by them.'

His argument is that this is what happened after the industrial revolution in England that began in the second half of the 18th century: production increased but wages didn't because the new jobs that were created were low-paid; it was only in the second half of the 19th century that workers began to benefit. According to him, it was the prolonged period of inequality and stagnant wages that paved the way for the rise of Marxism.

This can be disputed as a historically accurate account of the spread of Marx's views. While it is true that the empirical examples in *Capital* are taken from England in the 1860s, Marx's views did not begin to penetrate sections of the workers' movement till the end of the 19th century, during a period when Carney says the benefits of the industrial revolution in terms of higher wages and better conditions began to be felt by workers. Marxism was in fact embraced not so much by low-paid unskilled labourers as by higher-paid skilled engineering and building workers. Be that as it may, will Carney's fears come true? He himself doesn't appear to really believe that robotisation will lead to 'mass unemployment' – that's been predicted about mechanisation since

the industrial revolution but has never materialised – but advances, rather, the lesser argument that it will lead to an increasing proportion of lower-paid jobs. He advises office workers, whose jobs are now threatened by artificial intelligence, to retrain for jobs 'which require a higher emotional intelligence, in sectors such as care and leisure', both of which are notoriously low-paying. This does seem to have been happening to some extent as, although the statistics show record employment levels in Britain, they have not been showing any increase in average wages. In positing a direct link between increasing poverty and opposition to capitalism Carney comes across as a 'vulgar Marxist'. The link between the conditions of the wage and salary working class and the emergence of socialist consciousness is rather more complicated. Even in times of 'prosperity' capitalism is based on the exploitation of wage-labour for the profit of a minority and is as unacceptable then as in its lean years. Which is why Marx and Engels are relevant as long as capitalism lasts and whatever state it is in and even if Carney's fears are not realised.

WOOD FOR THE TREES

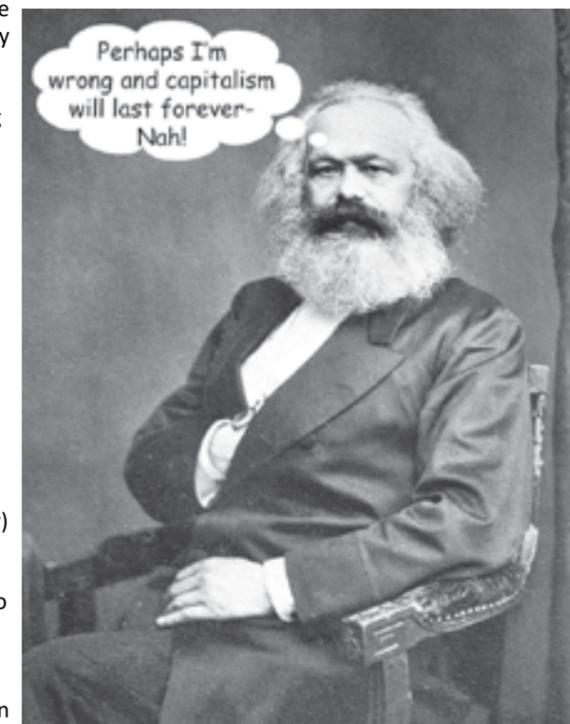
What if we're Wrong?

SOME TIME ago I attended a 'Question Time' type meeting at a local college. Selected members of the audience put questions to a panel of politicians; one of which was a question of mine. I asked: 'When was the last occasion that you were clearly wrong about something of political importance?' As I had intended, this caused an initial confusion in those who had made a career out of being publically confident. Any admission of being mistaken about anything is anathema to professional politicians. But in 'real life' when we meet someone with absolute certainty about anything we are usually wary of them. In terms of character assessment the line between confidence and arrogance can be a very fine one. Given the complexities of life is it ever possible to be certain or even unduly confident about anything? And if we can be certain about anything surely politics is one of the last arenas where this is a possibility. Does a person's certainty tell us everything about his or her character and nothing about the subject of their confident assertions?

For a confident bunch like us socialists it is an unnerving concept that we might be mistaken in our values and beliefs. But what we all know, with absolute certainty, is that anyone can be wrong – including us. It is an interesting experiment to try and come up with an historical individual who was never wrong. Leaving aside the gods and demigods of religious belief (to whom we will return later) there seems to be no individual or school of thought, with which they are associated, that is not subject to various levels of relevant criticism. Phrases like: 'he was a man of his time' or 'the science of genetics didn't exist then' are used to explain why many respectable theories of the past are now rejected and consigned to a dusty bookshelf as a subject of academic interest only. How many of our contemporary theories will also become just of interest to the academics and esoteric historians of the future? Many lack this kind of historical perspective and are continually seduced by the latest theory when a closer look might reveal it as merely a repackaged version of an old idea. Technologically and scientifically our species has made great advances but can we say the same of our philosophy? We know that human technological progress provides the context for the concepts and

language of his beliefs and values so why is it that some of the phrases of people like the Buddha, Socrates, Confucius, Shakespeare and Marx still have a powerful contemporary resonance?

One thing that all of these people shared was, of course, confidence. And we can be certain that if they were resurrected and placed in a contemporary philosophical debate they would all give a good account of themselves. Why? Because they all had a grasp of historical perspective and context. In this age of ideological consumerism there seems to be little room for history. Politics is seen as an intellectual riddle where all of the information needed for its resolution is entirely contemporary – there is a great contempt for the past. But the reality is that many of these shiny new economic and political theories are superficial philosophical regurgitations with flimsy



ideological facades. Culturally capitalism has reached a dead end and the theories used to defend it are, like the food in supermarkets, just repackaged basics.

Socialists see capitalism historically as the last incarnation of private property society. We see no reason why this form of economic exploitation will not vanish as did its predecessors slavery and feudalism. The reason for the decline of these former societies was the emergence of new classes that deposed the old ruling elites. This same dynamic, the class struggle, still rages remorselessly. With this perspective history takes on a meaning and trajectory

that no society can resist for long. This is the element that provides such confidence for Marxists/socialists. Without fail all attempts in the past to counter or ignore this momentum have been disastrous. It would seem that this theory of historical materialism has passed every test in terms of both explanation and prediction. To an outsider this may, however, sound quasi-religious in its certainty and its ability to predict.

To allocate meaning to history has a very long pedigree and, as with most of European intellectual activity, it has some of its roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition. But rather than seeing it, as many critics of Marxism do, as a reformulation of a traditional messianic vision we can turn it on its head and see the prophets and saints of religion as merely projecting the essentially human need for justice, righteousness and meaning onto a non-existent supernatural realm.

The reason that some of what these religious individuals had to say continues to resonate is because they were witness to injustices similar to those we endure today such as economic exploitation etc. In an increasingly secular society any undue expression of political confidence can be interpreted as religious. Certainly the dualism of the final resolution of the class conflict has an uncomfortable parallel in Christianity's Armageddon where good and evil will fight it out for the last time. Socialists' belief that the revolution will redeem our lost humanity can also be seen in this pseudo-religious light. We are therefore sometimes condemned as yet another sect of prophets that, as with those in the Christian context, will all be proven to be mistaken.

So is it possible that we are wrong and that history has no meaning? As we have said, the theory that backs up this belief continues to be robust and successful. The great irony is that even if we're mistaken in attributing meaning to history once a great majority believe it to be true then, for the first time, we will have the ability to impose meaning and direct our future accordingly – we will make our own history rather than just be manipulated by it. Humanity will no longer be subject to the vicissitudes of an amoral, destructive and perpetual class struggle and will finally emerge from the long dark age of private property.

WEZ



Capitalism, Counting and Economic Freedom

Hardly anyone will say they are opposed to freedom, since freedom is a concept with almost entirely positive connotations. Of course that does prompt the question of what is freedom. The Socialist Party's Declaration of Principles refers to the slavery of capitalism being replaced by the freedom of socialism, meaning that workers will no longer be subject to the rule of the employing class, the unpredictability of the market, the exploitation of the wages system, the violence of the state and its wars, and so on. Socialism will be, in the words of the *Communist Manifesto*, 'an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.'

On the other hand, many supporters of capitalism argue that the present wages-prices-profits system is a society of freedom, and moreover that the freer a society is, the better off those who live in it will be. Economic freedom, they say, means as little government interference as possible in the economy, resulting in greater prosperity and more secure lives. The role of the state should be limited to enforcing property rights and contracts, and it should not be regulating the economy in terms of investment, prices, wages, employment rights etc.

It is the right wing of capitalism who propagate this vision, and two organisations have gone so far as to quantify the supposed extent of economic freedom in different countries. The Fraser Institute (www.fraserinstitute.org) publishes the Economic Freedom of the World Index, while the Heritage Foundation (www.heritage.org), with the *Wall Street Journal*, publishes the Index of Economic Freedom. Countries are scored, to two decimal places in the case of the former, in terms of how much economic freedom they are claimed to display, and are ranked accordingly. References below are to the most recent editions of their index reports.

According to the Fraser Institute:

'The cornerstones of economic freedom are personal choice, voluntary exchange, freedom to enter markets and compete, and security of the person and privately owned property.'

And the Heritage Foundation:

'those who believe in economic freedom believe in the right of individuals to decide for themselves how to direct their lives...Economic freedom is at its heart about individual autonomy, concerned chiefly with the freedom of choice enjoyed by individuals in acquiring and using economic goods and resources.'

The Heritage Foundation recognises four broad categories

of economic freedom: rule of law (such as judicial effectiveness and the enforceability of contracts), size of government, regulatory efficiency (including 'labour freedom') and market openness (including freedom to trade). The Fraser Foundation uses similar criteria, and also refers explicitly to sound money, with inflation under control.

On the basis of their results, the Heritage Foundation divides countries into five grades, from 'free' (only six countries, including Ireland but not the UK) to 'repressed', while the Fraser Foundation just divides the 160 countries surveyed into four equal groups. For example, the UK is eighth in the Heritage Foundation rankings: it scores highly for property rights and business

freedom but relatively low for government spending and fiscal health. Germany, meanwhile, is 25th, with a high score for fiscal health offset by a low score for labour freedom.

The report of the Fraser Institute further argues that there are relationships between economic freedom and other matters. Thus the freest countries tend to have higher per capita income, faster economic growth, less moderate and extreme poverty, greater life expectancy, less gender inequality, and more political liberty. But there is no relation between economic freedom and the share of income earned by the poorest ten percent of a country's population.

It would be easy to dismiss these efforts as transparent and self-serving justifications for capitalism and the privileges of the rich and powerful, some of who bankroll both think-tanks. But we have to do more than that: to show that their claims about economic freedom are specious and have little if anything to do with the daily lives of the majority of the populations of the countries concerned. For

one thing, Hong Kong came top for economic freedom in the most recent version of both indices. That's Hong Kong, where one-fifth of the population are below the poverty line, and tens of thousands live in what are called 'cage homes'. Second in both was Singapore, where over a third live in poverty and inequality is extreme, and which is often described as a very authoritarian society.

Look at part of what the Heritage Foundation say about 'labour freedom':

'the ability of businesses to contract freely for labor and dismiss redundant workers when they are no longer needed is essential to enhancing productivity and sustaining overall economic growth.'

This is clearly the freedom of the bosses to run their businesses in the interest of profit, and has nothing at all to do with the freedom of employees. It is not labour freedom at all, but an aspect of the rulers' power over labour. Workers at Carillion and Toys R Us had little economic freedom when the bosses closed the companies down, forcing workers to try to find another job or get by on the dole. Moreover, topics such as the gig economy, zero-hours contracts and the existence of a precariat simply do not feature in the points studied in these reports.

The Fraser Institute report accepts that there is

no necessary causal relation between economic freedom and the other criteria mentioned earlier.

In general, correlation simply does not

imply causation,

let alone the

direction of

the causation,

and there are

many other

considerations

which would have to be taken into account when looking at the claims made, such as the natural

resources of an area (e.g. mineral deposits,

navigable rivers,

quality of soil,

climate, the

extent of any

'resource

curse'),

its history (e.g. being

subject to colonial

exploitation)

and current situation (such as wars

being fought there). It can

hardly be coincidence

that, as the Heritage

Foundation puts it, 'Sub-Saharan

African countries trail world averages in almost every category of economic freedom.'

More generally, the picture of capitalism that these organisations present is completely unrealistic as far as the vast majority of the population are concerned. For members of the working class, capitalism of any variety has



little if anything to do with 'personal choice' or 'voluntary exchange' (to use expressions cited earlier from the Fraser Institute). Having to sell your labour power in return for a wage is not a matter of personal choice but of economic necessity; it is not voluntary but unavoidable, given the way capitalism works. The Heritage Foundation refer to 'the right of individuals to decide for themselves how to direct their lives', but workers are in no position to do this if they are forced to work for an employer. Doing dangerous, unpleasant or badly-paid work that creates profit for your employer is not something anyone chooses to do but something that people have to do in order to survive. Homelessness, workplace stress and lack of decent health care all but destroy a person's 'individual autonomy', but are part and parcel of many workers' lives.

All the statistics and graphs put out by the think-tanks cannot disguise the nature of capitalism and its real-life effects on workers. After all, nonsense quantified is still nonsense.

PAUL BENNETT



The myth of the 'Self-Made Man'

Part two of our series on 'philanthrocapitalism'

One explanation offered for the rise of philanthrocapitalism is the recent 'surge in entrepreneurial wealth'. According to this, the growing number of 'self-made billionaires' tend not only to be more inclined to make charitable donations than wealthy philanthropists in the past but are also more pro-actively involved in shaping the very nature of charity itself in line with 'business principles'.

However, this explanation is based on a complete myth: the idea that there can be such a thing as a 'self-made billionaire'. Barring winning the lottery or some other stroke of good fortune, there is zero possibility of making a substantial sum of money under capitalism except by investing what money you have in some business and securing a healthy return. To get a substantial return you need a substantial sum to invest to begin with.

Investing it in a business means relying on the contributions of other people working for that business to grow the business and, by extension, what you get out of it by way of a financial return. The apocryphal rags-to-riches story belies the simple truth that the richer you become the less you owe your wealth to your own effort and enterprise and the more you depend on the effort and enterprise of others. A so called self-made billionaire, as much as one who had entirely inherited their wealth, could happily retire to a tropical island and sip Campari on a sun lounger for the rest of their life but still their income stream would remain relatively unaffected. Proof enough, if proof were needed, that their capital can and does reproduce itself without the slightest assistance on their part.

Even some of the very rich do not seem to have bought into this myth of the 'self-made man' - though, on the face of it, it would surely be to their advantage to promote it. As Ray B. Williams notes:

"Some of the wealthiest entrepreneurs in North America say there is no such thing as the "self-made man." With more millionaires making, rather than inheriting, their wealth, there is a false belief that they made it on their own without help, a new report published by the Boston-based non-profit United For a Fair Economy, states. The group has signed more than 2,200 millionaires and billionaires to a petition to reform and keep the U.S. inheritance tax. The report says the myth of "self-made wealth is potentially destructive to the very infrastructure that enables wealth creation." The individuals profiled in the report believed they prospered in large part due to things beyond their control and because of the support of others. Warren Buffet, the second richest man in the world said, "I personally think that society is responsible for a very significant percentage of what I've earned." Erick Schmidt, CEO of Google says, "Lots of people who are smart and work hard and play by the rules don't have a fraction of what I have. I realize that I don't have my wealth because I'm so brilliant." ("The myths of the "self-made man" and meritocracy", Psychology Today, June 13, 2010)

Williams goes on to refer to the meticulous research carried out by Malcolm Gladwell, in his book, *The Outliers* (2008), that 'enormously successful people like Bill Gates, The Beatles, and professional athletes, scientists and artists, all had people in their lives that helped them get there'.

It was in the early 19th century in America that this myth of the 'self-made man' took off, the term having been coined by Henry Clay. It was a concept that went hand in glove with another - the myth of the 'American Dream'. The late 19th

century ushered in the Gilded Age of the Robber Barons - Vanderbilt, Rockefeller, Morgan, Carnegie, and others - the very epitome of so called 'self-made men'. These were corporate capitalists ruthlessly bent on amassing huge fortunes by whatever means possible, including outright criminality.

This was also an era in which the doctrine of Social Darwinism became highly fashionable in certain circles - in particular, among the wealthy and the well-heeled. It furnished them with an ideological weapon in the battle of ideas, allowing them to justify their great wealth in terms of the working out of a natural law. According to this doctrine, founded by the British sociologist, Herbert Spencer (who enjoyed the patronage of Robber Barons like Carnegie and Rockefeller), the progress of society depended on the 'survival of the fittest'. A corollary of this was the weeding out of the weak as a precondition of a general improvement in the human stock. Hence Spencer's vigorous opposition to the poor laws and any form of state welfare that would impair the workings of this selective process. As he charmingly put it in his 1851 work, *Social Statics*: 'Under the natural order of things society is constantly excreting its unhealthy, imbecile, slow, vacillating, faithless members'. Today, Social Darwinism has been completely discredited as a concept though, at the time, it contributed to the rise of the Eugenics movement in America and elsewhere and later served as a cornerstone belief of Nazi ideology.

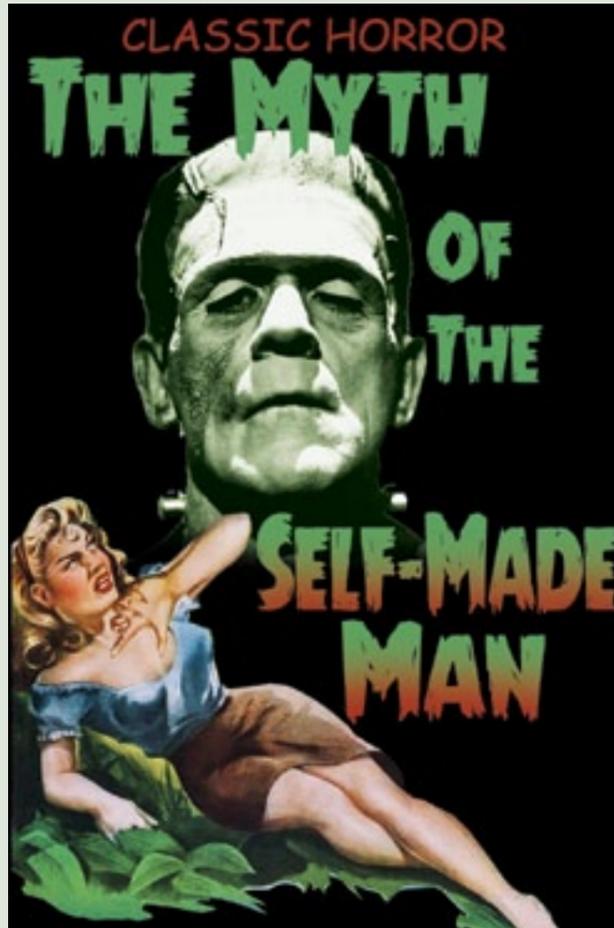
Co-opting the poor

It seems paradoxical that, at a time when America's Robber Barons were exalting in the dog-eat-dog society that had been prescribed by Social Darwinism and that had delivered to them their fabulous wealth, that there should emerge within these self-same circles, a strong tradition of philanthropic giving. How does one account for this?

Centuries ago, in Europe, the harshness of a lowly status would have been somewhat tempered and ameliorated by Christian teaching about the virtue of poverty. The poor were looked upon as an inevitable - not to say, God-ordained - feature of the social landscape. Their purpose in life was to provide the well-to-do with a ready-made pretext to bestow on those less fortunate, a measure of charity that would prove their piety in the eyes of God and their fellows. For the poor, at any rate, there may well have been a crumb of comfort in the biblical expression that it was harder for a rich man to get to heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.

With the growth of secularism, however, such religious solace was not so readily forthcoming to those of meagre means. Attitudes towards poverty and its amelioration through charity began to change. The traditional moral economy which bound the rich and the poor together increasingly gave way to the exigencies of a market economy, with the rise of industrial capitalism. Poverty began to be viewed, not so much as ineliminable, but as inexcusable.

In the increasingly harsh moralistic climate of Victorian Britain, poverty came to be attributed to one's own moral



shortcomings and defects, with the ghettoes of the poor being looked upon as hotbeds of vice and depravity. By contrast, the fortunes of the well-off were considered to be divinely ordained with God's own personal stamp of approval. Alain de Botton quotes a representative voice in this regard - William Lawrence, the Episcopal Bishop of Massachusetts - who wrote in 1892 that 'In the long run, it is only to the man of morality that wealth comes. We, like the Psalmist, occasionally see the wicked prosper but only occasionally. Godliness is in league with riches' (*Status Anxiety*, 2004, p.86).

As usual, the economists weighed in to back up the moralists. The old Elizabethan poor laws which afforded a measure of charitable assistance to the poor were strenuously attacked by David Ricardo and others for diverting money from productive purposes and weakening the incentive to work. If withdrawing such assistance meant the poor would be left to perish then so be it. This was Mother Nature's 'final solution' - culling the poor - with the aid of the eugenicists, of course. Thus did the Social Darwinists, following in the footsteps of the Reverend Malthus, join hands with the economists in

calling for a remorselessly competitive *laissez faire* economy as the very expression of this natural order.

If charity was to be reluctantly rendered - one could not, after all, allow those duly 'excreted' by society and driven to the point of desperation by sheer hunger to run riot - then it ought to be made strictly conditional upon the performance of work and from the 1830s onwards 'charity' increasingly took the form of workhouses in which the very poor were housed, overseen, regulated and expected to labour. The ignominy and shame of being despatched to the workhouse was, in a way, deliberately cultivated, as was the barrack-like grimness of the physical environment of these institutions. Their purpose was to instil an austere discipline and to provide a powerful disincentive to those not minded to pull themselves up by their bootstraps.

The idea that poverty is something that one essentially brings upon oneself has its corollary in the idea that one can get rich by wanting to get rich and if one is not yet rich that that is only because one is not sufficiently motivated to get rich - an unfalsifiable claim that makes such an assertion downright meaningless.

However, despite the attraction of Social Darwinism to individuals like the Robber Barons, the poor failed to conveniently succumb to Mother Nature's culling programme. Their numbers grew and, more disturbingly still, they began to organise and fight back. The new unionism of the 1880s was an expression of this rising resistance - a new kind of trades union, differing from the older specialised craft unions in that it sought to widen its appeal and recruit from sections of the working class such as the unskilled that had hitherto been unorganised.

A ruling capitalist class cannot rule by force alone; if nothing else, the sheer costs of coercing an uncooperative population would tend to make this unfeasible. To secure its rule it has

also to resort to ideological persuasion and the manner in which it sets about doing that is very much shaped by the prevailing material conditions.

In the 19th century, the growing differentiation within the working class in terms of income and occupation, encouraged a tendency to distinguish between the 'deserving poor' and the 'undeserving poor'. Where the institution of the workhouse was wielded as a 'stick' to discipline the latter into submission, the 'carrot' of philanthropy was primarily focused on the former. To that end, an ideology of self-improvement and upward social mobility was relentlessly peddled as the route to riches and books such as Samuel Smiles' *Self Help* (1883) which essentially blamed the poor for their own poverty, became best sellers.

This obsessive focus on the individual was, one might say, almost designed to encourage a sense of separateness between worker and worker. At the same time, strenuous efforts were made to direct and channel the collectivist impulses of workers along nationalist lines and to crowd out and replace an emerging working class identity with a sense of national identity. In short, these various tendencies constituted different prongs of a pincer movement in a wider ruling class strategy of 'divide and rule'.

Philanthropy came to the aid of capitalism not only by presenting the capitalists in a more positive light but, just as importantly, by striving to pour working class aspirations into a particular mould that would help to solidify and buttress the existing capitalist order. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the case of the Robber Baron and steel tycoon, Andrew Carnegie.

Carnegie's book, *The Gospel of Wealth* (1889), was enormously influential at the time. In it, he expressed concern over the huge inequalities of that era. Though he regarded inequality as absolutely indispensable to the process of wealth creation, it presented a problem inasmuch as too much of it could potentially undermine the 'ties of brotherhood' that 'bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship' and promote class struggle. Resolving this dilemma, he concluded, had to involve creating 'opportunities for people to better themselves'.

Condescension and self-conceit

With great wealth, he argued, came the moral duty to put this money to good use through purposeful charitable donations rather than just indiscriminately doling it out to the poor. 'It were better for mankind', he declared, 'that the millions of the rich were thrown into the sea than so spent as to encourage the slothful, the drunken, the unworthy'. The man of stature, Carnegie confided, was 'the mere trustee and agent for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could for themselves'.

Taking up Samuel Smiles' line of argument in *Self-Help*, Carnegie set about endowing, and putting his name to, institutions like colleges, libraries, museums, and concert halls through which individuals could aspire to 'improve' and educate themselves and eventually become self-made men like himself - a degree of self-conceit and self-promotion that has not dimmed with the emergence of modern philanthrocapitalism. Thus were the fortunes of so-called self-made men deployed to bolster and perpetuate the myth of the self-made man.

While the likes of Carnegie might have approved of the efforts of workers to improve their own circumstances via means he had specifically laid down for them, woe betide the worker who sought to do the same by asking for a wage rise or organising within a trade union to press for such a



their own financial success, that it would have been of little or no concern to them that their employees should have striven for a modicum of 'financial success' themselves in the guise of a higher wage. Their very actions belied the grandiose claim that they had made their own fortunes themselves. Those fortunes were made for them by others and their curmudgeonly and belligerent response to even the most modest wage claim that might erode their profit margins underscores the exploitative nature of their relationship to, and dependence upon, their workforce.

Once again, there is little here to differentiate philanthropists of the past and modern philanthrocapitalists. The same galling patronising attitude is to be found amongst the latter too. They too are all too ready to lecture others on what is good for them and to act without the mandate of the intended recipients of their charity.

Their huge wealth gives them the power to shape the social agenda and determine the priorities of the poor in ways that are transparently, and obnoxiously, undemocratic. Some like Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook would deny this. According to him, 'When you give everyone a voice and give people power, the system usually ends up in a really good place. So, what we view our role as, is giving people that power.' But this is delusional. Power has to do with how people relate to one another. It operates in a context of social inequality. You don't remove that inequality by enabling individuals to access a social network like Facebook (which, by all accounts, is itself becoming more and more intrusive, censorious and authoritarian in its mode of operation). All you do is accentuate the feeling of powerlessness by being drowned out by the voices of millions of others.

ROBIN COX
(Next month: *The Rich Stay Rich*)

rise. Wage demands were fiercely resisted by him and other Robber Barons who frequently called upon the state to brutally crush organised labour protests or made use of the notorious Pinkerton agents, a private security force, for precisely that purpose.

So much for the myth of the 'self-made man'. You would have thought, had these individuals actually been the authors of



Capitalism is a society of inequalities, in how both wealth and power are distributed. These inequalities have often affected women more adversely than men, and campaigns for women's rights have been ongoing for over a century. But the debate around gender equality is no longer just about differences in wages or opportunities. Allegations of sexual harassment and abuse in Parliament and the entertainment industry especially have highlighted how some men have exercised their power. Also, the debate has broadened due to increased awareness of issues affecting transgender people, many of whom have felt marginalised.

How should socialists respond to the new prominence given to gender politics? What does gender inequality tell us about capitalist society, especially how it shapes gender roles? And how does the issue impact upon revolutionary politics? The Socialist Party argues that sexism and misogyny are expressions of how capitalism is inherently divisive and unequal. So, the

solution is to address these problems at their source, by uniting to replace capitalism with a society based on equality and freedom.

Our weekend of talks and discussion will examine how gender issues relate to wider society and to revolutionary politics. 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.

E-mail enquiries should be sent to spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk. To book a place online, go to spgb.net/summerschool2018, or send a cheque (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) with your contact details to Summer School, The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN.

Was the Jewish Bund anti-semitic?

The revisionist definition of anti-semitism to include anti-Zionism is refuted by its absurd conclusion that the old Jewish Bund was therefore anti-semitic.

The media have been carrying stories about anti-semitism, particularly on the rise of hate-crimes against Jewish individuals and religious institutions. Also in the headlines are allegations that anti-semitism exists within the Labour Party and its left-wing hangers-on.

Zionism claims to speak on behalf of Jewish people. Today, although a majority of Jews choose to live outside of Israel, only a minority still oppose Zionism and its creation, Israel. A hundred years ago, however, it was Zionism that was the minority and challenged in the working-class movement by Yiddish-speaking secularists of the Jewish Bund.

Originally Zionism was a nationalism of Jewish people outside Palestine, claiming that the main cause of the troubles of the Jews was the fact that they had no country of their own. Its supporters argued that, as a means of solving the problem of anti-semitism, Jewish people should establish a nation-state in Palestine, chosen on the grounds that the region was the historic homeland of the Jewish people. Only by settling in a country of their own would Jews be safe from anti-semitism. No longer then would they be a small minority of outcasts, dependent upon the tolerance of others, but citizens of their own state. As such they would be free from interference and discrimination.

Yet in their efforts to free Jews in Europe from anti-semitism, the Zionists generated another, Arab and pro-Arab anti-semitism, a price they were prepared to pay as David Ben-Gurion, a well-known Zionist leader and future prime minister of Israel, acknowledged when he declared even before Israel was established:

'We shall go to Palestine in order to become the majority there. If need be we shall take the country by force. If Palestine proves too small...her frontiers will have to be extended' (*Manchester Guardian*, 3 July 1946).

Many of Jewish background have been brought up to hold an image of Zionism as a movement of pioneering, progressive, pious, peace-loving nation-builders. However, in the 1920s and 1930s, some Zionists resorted to violence against fellow-Jews, breaking up meetings and fire-bombing printers and publishers so as to keep the Yiddish language and its rich Jewish culture out of public life in Palestine. An early Zionist group, 'the Battalion of the Defenders of the Language' who sought to make re-constructed Hebrew the national language of Israel through suppression of other Jewish traditions, was hailed 'Heroes of Israel' by the prominent Zionist Chaim Weizman, later the first President of Israel (see: strangeside.com/yiddish-in-israel).

The Jewish Labour League, the Bund, believed that anti-semitism was a by-product of the private property system and would end with the end of that system; the Jews were just used as a convenient scapegoat for the problems capitalism caused other workers, easy to label and point the finger at. They did not think in terms of a return to 'the promised land' as a solution to the problem Jews faced.

The Bund, in Russia and Eastern Europe, was a mass movement with tens of thousands of members; and, due



to emigration to Western Europe and the United States, an international network of left-wing activists. They argued that a Jewish state would be yet another class-ridden society in which Jewish workers would have to fight their Jewish bosses. The Bundists defended the rights of Palestinians against Jewish settlers. Bundism maintained the hope that Jew and Gentile could coexist in a true socialist world in all lands. Instead of falling for the divide and rule tactics which weaken the workers' movement, Bundists said Jewish workers should recognise who their real enemy was and work together with other workers to defeat the system that exploits all workers..

People make their own history but that history gets written only later and it is often selective with great omissions. The Bundist alternative to Zionism appears to be written out of the history of the Jews. Bundists rejected emigration to Palestine as a solution and favoured a social revolution in their 'real homeland', i.e., the place they were born or lived. To rid the world of anti-semitism, the world itself had to change, class society had to be ended everywhere, and this was a struggle that began at home – or as Marx put it, 'The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.' The Bund urged Jews to remain in their countries of residence, support the workers' movement of that country, and forge a Jewish culture around the Yiddish language. The belief of Bundists of trying to build a better Jewish life in the country where Jews lived was rejected outright by Zionism.

The State of Israel came into being in 1948. The Bund's hopes never materialised and it finally disbanded in the mid-1950s. Although they were essentially Social Democratic reformists they never fell for Jewish nationalism. They certainly weren't anti-semitic. In fact they were criticised by other Jewish opponents of Zionism for being too nationalist themselves.

We in the Socialist Party also opposed Zionism. As we wrote in our pamphlet *The Racial Problem* published in 1947 before the state of Israel was set up:

'Our case to the Jewish workers is that under no circumstances should they allow themselves to be deluded by ideas of nationalism and "race" into supporting such movements as Zionism which will not solve their problems. The only solution to anti-semitism is Socialism, and to the extent that Jewish workers co-operate with other members of their class to bring about Socialism will the complete eradication of anti-semitism be more quickly achieved.'

So, we, too, on the invalid revision of anti-semitism to include anti-Zionism, would have to be classified as anti-semites; which is just as absurd as the Bund being so classified. We are – and always have been – opposed to all discrimination on grounds of nationality, language or cultural tradition, including anti-semitism.

We were opposed to the establishment of Israel and we do want to see it disappear – but not, as some Islamic and Arab Nationalists want, on its own within the context of capitalism. To campaign for its abolition would be just as much a diversion as campaigning for its establishment was originally.

Instead, we want *all* nation-states to cease to exist and oppose the creation of new ones such as the proposed Palestinian state. What we want is the establishment of a frontier-less world community without any states as the coercive institutions of class-divided society that all of them are.

ALJO

'What are your views on?'

Answers to questions put by a website in Croatia, 'Il grido del popolo'.

What does your political experience say about the future of socialism?

Because we had always said that it was state capitalism and had nothing to do with socialism, when the USSR collapsed in 1991 perhaps we expected people to say 'Yes, you were right, it did have nothing to do with socialism'. Then the way would be clear to put the case for real socialism as a system based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production, with production to directly meet people's needs not for profit, and distribution on the principle of 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs'. But what happened was that people said 'socialism has been tried and failed, it is now irrelevant'. Supporters of capitalism proclaimed the definitive victory of their system and ideology and that capitalism was now the only game in town. This lasted for nearly twenty years. Then came the Great Crash of 2008 and the ensuing slump. 'Capitalism' became a dirty word once more and socialism (however defined) was discussed seriously again. This is still the position today.

Your thoughts on European trade unions? Are they here to help the workers or have they sold out to corporations?

Trade unions were formed by workers to bargain with employers over the price of their labour-power and the conditions under which it is exercised. Over the years they have become huge bureaucratic organisations but still, by and large, continue to be defensive organisations for the working class. They should not just be dismissed as sell-outs. Workers should still join them and work to make them more accountable to their memberships.

What is the UK future after Brexit?

Most of the UK capitalist class want to stay in the EU but their political representatives let them down by organising a referendum that resulted in a 52-48 majority for Brexit. They are probably right to think that the UK outside the EU will not be as good for them as staying in, because they won't be able to get better trade deals than they have been getting as a member. But that's their problem, not ours as socialists and workers. In or out of the EU, and whatever the Brexit terms negotiated, there will still be capitalism and the problems it generates for the majority class of wage and salary workers.

Your comment on UK foreign policy towards Russia?

That the antagonism between the West and Russia has continued despite the end of 'communism' (in reality, state capitalism) in Russia shows that the conflicts of the Cold War period were not, as presented, based on ideology but were clashes of material interests, mainly over spheres of influence (who dominates Eastern Europe, Russian access to the Mediterranean, etc).

What do you think, is Corbyn a good example for the left?

The Labour Party under Corbyn represents something of a return to what the Labour Party was like in the 1960s, 70s and early 80s – proposing reforms aimed at making capitalism work for 'the many, not the few'. The Labour governments in these periods failed to do this (as it can't be done) and ended up presiding over, and even encouraging, the operation of the capitalist economic system in the only way that it can exist – giving priority to profits and conditions for profit-making over satisfying people's needs. A Corbyn Labour government would fail, and for the same reason that there is no way in which capitalism can be reformed to work in the interest of the majority. So, no, Corbyn is not a good example of what to do.

How can modern left politics answer the challenges of the 21st century, when there is no mainstream socialism as in the 20th century?

It is true that for most of the 20th century the existence of a major country calling itself socialist (even if it wasn't) made socialism a subject of current political debate and that this is no longer the case. On the other hand, not having a state-capitalist regime calling itself socialist is an advantage as socialists no longer have to deal with this as a regular objection to socialism. Socialism can be presented positively as a society of common ownership, democratic control, production directly to meet people's needs and not for profit.

Is socialism today important or has it lost all its 'weight' in political arenas in Europe?

Of course socialism is still relevant and important today – capitalism will never be able to solve the multiple problems it generates by its very nature for humanity in general and the wage and salary working class in particular – even if the word 'socialism' meaning an alternative social system is not a subject of political discussions. Socialism will be relevant as long as capitalism exists as, objectively and not just as a matter of opinion, it is the only framework within which the problems capitalism generates can be solved.

Can you make short comments on political parties like the Communist Party of Great Britain Marxist-Leninist and the New Communist Party?

Neither of them is any good, if only because they both support the North Korean government and defend the state-capitalist system there as somehow socialist or pro working class. Another similar organisation, the CPBML, is as nationalistic over Brexit as the UK Independence Party. 'Marxism-Leninism' is a contradiction in terms as Leninism is a distortion of Marxism, mainly through its theory that the working class on its own can only develop a trade union consciousness and so needs to be led by a self-appointed vanguard party. This was not Marx's view; he favoured the democratic self-organisation of the working class in a mass workers' party.

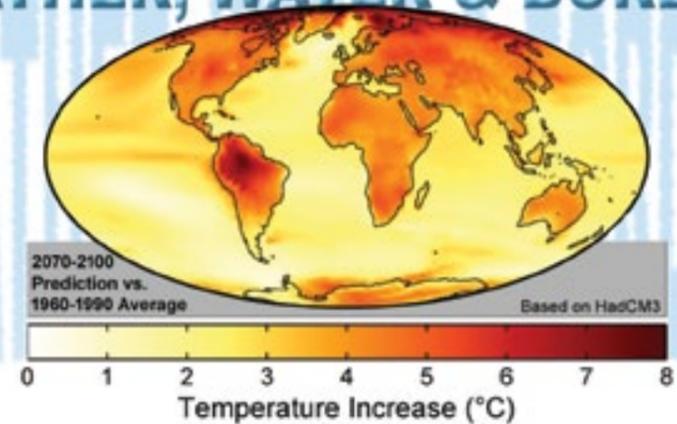
How to educate today's working class when more and more positions in factories and elsewhere are becoming controlled by technology?

The working class is not composed just of factory workers but of everyone who is forced by economic necessity to try to sell their mental and physical energies to an employer in order to live. This is irrespective of the job they do, whether in a factory, an office, a hospital or an educational institution. Most of the so-called 'middle class' are in fact members of the majority class of wage and salary workers. Artificial Intelligence is now threatening their jobs too.

How do British trade unions today work to protect workers, after all that happened with Thatcher in 80s?

The effectiveness of trade unions is largely governed by the overall economic situation, much more than by legislation. In times of capitalist expansion they can work with the labour market to increase wages; in times of slump the most they can do is slow down the decrease in real wages. The type of trade union has changed since the Thatcher years. Today the coal mines and the once powerful miners' union have gone. The big trade unions today are those in the public sector, in national and local government, the health service and education. Given the unfavourable economic situation they don't do too badly.

WEATHER, WATER & BORDERS



Maybe it's all about perception, but how do the many and various facts and fabrications impact on any one individual's view of, or attitude towards, the numerous factors surrounding the great climate debate? As it is debate, rather than serious decisions as to exactly what steps should be taken (should actually have already been taken), that is all that is happening currently.

Our planet, Earth, was inhabited over millennia by humankind as it developed in a long slow series of settlement and movement, more settlement, more movement, developing and leaving social groupings all along the way over century after century, all the while spreading DNA and long-recognised and easily-proved similarities of peoples as far apart as NE Asia and South America. It's what we call migration. Something humankind has been doing quite naturally since its earliest existence. There's nothing new about it in a million years but currently, in so-called 'developed' countries, especially of the north and west, it's causing all kinds of hoo-ha, most of which is based on false premises and nationalism.

In the 21st century the global population has the means to be aware of the planet's geography and demography and can make decisions based on knowledge gathered from serious news sources including the internet. And they can do it quickly rather than over generations. For migrants focused on escaping increasingly insurmountable threats – of war, of starvation, or a need to earn a living time which is probably the priority factor. For those already living in the host areas, decisions as to the best way to accept the immigrants, some temporarily if they choose to move on, others more permanently, should surely be more inclusive than is experienced now.

Since the creation of national borders in relatively recent history there has become a gradually more strident call in Europe, North America and Australia from politicians of various stripes filtering down to sections of the general populace, persuaded by nationalist protectionists for stricter border control. Scare tactics, terrorist threats, divide and rule – the media amplifies political rhetoric over and over, louder and louder until the message is meekly or keenly accepted and repeated by many. Opinion rules whilst evidence is there to show that there is little, if anything, to back up such claims that migrants are any more a threat than local residents in relation to crime. However, opinion has decided. Year on year there are more walls, fences, barricades, security zones, checkpoints, more militarised, hostile and dangerous borders. Having managed the situation so badly in these early days, how can such countries be expected to cope better with the inevitability

of the increasing numbers expected and noted by climate scientists for the years ahead?

Changing weather conditions

When taken in context it becomes apparent that much of more recent migration is firmly linked to local weather problems associated with overall global climate change, not unlike, but way more urgent by a huge factor, some of the historical migrations of our ancestors who followed their animals or moved seasonally as necessary in pursuit of food. Today's migrations are a steady build up in response to facts on the ground in various regions. One clue is water. Globally water is being mismanaged on a serious level. Water tables are falling at a dangerous rate and non-replenishable aquifers are at crucially low levels, while decaying infrastructure in many developed countries is wasting billions of gallons of water annually. Businesses continue to have access to water without restrictions, for manufacturing unnecessary products and private companies control water supplies and profit from what comes out of the tap. Both business and industrial agriculture consistently foul water systems making them not fit for consumption. All of these factors are depriving more populations in both the developing and developed world of clean water, with obvious serious consequences.

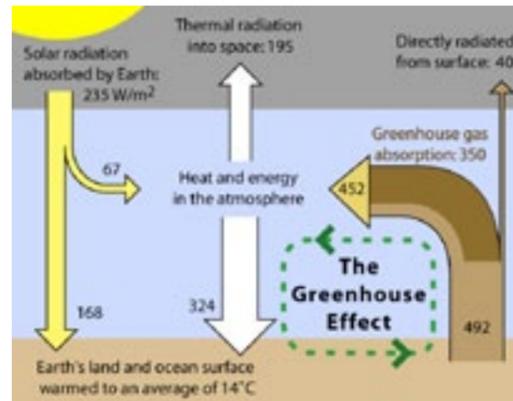
Changing weather patterns globally are affecting populations in different ways. Some are water scarce, expected rains having failed to deliver season after season causing ongoing crop failure, loss of food and remuneration, and unmanageable hunger. This has meant several years of mass migration to the edges of already overpopulated towns and cities in their country of origin – with little to offer newcomers needing work to meet life's necessities. This was one of the little discussed problems facing Syria before 2011 when all hell broke loose.

Similar scenarios are occurring in much of the continent of Africa where, for one reason or another, huge migrations are taking place, the vast majority of the migrants travel to neighbouring or other African destinations. Reasons are various but the footprints of the colonialists are there. Big companies commit pillage in many African countries, for resources of all kinds. Compliant governments benefit financially from deals which force millions of Africans into penury and often early death from poisoning or fatal work accidents. Blame is not considered. When war breaks out, as in Mali, Congo, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Libya etc., it has been about competition for resources.

The aftermath of such terrible conflicts, people fleeing in huge numbers, does not register as being connected to the cause.

Then, the opposite scenario – too much water, and generally the ‘too much’ effect happens in a short space of time. Hurricanes, floods, total inundation – again causing crop failures, loss of top soil, salination of low lying areas. And, as a result of melting ice caps and subsequent sea level rise this has also become a fast-increasing problem. There are many areas in and around the Philippines and the wider Pacific Ocean, small but inhabited islands, which are becoming less viable as each year goes round. Houses and once productive land is washed away by slowly encroaching seas. Whole villages have to up sticks and move to higher ground and start again from nothing, or decamp, with little or nothing to one of the bigger cities elsewhere. Other island communities are seeking agreements for the future with friendly nations to grant them permanent residence when the ocean finally makes living conditions impossible.

Similarly, in the Caribbean last year hurricane Irma struck the island of Barbuda fiercely, destroying almost everything along with the terrible toll of human life. The total population of about 20,000 was forbidden to return to live, having been evacuated en masse, except to attempt to salvage their possessions. Meanwhile Robert de Niro and his company, with the support of the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, continues to pursue his plans for a super-hotel complex for the super-rich on one of the beaches. How many tourism seasons before the problems begin to eat into the profits too much, one wonders. How many decades of profit before abandonment?



Contrast those caught in extreme climate events with those of the fraction of 1 percent, Richard Branson for example, who just look to their own personal way of living, their own island for their own use – do they even consider the consequences for the others?

This topic of climate change/global warming isn't going to go away while it is still the elephant in the room. It impacts on so many things but things about which many are in denial because 'business as usual' remains the priority. The movements of millions in the global south demanding 'System Change Not Climate Change' are hitting the right button, but what is sorely needed is that those who are opposing and haranguing the powers-that-be around the world to 'do something' about it come to the realisation that nothing is going to change, or change at only a snail's pace, whilst the capitalist system remains in place. If not, then it is just pontificating while Rome burns.

JANET SURMAN



BBC 3'S RECENT season of documentaries about body image raised plenty of questions about the importance we place on looks, and the effect this has on how we see ourselves. Each of the programmes featured people who don't fit in with mainstream conceptions of what body image 'should' be. Shows such as *Fat, Glam And Don't Give A Damn* and *Too Fat For Love?* focus on the lives of larger people, while the *Misfits Like Us* series brings together people with debilitating skin problems to learn about each other's experiences. Two of these programmes follow people who live with scarring from burns and the skin condition vitiligo. This is a disorder which affects pigmentation cells, leaving pale patches on the skin. Little is known about its causes, and although there are some treatments available, there is currently no cure. Around 600,000 people in the UK have the condition.

Obesity, vitiligo and scarring often have as much of an effect on someone's mental health as they do on their physical wellbeing. A lifetime of being stared at, bullied, and hearing abusive comments can ruin someone's confidence. Social media provides an easy platform for trolls to hurl insults at people, although *Misfits Like Us* emphasises the positive aspects of social media, through using it to find others in similar circumstances or in receiving supportive messages.

Our self-image, and particularly how attractive we consider ourselves and others to be, is strongly influenced by the mainstream media. Emma, a blogger from Preston, draws attention to the judgemental language used to describe large people in news reports. Words like 'bulging' and 'fattest' are loaded with disapproving connotations, while obesity is reported as a 'plague' or 'epidemic'. According to activist Scottee, fat people in fiction are 'the funny sidekick or the broken one you feel sorry for – never the romantic hero everyone fancies'. Popular examples from film and TV include 'Fat Monica' from the now-unfashionable sitcom *Friends*, 'Fat Bastard' from the *Austin Powers* films and Mr Creosote from *Monty Python*. And advertising not only tries to flog us products, but also often sells us the view that success and happiness mean having chiselled, smooth features rather than any other body

shape. Attitudes are changing, though, and some adverts now feature a wider range of people, even if this is really just to draw in a wider range of potential punters.

Part of the backlash against negative views about larger people is the 'body positive movement', which aims to ditch society's expectations and appreciate all body types. In *Fat, Glam And Don't Give A Damn*, pole dancer Alabama Whirley says that 'you can be sexy at any size'. For her, pole dancing gives her confidence



and appreciation. Some want to reclaim the word 'fat' away from its 'ugly slob' connotations. According to Scottee, 'saying the word 'fat' removes the stigma around it. The more we use it, the less of a big deal it becomes to be called fat. It's good for fat people, but it also takes away power from the multi-billion pound diet industry, which feeds off and profits from people's insecurities'. The labels we apply to ourselves are often an important part of our self-image. Many find that the term 'burns survivor' is more empowering than 'burns victim', while others dislike labels altogether, not wanting to be defined by their condition.

All of the people featured in the shows have found their own ways of accepting and living with their situation. Generally, those who aren't too bothered about prevailing ideals or what other people think seem happier within themselves. Others find it more of a struggle to

manage with their conditions, and it certainly helps those with scarring or vitiligo to get support from others with the same problem. People living with vitiligo often use concealer make-up, not only so they can appear more conventional, but also to give them self-assurance. Some find a new confidence in going outside without wearing make-up.

Unfortunately, not everyone copes well, and some people's concerns about their body image lead to eating disorders. Anorexia and bulimia aren't just unhealthy ways of trying to lose weight, they also represent an attempt to maintain a kind of self-control in a society where we often feel overwhelmed by outside pressures. A particularly difficult condition is described in the documentary *Diabulimia: The World's Most Dangerous Eating Disorder*.

Diabulimia affects people with type one diabetes who fear that taking insulin causes weight gain. Consequently, they avoid taking the medication, which risks dangerously high blood sugar levels and other complications. But, as one person with the condition has believed, 'it's much more important to be skinny' than to take insulin. According to studies made in 2010 and 2015, it is estimated that at least a third of adolescents and young adults with type one diabetes omit or reduce insulin in order to lose weight, and by the age of 25, 60 percent of women with type one diabetes will have experienced an eating disorder. One of the people interviewed says that diabetes itself is isolating and stressful, so it's easy to go downhill mentally.

Despite its prevalence, tailored support and medical treatment for diabulimia is very scarce. The NHS's separation of mental and physical healthcare means that sufferers of diabulimia fall between services. Psychiatric hospitals aren't set up to deal with the physical aspects of the condition, and mainstream hospitals lack sufficient mental health expertise. Similarly, the emotional and psychological needs of people with obesity, scarring, vitiligo and countless other conditions aren't adequately catered for.

Capitalist society creates or contributes to many health problems, but can never find enough resources to treat them. Adequate medical care and counselling is expensive, without an obvious enough financial return, whereas there's money to be made from media which promote an idealised body image. Advertising, films and TV have sold us the idea that popularity and achievement come with a particular set of looks. And our divisive, competitive society encourages us to judge ourselves and anyone outside these standards, making many people feel marginalised and depressed. Those featured in the BBC 3 programmes have shown strength and determination to fight back against society's pressures.

MIKE FOSTER



No need for more capitalism

Yanis Varoufakis, the maverick former Greek finance minister, has written an introduction to a new edition of the *Communist Manifesto* (published by Vintage Classics), reproduced in the *Guardian* (20 April). It is actually quite good.

Here he is writing about 'the predicament in which we find ourselves today':

'While we owe capitalism for having reduced all class distinctions to the gulf between owners and non-owners, Marx and Engels want us to realise that capitalism is insufficiently evolved to survive the technologies it spawns. It is our duty to tear away at the old notion of privately owned means of production and force a metamorphosis, which must involve the social ownership of machinery, land and resources. Now, when new technologies are unleashed in societies bound by the primitive labour contract, wholesale misery follows. ... If we continue to subscribe to labour contracts between employer and employee, then private property rights will govern and drive capital to inhuman ends.'

When he was a member of the Greek

government Varoufakis defended himself on the grounds that, as capitalism paved the way for socialism but socialism was not an immediate prospect, it was better to help capitalism out of its crisis than let it collapse – to save capitalism so as to be able to end it later in better circumstances.

He still hasn't entirely escaped from this way of thinking, as he writes here:

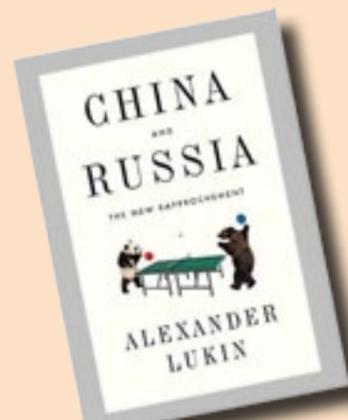
'Given that it is neither possible nor desirable to annul capitalism's "energy", the trick is to help speed up capital's development (so that it burns up like a meteor rushing through the atmosphere) while, on the other hand, resisting (through rational, collective action) its tendency to steamroller our human spirit. In short, the manifesto's recommendation is that we push capital to its limits while limiting its consequences and preparing for its socialisation.'

Actually, this is not what the *Manifesto* recommended (unrealistically, it envisaged that 'the bourgeois revolution in Germany will be but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution'). But it was what Leninists and Social Democrats tried to do in the 20th century, arguably unnecessarily prolonging the existence of capitalism.

Marx and Engels did hold that capitalism paved the way for socialism, by creating its material basis in the form of a world-wide productive network technologically capable of providing plenty for all. In 1848 Marx did argue in favour of free trade on

the grounds that it 'works destructively. It breaks up old nationalities and carries antagonism of proletariat and bourgeoisie to the uttermost point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the Social Revolution.' But that was in 1848, some 170 years ago now. At that time capitalism, as an economic system, was confined to parts of Western Europe. As Varoufakis points out, Marx and Engels predicted in the *Manifesto* that it would eventually come to dominate the whole world. He sees this as having come about in the 1990s. In fact, however, it had come about a century earlier in the 1890s, as reflected in the discussions about 'imperialism' that began at that time. By then capitalism had performed its historical role and had become historically unnecessary in that socialism, as a world system, could have been established in its place at any time since. Capitalism's continuation beyond its sell-by date has led to two world wars, countless smaller wars and massacres, and now a threat to the planet's ecology. Who knows what its further development will bring? So, no, the task today is not to 'speed up capital's development'. It is to stop it, by establishing a world of common ownership, democratic control, production to directly satisfy people's needs and not for profit, and distribution on the principle of 'from each their ability, to each their needs'.

Best of Friends (Almost)



Alexander Lukin: China and Russia: the New Rapprochement. Polity. £16.99.

The Sino-Soviet split of the 1950s and 60s involved a conflict between the two most powerful countries that claimed to be heirs of Lenin. There were small-scale border disputes and the Chinese leadership denounced the Russian bosses as revisionists. But, with major political changes in both countries since then, they are now 'close but not allies'. Here Lukin tracks the history of the relationship between Russia and China and its current status, which he says is 'the natural outcome of developments in international relations'. His book contains a lot of information but is often a rather dry read.

If the Cold War implied a bipolar world, with two large powers confronting each other, the fear in Russia now is of a drift towards a unipolar set-up, with the West (primarily the US of course) ruling the roost. Instead, Chinese and Russian leaders envisage a multipolar world, with not just three powerful camps (US, Russia, China) but more, including India, Brazil and so on.

Currently, China is economically more powerful than Russia but militarily weaker. In the 1990s, after the collapse of Eastern European Bolshevism, China bought various goods, including weapons, from Russia, thus helping much heavy industry in Russia to survive. Nowadays energy resources are the main export from Russia to China, with both oil and gas being supplied in large amounts, but there are concerns in Russia about being overly dependent on one main customer. The arms trade is also important, with Russia selling fighter jets and surface-to-air missiles

to China. China is Russia's main trade partner, but Russia's 'pivot to Asia' means it is keen on expanding trade with Japan and South Korea too. Chinese exports to Russia are primarily machinery, equipment and consumer goods.

In 2001, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was formed, the original members being China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, with India and Pakistan joining in 2017. Central Asia is clearly an area of interest for both Russia and China, as much for security as for economic reasons. The SCO, says Lukin, might be a cornerstone of the emerging multipolar world and 'could assume the role of a second, non-Western center of gravity in Eurasia'.

On the whole, then, the book deals with the familiar topics of trade, energy supplies, security and power rivalries. As a further sign of developing relations, the teaching of the Chinese language in Russia and of Russian in China are both expanding.

PB

What is money?



Money. By Yuval Noah Harari. Vintage Minis. 130 pages. £3.50.

This short book is made up of extracts from two books by Harari, though only the first section, from his best seller Sapiens, is on money.

He makes the point that money is not just a thing – something you can exchange for whatever you want – but that it is also a social relation between those producing different things for sale within the context of the division of labour. However, he confuses the use-value and the exchange-value of the various things – silver, gold, cowrie shells, metal and paper tokens, electronic data – that have served as money over time.

He writes that 'the silver shekel had no inherent value' and that the value of silver and gold is 'purely cultural'. Their use-value, apart from serving as money, as ornaments and status symbols does indeed depend on culture, but they do have an 'inherent value' in the sense of an exchange value when bought and sold or used as money. This is as a result of being the product of work; which allows them to be exchanged with other products which took the same amount of labour to produce. The same applies to cowrie shells which were used for trade in parts of Africa and Asia; besides as ornaments they could be used as money because amounts of them were easily divisible and not too bulky and, being rare, labour was required to find them.

So, money does not rely simply on trust, as Harari argues. Originally, it was a product itself, one that could be exchanged for any other product of equal exchange value. Today, when the things that are used as the medium of buying and selling are practically worthless metal or paper tokens, trust is more involved but more important is the backing of the state that issues them and decrees them 'legal tender'.

When it comes to banking, Harari is confused. He writes:

'Banks are allowed to loan \$10 for every dollar they actually possess, which means that 90 per cent of all the money in our bank accounts is not covered by actual coins and notes.'

It is true that (in the US) 90 percent of total bank accounts is not covered by cash, but not for the reason he states. It results from banks lending only \$9 of every \$10 deposited and retaining \$1 as cash.

The second part of the book, taken from his Homo Deus, is speculation about future possible interactions between Artificial Intelligence and humans. It is not all that imaginative as it assumes the continued existence of capitalism. In a book on money you might have expected that the possibility be considered that the widespread application of AI might lead to abandoning the use of money rather than to mass unemployment.

ALB



The Law won



Rent Strike. St Pancras 1960. By Dave Burn. Past Tense. £3.

In 1959 the newly-elected Tory Council in St Pancras in central London – the voters had just kicked out the previous Labour one – introduced, in accordance with the 1957 Rent Act, a new rent scheme for council tenants which meant huge rent increases for most of them. The tenants organised to resist, calling first for a refusal to pay the increase and then, when the Council refused to negotiate, a complete rent boycott. Two of the tenants' leaders were chosen to be test cases with the other tenants organising to try to prevent their eviction. They failed as a massive police presence enabled the bailiffs to enforce the law. The evictions were followed by what was described as the worst riot in Britain since the 1930s as hundreds of tenants protested outside the Town Hall but were beaten back by the police.

The Labour Party regained control of the council at the 1962 elections with a promise to reverse the Tory rent scheme. They found that this was legally impossible and that if they had tried they would have been personally 'surcharged' for the loss of revenue; all they could, and did, do was to rehouse the two evicted tenants' leaders.

This pamphlet, originally published in 1972 and now for some reason republished, admits that the tenants' campaign was a failure but attributes this to relying on electoral action, implying that had they resorted to 'direct action' they could have won. This is open to serious doubt as the tenants were up against not only the law but the force of the state machine. The sad fact is that all they could have hoped for was some modification of the scheme to remove the worst anomalies.

'Direct action' – reformism by blows – is not able to be any more effective than reformism by voting for a reform-promising political party. It can't make the state go away.

ALB

Slaves of Fashion

India was one source of the cotton that was used in the mills of Lancashire and so clad many people. An exhibition by The Singh Twins at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool deals with this and other aspects of the production of raw material and finished clothes, emphasising the role of European, especially British, colonialism; it is on until 20 May and then moves to Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

A series of light boxes and paintings, together with contemporary objects, make up the display. The works include many references to historical events and individuals, mainly from other collections in Liverpool; for instance, one Indian woman, who grew up in Britain and campaigned for women's rights, is depicted wearing a 'Votes for Women' badge from the Women's Social and Political Union.

Textiles have a long history in India, and in the fourteenth century, Europeans apparently believed that the source of cotton was lambs growing on trees! But it was not just cotton, as there were also silk and cashmere industries. Indigo was used to dye fabrics, especially military uniforms; one depiction here of Mumtaz Mahal (the Taj Mahal was built in her memory) shows her wearing jeans, to demonstrate the true origin of denim.

In India cotton was not just a crop, it was also made into clothing, but this did

not fit in too well with the priorities of emerging British capitalism. As pointed out in the display, the nascent British textile industry was protected by the Calico Acts of 1700 and 1721, which banned the sale of finished cotton clothing in Great Britain, and made it illegal to wear imported silk and calico garments. Raw cotton was not included in the prohibition, so that could still be imported

for processing. Further, it is possible that one cause of the Bengal Famine of 1770, which resulted in ten million deaths, was the insistence of British plantation owners that Indian peasants grow indigo rather than food crops. After the abolition of slavery, Indian workers were transported as indentured labourers to sugar plantations in South Africa and other places.



Mumtaz Mahal

This is a thought-provoking exhibition which covers both historical and present-day issues.

PB



Indigo Plant



Wolverhampton Art Gallery

50 Years Ago

The Founding of the Trades Union Congress

The Trades Union Congress was founded in the Mechanics Institute, Manchester, on June 2 1868 by thirty-four delegates who had responded to an invitation sent out by the Manchester and Salford Trades Council. In every way the aims of the founders were strictly limited, and in some important respect those limitations are still to be found in the TUC to-day, in spite of its vastly greater representative capacity and the widening of its activities.

This was not in any sense a revolutionary body and even its structure reflected a falling away from earlier attempts to form a unified National Trade Union body with power to act in strikes. The delegates came together only to discuss matters of mutual interest. It was, as George Woodcock describes it in the recently published *History of the TUC 1868-1968*, no more than "a small debating society". (...)

The early TUC can be seen in perspective by comparing its outlook with, for example, that of the Chartist Labour Parliament held in Manchester in 1854, attended by trade union delegates from all over the country. Marx and Louis Blanc were elected honorary delegates. They did not attend but Marx sent a message in which he expressed the view that the proceedings should be aimed at organising the working class for the conquest of political power and taking over ownership of the means of production by the workers. The letter was read at the conference. (...)

If anything else was needed to mark the contrast between the socialist outlook and that of the founders of the TUC it is only necessary to recall the paper Marx submitted to the Geneva Congress of the First International in 1865 (Value Price and Profit) in which he called on the unions to give up the motto "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay" and adopt instead "abolition of the wages system".

A new slave trade

Football can fulfil the dreams of a young boy and his family trying to escape poverty. Around the world but especially in Africa boys are inspired by the players such as the current icon, Egypt's and Liverpool's, Mo Salah, that they see on TV. They learn of the wealth associated with international football stars, coming to believe that a career in football is a way out of destitution. For many young Africans, the rags to riches stories of the professional football player offers a route to the trappings associated with a lavish lifestyle.

But as well as hope there is greed, with unscrupulous shady football agents luring under-age talented players from Africa and South America then abandoning them if they fail to make their mark.

'Whoever does make it, can earn lots of money,' said Christophe Gleizes, a French journalist who wrote a book on the modern enslavement of African footballers. 'African players are handled as traded goods, as if they were a kilo of cacao or cotton. European clubs come here to find cheap labour.'

15,000 young players are moved from West Africa each year under false pretences, estimates the charity Foot Solidaire, but a lack of monitoring means the number being trafficked

abroad could be far higher.

The greater the success of African players, the more unaccredited academies spring up. Most demand fees from the children's parents, who often take their children out of normal schooling to concentrate on football full-time. Since having a professional footballer in the family would be the financial equivalent of a lottery win, many reckon the risk to their child's education worth taking. Middlemen haggle over the best players with the

raising alarm among NGOs including Save the Children and Caritas.

'This football-related trafficking and the widespread creation of so-called schools of excellence is an area of huge growing concern for Save The Children,' says Heather Kerr, the charity's Ivory Coast country manager.

Tony Baffoe, the former Ghana captain, admits that 'the trafficking of children to play football is a reality we must all face'.

The BBC in 2015 reported that African footballers as young as 14 years were being traded to Laos to attend a fictitious football academy. Champasak United, a club which plays in Laos' top league, had imported 23 under-aged players intending to profit by selling the players on at a later stage. They became illegal immigrants after their visas ran out and the boys rarely left the stadium where they both lived

and worked every day. The youths told the BBC they were poorly fed, rarely paid and received no medical assistance despite contracting malaria and typhoid because of the conditions. One described their existence at Champasak United as akin to 'slave work'. As a result of



the expose in April the Laos Football Federation (LFF) was fined 690,000 Swiss francs by Fifa.

'It's important to dream,' says Jean-Claude Mbvoumin, a former Cameroonian international, 'but the dreams about football now are not realistic.'

Every year hundreds of young African players come to Europe in the hope of striking it rich. A handful make it but far more fail.

Raffaele Poli, a Swiss academic, has studied the career paths of African footballers in Europe. He looked at 600 players who played in the top European leagues in 2002. Four years later, only 13 percent had progressed upwards. A third had simply disappeared from professional football. Players are simply abandoned on the streets by their agents when they fail a trial or have their contract terminated.

The so-called agents are not the only ones making a profit. The European clubs benefit, too. In Africa serious money is being invested to operate academies or to buy a share in a minor league club. Just one top-class player every five years would cover the running costs of these accredited academies.

Football puts a price on players and talks of "buying", "selling", or "loaning" them. Footballers are real commodities influenced by market forces such as supply and demand and there exists a business akin to the slave-trade to make profits out of people.

ALJO

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.

Meetings

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

JULY 2018

LONDON

HAMMERSMITH

Saturday, 21 July, 2.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m. Public meeting Speaker and subject: TBA

Venue: Quaker Meeting House, 20 Nigel Playfair Avenue, London



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Misappropriated

'Since coming to power in 2012, Xi, widely seen as the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao Zedong, has said the party must not forget its socialist roots as it works to attain the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation"....Xi said, "Writing Marxism onto the flag of the Chinese Communist Party was totally correct... Unceasingly promoting the sinification and modernization of Marxism is totally correct." Xi also instructed all party members to adopt the reading of Marxist works and the understanding of Marxist theories as a "way of life" and a "spiritual pursuit". Xi's speech came near the end of a week-long propaganda blitz by state media, with chat shows saying "Marx was Right" and cartoons of his wild youth aiming to show his theories remain relevant to modern China and the next generation. Today, China, the largest self-identified socialist country, outwardly displays all the trappings of a modern capitalist society, from rampant consumption to a massive gap between the urban elite and rural poor. The apparent contradiction between party rhetoric and appearance has prompted many analysts to suggest the party is no longer really motivated by Marxism but puts practical and economic concerns above all else' (cnbc.com, 4 May). In his Report of an Investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan (1927), Mao admitted that the coming revolution would not be socialist: 'To overthrow these feudal forces is the real objective of the revolution'. China has all the hallmarks of capitalism. And the idea of a 'socialist' country is like being a little bit pregnant.

Misunderstood

'In another recent interview, Cardinal Marx admitted to finding the writings of Karl Marx "fascinating," adding that the Communist Manifesto has "an energy" and "a great language." "One only has to read Karl Marx without prejudice, then his power will surprise," the prelate

explained. "There is an inspiration, a revolutionary impetus," he stated. According to *Vatican News*, Marx also said in his interview with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* that Karl Marx "can be very helpful" in light of the current conflicts, revolutions and wars which very well might have their roots in economic injustice. "Human rights without material participation remain incomplete," the cardinal said. Cardinal Marx – who himself was once a professor of social ethics – also called Karl Marx "the first serious sociologist." Quoting yet another news source about the same interview, Marx also said about Karl

Marx: "Without him, there would not be any Catholic social doctrine." Moreover, he made it clear that Karl Marx is not responsible for the crimes of Stalinism, even though the cardinal admitted that "there is to be found [in Marx's writings] here or there a totalitarian thought," such as the collectivism which disrespects the individual person. However, added the cardinal, one may not put Karl Marx into a "direct connection" with the later political Marxism-Leninism, nor even the soviet prison system and work camps' (lifesitenews.com, 1 May). This is a curate's egg. Without doubt greater misunderstandings of Marx exist, but his materialism and comments regarding religion are tellingly absent. Holding two contrictory ideas in his head, not unlike scientists who profess religious beliefs, Cardinal Marx seems also to have forgotten The Papal Decree Against

Communism which declared Catholics who professed Communist doctrine should be excommunicated as apostates from the Christian faith!

Maligned

'This week marks the birthday of one of history's worst human beings, Karl Marx. Just because Marx's philosophy would lead directly to the deaths of 100 million human beings over the course of a century, the imprisonment of tens of millions more in gulags and reeducation camps from Russia to China to Vietnam to Cambodia to North Korea, and the oppression of hundreds of millions more hasn't dissuaded those on the modern Western left from embracing Marx's bloody legacy' (nationalreview.com, 2 May). This old canard is beneath contempt and arguably fading in its vintage.

Marx's Message

The bi-centenary of Karl Marx's birth was marked last month. His legacy to us is a fundamentally revolutionary theory of society, one which is even more relevant today and which will not go away no matter how many times

it is declared dead, derided or distorted until the worldwide system of capitalism is replaced by socialism. We have our disagreements with him, but are confident he would approve of our 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.

