

# socialist standard

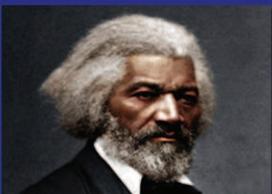
March 2013  
Vol. 109 No. 1303  
£1.50

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

## What would it take to make you snap?



## 150 years of slavery and wage-slavery



Frederick  
Douglass  
page 12



Tony Cliff  
page 15



Mali  
page 17

# socialist standard

MARCH 2013  
contents

## FEATURES

<b>Slavery and the US Civil War</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Frederick Douglas</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>SWP: Leninist organisation</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Mali - the background</b>	<b>17</b>

## REGULARS

<b>Pathfinders</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Letters</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Halo Halo!</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Brief Reports</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Cooking the Books</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Material World</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Greasy Pole</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Mixed Media</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Reviews</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Proper Gander</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Meetings</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>50 Years Ago</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Action Replay</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Voice from the Back</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Free Lunch</b>	<b>24</b>

## The Socialist Party

52 Clapham High Street,  
London SW4 7UN

Tel: 0207 622 3811

Email: [spgb@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb@worldsocialism.org)

Website: [www.worldsocialism.org/spgb](http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb)

Blog: <http://socialismoryourmoneyback.blogspot.com/>

## SUBSCRIPTION ORDERS

should be sent to the address above.

**RATES:** One year subscription (normal rate) £15. One year subscription (low/unwaged) £10. Europe rate £20 (Air mail). Rest of world £25 (Air mail). Voluntary supporters subscription £20 or more. Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 6 April** at the address above. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

## Contact Details

### UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

#### LONDON

**North London branch.** Meets 2nd Wednesday 6.30pm. Travelodge café/bar, 7-15 City Road, EC1 (nearest Tube and rail stations Old Street and Moorgate).

**South London branch.** Meets 1st Tues. 7.00pm. Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Tel: 020 7622 3811

**West London branch.** Meets 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY.

#### MIDLANDS

**West Midlands Regional branch.** Meets last Sunday of the month, the Briar Rose pub, 25 Bennetts Hill, Birmingham B2 5RE. Tel: Tony Gluck 01242 235615.

Email: [tonygluck111@btinternet.com](mailto:tonygluck111@btinternet.com)

#### NORTHEAST

**Northeast branch.** Contact: Brian Barry, 86 Edmond Ct, Ryhope, Sunderland SR2 0DY. Tel: 0191 521 0690.

#### NORTHWEST

**Lancaster branch.** Meets fortnightly 8.30pm. P. Shannon, 10 Green Street, Lancaster LA1 1DZ. Tel: 01524 382380

Email: [spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org)

**Manchester branch.** Paul Bennett, 6 Burleigh Mews, Hardy Lane, M21 7LB. Tel: 0161 860 7189

**Bolton.** Tel: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589

**Cumbria.** Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG

**Carlisle.** Robert Whitfield. Email: [robdotbob@gmail.com](mailto:robdotbob@gmail.com) Tel: 07906 373975

**Rochdale.** Tel: R. Chadwick. 01706 522365

**Southeast Manchester.** Enquiries: Blanche Preston, 68 Fountains Road, M32 9PH

#### YORKSHIRE

**Skipton.** R Cooper, 1 Caxton Garth, Threshfield, Skipton BD23 5EZ. Tel: 01756 752621

**Todmorden:** Keith Scholey, 1 Leeview Ct, Windsor Rd, OL14 5LJ. Tel: 01706 814 149

#### SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

**Kent and Sussex Regional branch.** Meets second Sunday every month at 2.00pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ. Dave Chesham:

Email: [whichfinder@gmail.com](mailto:whichfinder@gmail.com) Tel: 07973 142701.

**South West Regional branch.** Meets 2nd Saturday of each month in the Railway Tavern, Salisbury, 2.00pm (check before attending). Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol BS5 6DN. Tel: 0117 9511199

**Canterbury.** Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB

**Luton.** Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP

**Redruth.** Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1PB. Tel: 01209 219293

#### EAST ANGLIA

**East Anglian Regional branch.** Meets every two months on a Saturday afternoon (see meetings page for details).

Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billericay, CM12 0EX. [n.deutz@btinternet.com](mailto:n.deutz@btinternet.com) David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccles-on-Sea, NR12 0SF. Tel: 01692 582533. Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD. Tel: 01603 814343.

#### IRELAND

**Cork:** Kevin Cronin, 5 Curragh Woods,

Frankfield, Cork. Tel: 021 4896427. Email: [mariekev@eircom.net](mailto:mariekev@eircom.net)

**Newtownabbey:** Nigel McCullough. Tel: 028 90852062.

#### SCOTLAND

**Edinburgh branch.** Meets 1st Thur. 7.00-9.00pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh. J. Moir. Tel: 0131 440 0995.

[JIMMY@jmoir29.freemove.co.uk](http://jimmy@jmoir29.freemove.co.uk) Branch website: <http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>

**Glasgow branch.** Meets 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. Tel: 01355 903105.

Email: [peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk)

**Dundee.** Ian Ratcliffe, 16 Birkhall Ave, Wormit, Newport-on-Tay, DD6 8PX. Tel: 01328 541643.

**Lothian Socialist Discussion @** Autonomous Centre Edinburgh, ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Meets 4th Wednesday of each month 7.30-9.00pm. Tel: F.Anderson 07724 082753.

#### WALES

**Swansea branch.** Meets 2nd Mon, 7.30pm, Unitarian Church, High Street. Corres: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. Tel: 01792 643624

**Cardiff and District.** Corres: Richard Botterill, 21 Pen-Y-Bryn Rd, Gabalfa, Cardiff, CF14 3LG. Tel: 02920-615826

Email: [richardbotterill@hotmail.com](mailto:richardbotterill@hotmail.com)

**Llandudno** Contact: Gareth Whitley - Email: [gwhitley@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:gwhitley@hotmail.co.uk)

**INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS**

**Latin America.** J.M. Morel, Calle 7 edif 45 apto 102, Multis nuevo La loteria, La Vega, Rep. Dominicana.

**AFRICA**

**Kenya.** Patrick Ndege, PO Box 78105, Nairobi.

**Swaziland.** Mandla Ntshakala, PO Box 981, Manzini.

**Zambia.** Kephass Mulenga, PO Box 280168, Kitwe.

**ASIA**

**India.** World Socialist Group, Vill Gobardhanpur. PO Amral, Dist. Bankura, 722122

**Japan.** Michael. Email: [japan.wsm@gmail.com](mailto:japan.wsm@gmail.com)

**EUROPE**

**Denmark.** Graham Taylor, Kjaerslund 9, floor 2 (middle), DK-8260 Viby J

**Germany.** Norbert. E-mail: [weltsozialismus@gmx.net](mailto:weltsozialismus@gmx.net)

**Norway.** Robert Stafford. Email: [hallblithe@yahoo.com](mailto:hallblithe@yahoo.com)

**Italy.** Gian Maria Freddi, Casella Postale n. 28., c/o Ag. PT VR 17, 37131 Verona

**Spain.** Alberto Gordillo, Avenida del Parque 2/2/3 Puerta A, 13200 Manzanares.

**COMPANION PARTIES OVERSEAS**

**World Socialist Party of Australia.** P. O. Box 1266 North Richmond 3121, Victoria, Australia. Email: [commonownership@yahoo.com.au](mailto:commonownership@yahoo.com.au)

**Socialist Party of Canada/Parti Socialiste du Canada.** Box 4280, Victoria B.C. V8X 3X8 Canada. Email: [SPC@iname.com](mailto:SPC@iname.com)

**World Socialist Party (New Zealand)** P.O. Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New Zealand.

**World Socialist Party of the United States** P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 USA. Email: [boston@wspus.org](mailto:boston@wspus.org)

---

# 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

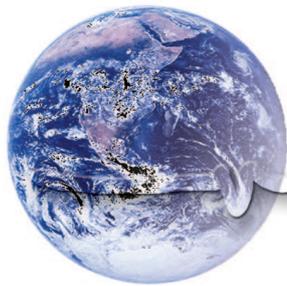
new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections 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.

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



# socialist standard

MARCH 2013

## Editorial

---

### The power to say no

---

THERE HAS been more ministerial sneering recently from Ian Duncan Smith after his department's Workfare regime of unpaid work placements for benefit claimants, 'slave labour' to some, was declared illegal by a High Court ruling. The ruling was made on narrowly technical grounds and not, as some had hoped, under the anti-slavery laws. This came as a disappointment to campaigners, but as a judgement by the capitalist state on a capitalist system of government, it should surprise no one. But what of slavery within capitalism itself?

Capitalism's system of exploitation is dependent on the existence of a large pool of free labour which can be taken up or discarded by employers at will as individual businesses and the economy expand and contract. This meant that before capitalism could flourish in Britain, the old medieval system that tied serfs to a particular place and a particular overlord, had to be broken up. In the southern states of America, chattel slavery was another system that tied labourers to a master. It was inevitable then that the dynamic new capitalist economy in the north and the older slave economy in the south would sooner or later come into conflict. That conflict was eventually resolved on the bloody battlefields of the American civil war, and led to the triumph of Northern capitalism. The resulting freedom that workers acquired in both countries to sell their labour to whoever would buy it would seem, on the face of it, to be the very antithesis of slavery.

But slavery, in its broadest economic sense, takes many

forms. Best known, perhaps, are the chattel slavery of Greece and Rome and the serfdom of medieval Europe. But child soldiers, those forced into marriages, bartered wives, coerced prostitutes and indentured servants are all slaves. Slavery flourished in the twentieth century in the Soviet Gulags and in German and Japanese prisoner-of-war camps. In southern Asia, today, many are forced by economic circumstances to sell themselves to creditors. Debt bondage is prevalent in this region, particularly in rural India where a family can find itself enslaved for generations in payment of an unpayable debt. The forced labour regimes and the sale of 'orphaned' children to employers by British workhouses in the nineteenth century were both direct form of slavery.

In theory, slavery was abolished worldwide by article four of the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights. Yet one form of slavery remains today which is not only legal, but universal in the capitalist world: wage slavery. Those free wage workers on which capitalism depends are free only to the extent that they have a choice, a limited choice, over which employer buys their labour. And like the ancient Athenian or modern Indian slave who has sold himself into bondage under contract because it was the only way he could survive within a private property economy, the wage worker is forced to sell his labour by contract to an employer. And while the wage worker's employer only owns his labour and not his body and mind, that body and mind must nevertheless go wherever his labour goes, which is where his employer directs it.



'THE BREAD I eat in London is a deleterious paste, mixed up with chalk, alum and bone ashes, insipid to the taste and destructive to the constitution' (Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Henry Clinker*, 1771). Food adulteration and poisoning have probably been with us for as long as food has been a market commodity, and like many other commodities in capitalism, the quality of food is a permanent battleground between profit and regulation. It is not too long since the Chinese melamine scandal, which killed 6 children in 2008 and resulted in the executions of those deemed responsible by the Chinese state. But what is really responsible goes unpunished, because even the Chinese state can't execute the profit motive, and instead is becoming one of its most ruthless admirers.

More recently, in 2012, the Food Safety Standards Authority of India found that of 1791 random samples of milk from 33 states only 31.5 percent conformed to quality standards while 68.4 percent were adulterated with glucose, skimmed milk, detergent, fat and urea (*Times of India*, 10 January 2012).

Across the world, any type of processed food or drink may at any time contain one or more adulterants, usually cheaper ingredients to increase weight, improve appearance or lengthen shelf life. The most adulterated products are 'extra virgin' olive oil, milk and honey ('Food Fraud: The 10 most adulterated foods', [blog.cncahealth.com](http://blog.cncahealth.com), 26 April 2012). Coffee is routinely adulterated with chicory, and chicory itself with peas, beans or wheat. Butter is mixed with lard, wine with diethylene glycol, honey with corn syrup, rice noodles with bleach, and meat, fish and even tofu with formaldehyde. Fish substitution is particularly rife, with recent studies showing that 39 percent of seafood sales in New York were not as claimed on the label, while 94 percent of 'white tuna' was in fact escolar, the consumption of more than 100 grams of which leads to violent diarrhoea (*New Scientist*, 16 February). An indication of how much worse things would be without regulation is given by studies of illicit drugs such as hashish, which has been found to contain a wide range of adulterants including heavy metals, the horse tranquiliser ketamine, shoe polish and human faeces.

So it is with some bemusement that socialists consider all the hysteria about horsemeat being used in cheap burgers. People seem to possess an almost indestructible faith in capitalism's ability to give them a fair deal at any level. As if the clues aren't already big enough. At the risk of sounding like old nags, we have to say again that capitalism is about making money and nothing else. This means saving on costs. Regulations do exist but kudos to anyone who can get over or round them and pass off crud as caviar. British workers may be aghast that they have been scoffing My Little Pony all these years but really they don't have any reason to be surprised. Don't they know or care that the world is awash with counterfeits in everything from designer

jeans to prescription drugs?

Money corrupts in a poverty system. One of many pathetic and preventable disgraces to reach the small news columns recently was the story that over 11,000 African forest elephants in Gabon have been wiped out by poachers since 2004, threatening the very existence of elephants in Africa. But there's our old friend capitalism at work again, with a booming Asian market driving up the price of pink ivory and making poaching the occupation of choice for many poor people with few other options and no time for animal welfare. And it's not just poor people. As the World Wildlife Fund pointed out 'Such a high value commodity is corrupting governance on all levels - when arrests are made, they are often obstructed by government people who have a stake in the trade as well' (*BBC Online*, 6 February). Perhaps if the elephants were turning up in local burgers the media might have made more of a fuss about it.

Corruption isn't just a matter of venal motivations, but of incompetent systems, as with the story of the 'horse passports' in Ireland. Mild concern that horses were cantering into the catering turned into galloping paranoia that their phenylbutazone medications might be too, with the news that Irish horses seemed to have more dodgy passports than a Colombian drugs baron, at least one to record their true medication and a clean one to show the abattoir inspectors who could then pass them fit for consumption. It didn't take much to fiddle these passports, as it only involved the child's play of putting a piece of sticky tape over bits of it, or even better, just phoning it in as lost and getting an instant replacement. Whether blind eyes were being turned or blinkers worn we don't know, but the regulatory process can only be described as spectacularly inept.

The fact that the food industry is really a profit industry with no real interest in food may be lost on workers but it is not lost on the world's richest speculator, Warren Buffett, who has just bought Heinz for \$28bn, making him one of the world's biggest grocers. So now Beanz Meanz Buffett, but does he actually know anything about food, or what goes on in the food producing process? Probably not. Does he care? Probably not. His money goes where the profit is biggest, that's all. Perhaps he could have bought a pharmaceutical firm instead and started cranking out cheap or free medical supplies for the world's poor, but business is business and philanthropy is, let's face it, a hobby for the weekend.

The falling price of DNA testing means that regulators will be better able to spot Roger Rabbit or Roland Rat climbing into the burger mix in future, however manufacturers have every incentive to look for ways around the testing. One tried and tested tactic is 'pay the fine, promise change and then carry on regardless', a viable strategy because even where regulation is not just voluntary, states are reluctant to penalise their own industries to the point of damaging their ability to be competitive in international markets. Meanwhile, pig farms in largely regulation-free China are releasing a 'tsunami of antibiotic-resistant bacteria' in meat that contains up to 149 genes resistant to all classes of antibiotic, and there are predictions that a million Americans will get salmonella poisoning this year, and some hundreds may die, because poultry farms are refusing to invest in the vaccine - 'it doesn't hurt the birds, so there's no profit in prevention' (*New Scientist*, same issue).

Regulation, like reformism, fights a perpetually losing battle on an ever-expanding frontline in capitalism because money and how to get it are the only things that matter and anyone who gets in the way becomes just another casualty. The fact is that there is no 'decent' capitalism, no 'fair' way to play the money game, no honest buck or ethical dollar, and anyone who insists that there is, against all the evidence, is just flogging the same old dead horse.

# Vote for yourself for a change?

■ Why, when the resources exist to provide a decent standard of living for everyone, are we going through “austerity”?

■ It's because the present system is not geared to meeting our needs but to making profits for businesses and the rich people who own and control them. At the moment this capitalist system is in an economic crisis where profits have fallen. The only way out for the system is to restore profits at our expense.

■ That's why what our wages can buy has shrunk. It's why benefits are being slashed. And it's why Islington council has been cutting local services.

■ It's not just Islington. It's councils everywhere, whichever party is in control. Councils get most of their money from the government, but market forces have obliged the government to reduce this. National and local politicians are just running the system in the only way it can be – as a profit system where priority has to be given to profit-making over meeting our needs.

■ It's the system that's to blame, not those elected to run

it. That's why changing the politicians in charge makes no difference. As the saying goes, “changing governments changes nothing”. It will be like this as long as the profit system lasts. So there is no point in voting for parties that accept this system.

■ The alternative is to change to a new system based on satisfying our needs, where the places where wealth is produced will no longer be owned by profit-seeking businesses but will be owned and democratically controlled by us all. That's what the Socialist Party stands for. We are contesting this by-election to raise this issue, and to give those of you who agree a chance to be counted.

You can do this by voting for the **Socialist candidate, BILL MARTIN**. And then get in touch to help bring an end to the system that can never be made to work in your interest. Write to: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UN.

[www.worldsocialism.org/spgb](http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb)

Tel: 0207 622 3811 Email: [spgb@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb@worldsocialism.org)  
Election Blog: <http://spgb.blogspot.co.uk>

**Islington By-Election Junction Ward 21 March 2013**

## The Accrington Pals

The Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester,  
17 Jan - 16 Feb 2013



This captivating production of Peter Whelan's play is set during the First World War on the setts of Accrington, the smallest town to raise its own pals' battalion. These army

units were so-called to reflect their deliberate composition of friends and neighbours. In this staging, life is lived by hurricane lamp and moonlight, and clogs and army boots tramp across the tramlines as the rain pours down, the lighting picking out life in all its brightness and triumph against a dark background of defeat and death. The acting is superb, drawing us deeply into the lives of the women of the town and through them into unbearable intimacy with the fate of their men who have joined the battalion. This heart-rending drama is all the more poignant for eschewing and indeed bitterly condemning sentimentality.

The drama hangs broadly on the affection and tension between the women such as Eva who embrace life with all its risk of loss and those such as her acerbic landlady May who flinch from it and deny it. At the heart of the play is the tormented relationship between May and her second cousin, the idealistic Tom, contrasted with the generosity of the love between Eva and her man Ralph. May behaves like a tartar towards Tom, but in secret she tries to get the sergeant major, CSM Rivers, to release

him after he has enlisted. Rivers refuses but promises to look after him like a father.

Amongst the soldiers, the theme of hope against despair is echoed in the Baptist, Arthur who declares that we have failed to build the new Jerusalem and that the war is a second flood, this time of steel, to punish us; here is an oblique reference to the inability of the international working class to stand by one another and prevent the war. Indeed, Tom puts his hope in socialism as both he and this journal understand it, and which he believes he encounters in action in the regiment, the very body which is the engine of the slaughter, but in which no money changes hands, skills are exchanged voluntarily and with a will, and the good of one is the good of all. It



is this cohesion and mutuality of the men from the same small mill town which Rivers touchingly believes will dismay the enemy. He shares this belief with the cold and remote authority which

oversees the lives of soldiery and civilians alike, and which is unseen and untouchable but ever-present.

Tom and Ralph are together at the front when the fatal whistle blows, Ralph frantically tightening and loosening the straps of his pack, and Tom with staring eyes repeating his socialist belief as if in a trance.

As the play darkens, May meets Rivers for a second time and in a terrible and merciless speech he smashes her illusions and his own. But illusions are the enemy of hope, which we see renewed in the women finding a way of getting to grips with remote authority and, in Tom's words, joining the 'particular' with the 'general'.

**PR**



## Silence in Church

IN FEBRUARY, Kepar Leniata, a 20 year old mother from Papua New Guinea, was stripped, tortured, doused in petrol and burned alive. Hundreds of bystanders were in attendance, some even taking photographs of the events. She was suspected of being a witch (*Guardian*, 8 February 2013).

And in Zimbabwe in January, a sorceress who survived a massive explosion in her home explained that it occurred when her partner, a witchdoctor, was beheading a goblin. A customer who had paid \$15,000 dollars to have the goblin dealt with and the witchdoctor were both killed. The explosion occurred during a 'lightning manufacturing process' involving petrol and electricity which was required for the operation ([religionnewsblog.com/27031](http://religionnewsblog.com/27031)).

Meanwhile in London on 4<sup>th</sup> February, Justin Portal Welby, another man who believes in the resurrection of the dead, a 'holy ghost' and other spiritual hogwash was sworn in as the new Archbishop of Canterbury. As part of the proceedings he promised to 'promote unity, peace and love among all Christian people,' and to guide the Church away from 'error.'

He may have his work cut out since 'unity, peace and love' are in short supply in the Anglican Church at the moment, but at least there is plenty of 'error,' so perhaps he can get stuck into that.

One of the most dangerous examples of religious error (admittedly, more associated with the independent happy-clappy churches than with Justin's lot) is the apparently growing belief here too in witchcraft, exorcisms and the casting out of evil spirits,



etc. particularly from children: Kristy Bamu, for example, who in 2010 was tortured to death by his sister and her partner who had convinced themselves that he was a witch.

And should any would-be witch doctor for Jesus need instruction in performing an exorcism, the internet is awash with them - complete with handy lists of biblical passages to study. ([wikihow.com/Perform-a-Christian-Exorcism](http://wikihow.com/Perform-a-Christian-Exorcism), for example.)

According to the *Guardian* (1 March 2012), 'More than 650 Pentecostal churches opened in the UK between 2005 and 2010, taking the total to 3900. Many feature exorcisms and sell lucrative 'cures' for possession.' And in August last year, Tim Loughton, the government's children's minister, complained of the 'wall of silence' that surrounded the problem (*Guardian*, 14 August 2012).

So, if the new Archbishop of Cant wants to do something about the 'error' of the faithful, given that belief in biblical teachings is part of it, he now has the perfect opportunity to break the 'wall of silence' and come clean about the dangers that lie in wait for the gullible in religion.

However, we do like a happy ending in the Halo, Halo column, so here's a piece from the *Guardian* (29 January) to show that silence from the Church can sometimes be golden - or rather, worth its weight in gold.

When the vicar of St Peter's in East Blachington, Sussex described his church as having 'a wonderful quality of silence,' one of the flock hit on the idea of recording, and flogging it. And apparently they've sold out of their first pressing and are now taking orders from as far away as Ghana.

Well, Christianity has been selling nothing for 2,000 years, but how long it will take for the customers of these CDs to realise that you need perfect silence before you can listen to them is anyone's guess. Witchcraft is obviously not the only scam the faithful fall for.

NW

### Upon My Pontiff! *Halo, Halo Extra*

ONCE THE tabloids had their teeth sunk into that nice, juicy horsemeat scandal story that had been dominating the headlines it needed something of global importance to knock it off the front pages. But on 11<sup>th</sup> February the prayers of the meat industry were answered. The fact that they'd been feeding us minced nag labelled as beef for ages and that no-one had a clue about its origin, or what equine drugs had been injected into it were forgotten, temporarily at least.

The tired and confused 85 year old Pope Benedict XVI had jacked in his job and until a successor could be appointed the world was without its direct link to God. This was almost unprecedented. Popes are supposed to go on until they die. They are infallible.

Pope Benedict became infallible in a puff of white smoke eight years ago and his resignation raised an important question. You may remember that episode of 'Father Ted' where a

visiting bishop had a Grade Two holy relic, 'the holy stone of Clonrichert' rammed up his backside by Father Jack, and Father Ted asked 'will it still be a Grade Two when it's removed?' The question now applies to the ex-Pope's infallibility. Is he still infallible now?

It's not a question we've had to consider recently. The last

Pope to resign was Gregory XII in 1415, and before that in 1045 Pope Benedict IX resigned after being accused of 'feasting on immorality', committing 'many vile adulteries and murders' and of being 'So vile, so foul' and 'so execrable'. He then sold the papacy to his godfather who became Pope Gregory VI, and himself resigned the following year.

But at least it's not bad news for all the doomsday theorists out there. The 12<sup>th</sup> century St Malachy, an Irish archbishop prophesied that there would only be 112 more Popes before the Last Judgment and Benedict XVI was the 111<sup>th</sup>. Watch this space.

NW





## Value creation and extraction

Writing in the *Guardian* (19 January) in an article subtitled 'Talk of a fairer capitalism is just hot air unless we rehabilitate and reward the idea of value creation,' economics professor Mariana Mazzucato quoted Big Bill Haywood of the Western Federation of Miners and later the IWW as saying: 'The barbarous gold barons do not find the gold, they do not mine the gold, they do not mill the gold, but by some weird alchemy all the gold belongs to them.'

She used this as an introduction to her case that capitalism today is more concerned with 'value extraction' than 'value creation' and that this needs to be corrected to avoid further financial crises. 'Restraining the power of value extraction,' she wrote, 'requires a theory of value – an area once hotly discussed in economics, but no longer,' and went on:

'This is because a century ago the notion that labour creates value (central to the work of classical' economists like David Ricardo and Karl Marx, and measured by objective factors like productivity) was replaced by the 'neo-classical', subjective notion that satisfaction and 'preferences' create value.'

This is a valid point. In fact, modern bourgeois economics has gone further and dismisses the whole idea of 'value' as a useless concept, arguing that all you need is a theory of price. This enables it to obscure the obvious fact that wealth, as something useful to human life, can only be created by people working. In their theory labour becomes reduced to just one element, along with land and capital, of cost and so of price.

Marx's theory of value was that a commodity (as a good or a service produced for sale) was determined by the amount of 'socially necessary' labour expended on its production from start to finish. By 'socially necessary' he meant the labour that had to be expended to produce it by an average worker of average skill working with average equipment; in other words, not necessarily the actual labour expended, otherwise a slower than average worker would create more value.

Marx was not talking just about the labour expended at the last stage of production of a good but of all the labour expended on it from start to finish. That included labour expended on mining or growing the materials, constructing the machinery, supplying the energy, and making the semi-finished products, ie. the past labour incorporated in the fixed and circulating capital.

According to Marx, 'value creation,' to use Mazzucato's terminology, took place when workers produced a commodity. The workers transferred existing value from the raw materials, machinery, etc. to the product but at the same time created new value. However, what they produced was not theirs but belonged to the capitalist owner who employed them. A part of this did go to them as their wages, but most went to the capitalist as 'surplus value'. This legalised robbery (Haywood's 'weird alchemy') could well be described as 'value extraction'.

But this is not what Mazzucato means by the term. She is not as radical as might at first seem. Her case is not against capitalism as such, but only against present-day capitalism which she sees as biased in favour of finance and against industry. Her 'production theory of value' is a plea for, as she put it, 'reinvesting profits into areas that create goods and services' instead of financial juggling.

But, as Marx explained, 'value extraction' occurs at the point of production. Financial juggling is not extracting value from the producers but from those who originally extracted it from them: the mining, manufacturing and service capitalists who employ them. Mazzucato is taking sides in a thieves' quarrel.

## PUBLICATIONS ORDER FORM

### PAMPHLETS

Price and Qty

An Inconvenient Question: Socialism and The Environment.....	£2.00	x	_____
What's Wrong With Using Parliament?.....	£1.00	x	_____
Ecology and Socialism.....	£1.00	x	_____
From Capitalism to Socialism: how we live and how we could live....	£1.00	x	_____
Africa: A Marxian Analysis.....	£1.50	x	_____
Socialism As a Practical Alternative.....	£1.00	x	_____
Some Aspects of Marxian Economics.....	£2.00	x	_____
How the Gods Were Made.....	£1.50	x	_____
Marxism and Darwinism by Anton Pannekoek.....	£1.50	x	_____
How we Live and How we Might Live by William Morris.....	£1.50	x	_____
The Right to be Lazy and other articles by Paul Lafargue.....	£2.00	x	_____
Marxism Revisited.....	£2.00	x	_____
Socialist Principles Explained.....	£2.00	x	_____
The Market System Must Go! Why Reformism doesn't work.....	£2.75	x	_____
<b>All the above pamphlets (25% discount).....</b>	<b>£15.00</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>_____</b>

### BOOKS

A Socialist Life by Heather Ball.....	£3.75	x	_____
Are We Prisoners Of Our Genes?.....	£4.75	x	_____
Socialism Or Your Money Back (reduced from £9.95).....	£4.00	x	_____
<b>All the above books and pamphlets (25% discount).....</b>	<b>£20.00</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>_____</b>

### DVD

Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff.....	£5.75	x	_____
Poles Apart? Capitalism or socialism as the planet heats up.....	£5.75	x	_____

**TOTAL** .....£ \_\_\_\_\_

All prices include postage and packing. For six or more of any publication, reduce the price by one third.

Return this form along with your cheque or money order to:  
**The Socialist Party of Great Britain, FREEPOST, London, SW4 7BR, United Kingdom.**  
 (No postage necessary if mailed within the UK)

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

City.....

Postcode.....

County.....

PHONE (optional).....

E-MAIL (optional).....

LAST MONTH'S *Material World* examined the terrible price that society pays for the motor car – in pollution and disease, ugliness and noise, social atomisation, injury and death. Does it follow that a socialist community is likely to decide to stop producing cars? How compatible would such a decision be with the idea of socialism as a world of material abundance and free access?

First point. Socialism will make a lot of car travel unnecessary. This applies especially to commuting. Many jobs to which people now commute will disappear with the abolition of money. Over time geographical patterns of habitation and production can be changed to enable most people to live close enough to their work not to need a car to get there.

We can expect new forms of public transport and the restoration of environment-friendly old forms such as trams and perhaps even canal barges (for non-perishable supplies). Sizeable urban areas can be made safe as pedestrian precincts. Some towns in Germany are already car-free and accessible only by rail.

Second point. Replacing petrol-guzzling motor cars by electric cars should reduce pollution from cars and their contribution to global heating, provided that the electricity comes from low-carbon sources (not from coal, as it often does at present).

## Sharing systems

Third point. *Free access to car transport as a service* can be achieved without permanently assigning a car to each family or individual. In social terms, the current arrangement, with most cars sitting unused most of the time, is extremely wasteful. The total number of cars required can be minimised by relying on a pool of cars available through a network of depots.

When people want to go on a trip that cannot conveniently be made by public transport, they will borrow a car from the nearest depot. When they no longer need the car, they will return it to the network (not necessarily to the same depot). The depot staff will recharge, repair and maintain the vehicles and monitor their use.

Such arrangements already exist, though not for cars. The public lending library provides free access to books and cassettes. A free-access sharing system for bicycles was pioneered in Amsterdam by the Provos in the 1960s and now exists in Paris, Hangzhou and many other cities. In socialism sharing systems will expand to cover specialised tools and other

things that people need to use occasionally.

In a free-access society people will develop a different psychology. They will view the goods being held for their use in public stores and depots as *already belonging to them*. As they will have free access to those things whenever needed, they will feel no urge to transfer stuff to their homes in order to make it "theirs". Such pointless behaviour will appear pathological. People will feel a need for exclusive and permanent possession only of those things which have a special personal meaning for them.



More of this?

## Electric cars still a problem?

So it may be possible to provide free access to electric cars at a social cost lower than that now paid for motor cars. Much lower, perhaps, but still considerable. Switching to electric cars would not prevent road accidents. Electric cars also pose environmental problems of their own.

There are two types of electric car: one runs on a battery, the other is powered by a stack of hydrogen fuel cells. However, the manufacture of both devices depends on the availability of rare earth metals (REMs). These substances occur in very low-concentration ores from which they have to be separated out by means of acid baths and other processes, generating vast quantities of highly toxic waste.

The REM smelting plants in Inner Mongolia dump the waste into a large pool. From there the 'radioactive sludge' seeps into the soil and groundwater, destroying local agriculture and the health of local residents. A socialist society could not tolerate such poisoning of the environment, even in a single locality. No local community would voluntarily sacrifice itself to provide the world with certain raw materials. And the world administration would lack the coercive power to sacrifice a local community against its will.

So the waste would have to be reprocessed, stored in sealed vessels and buried in stable geological structures deep underground. This is not done under capitalism because it would cost too much. But even in socialism it will surely be impracticable to store more than a certain quantity of waste in this way, especially as it will be in addition to hundreds of thousands of tons of accumulated nuclear waste in urgent need of similar treatment.

That constraint will limit the amount of REMs extracted. And as REMs will be needed for many other uses (including energy-efficient fluorescent lamps and magnets for wind turbines) it will be necessary to set priorities for their allocation.

## Free access to everything?

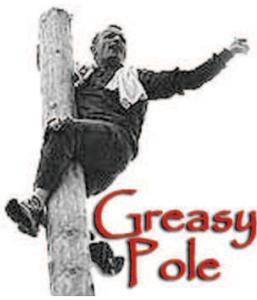
Thus, we cannot be sure whether socialist society will be able or willing to provide free access to car transport. The social cost associated with maintaining an adequate pool of electric cars may still be judged unacceptably high.

It's doubtful that there could ever be free access to *everything* – to space travel, for instance. The world socialist community will have to decide, through its democratic institutions and procedures, what free access will and will not cover, and how to distribute things to which free access cannot be provided.

STEFAN



No more of this?



## Disturbance? In Westminster?

report includes scenes which some viewers may find disturbing'. Cut to a film of a ditch in some famished village overflowing with massacred corpses, to a motorway fast lane with oozing victims of mangled vehicles, to some dazed and famished animals waiting to be transported to the abattoir. But the news can also be disturbing in a rather different way and with its own style of injury and anger. On 13 January an inquest into the death of Jacintha Saldanha, the nurse at the King Edward VII Hospital in London who had taken the hoax telephone call from Australia about the admission of pregnant Kate Middleton for morning sickness, ruled that she had committed suicide. A few days before, on a visit to the Houses of Parliament, the family's bewildered grief was all too apparent to need the intervention before the cameras of Labour MP Keith Vaz, gripping his arms around them after ensuring that it was all being recorded for the TV news. Was the sight of Vaz so determinedly exploiting the family's grief 'disturbing'? Well not on the same scale as those other incidents but it certainly aroused some strong reactions. 'What the hell has this got to do with Keith Vaz?' demanded Richard Littlejohn (himself not unaccustomed to attention-seeking). 'A creepy, oily politician who makes my skin crawl whenever I listen to him,' was one posted comment: 'A lawyer with a big mouth and a crooked MP with crooked mates' was another.

### Survivor

It is possible that a clutch of viewers assumed Vaz is the family's MP and was simply doing his duty towards them. But this is not so: he sits for Leicester East and the family live in Bristol, which means they are represented by the Tory, Charlotte Leslie – who, compared to Vaz, was markedly invisible in the matter. Then there is the fact that Vaz has some experience of inserting himself into prominent positions; for example at a royal reception in Buckingham Palace in December 1988, when he was just a year into his time in the Commons, his fellow Labour MP Chris Mullin observed that he 'managed, in a crowded field, to inveigle himself into The Presence. HM, radiant in lime green, worked the crowd...for an hour and a half'. More recently, a big party to mark his 25 years as an MP was attended by Tony Blair, Ed Miliband, Theresa May. For he is very much a survivor – the longest-serving Asian MP, which should give him some influence where it is likely to count. Except that there have been episodes in his parliamentary record which have needed all his skills to avoid involving him in some terminal scandal.

### Solicitor

Vaz came to England when he was nine; he went on

'BEFORE WE go over to our outside broadcasting team,' says the TV news presenter, 'a warning: their

to Cambridge and qualified as a solicitor, working mainly for local authorities. After becoming an MP he held a succession of minor jobs, including PPS for the Attorney General and Minister for Europe and the Commonwealth. His career has had an unusually high incidence of allegations about his conduct in office, such as ballot-rigging and receiving money in return for favours, some of which have been upheld and others which have been successfully obscured in clouds of verbiage and self-justification. In February 2000 Parliamentary Standards Commissioner Elizabeth Filkin, whose job was as gruesome as its title, investigated a number of allegations that Vaz had failed to declare, as he should have done, the receipt of several thousands of pounds from another solicitor, Sarosh Zaiwalla, whose former partner had made the original complaint. In the end Vaz was censured for just one matter, of receiving two payments of £4,500 although Filkin complained that the Honourable Member had improperly obstructed the full scope of her enquiries.



Keith Vaz

### Hinduja

Perhaps the most serious of these matters, as it involved a senior minister, was in January 2001 when the Commons were informed that Vaz and others had intervened in the application for British citizenship of the Hinduja brothers. From a tangle of misinformation and collusion it emerged that the Hindujas had paid Vaz's wife for 'legal advice on immigration issues.' Although Vaz was not required to declare these payments, Filkin was moved to comment that 'It is clear to me there has been deliberate collusion over many months between Mr Vaz and his wife to conceal this fact and to prevent me from obtaining accurate information about his possible financial relationship with the Hinduja family.' As a result, in June 2001 he was ousted as Minister for Europe. One rumour had it that he was called to see Tony Blair, who told him he was doing a brilliant job but as he happily went to leave he was informed by a member of the Downing Street office that he had in fact been sacked. In 2002 he was suspended from the House of Commons for one month after the Committee of Standards and Privileges ruled that he had 'committed serious breaches of the Code of Conduct and showed contempt for the House.' Last October the Tory MP Andrew Bridgen (who is himself what is called 'known to the police') complained to the Parliamentary Standards Commissioner after a Scotland Yard enquiry found evidence that some money paid into Vaz's bank accounts was 'of a suspicious nature.'

Vaz was rated by Chris Mullin as 'a sleek wheeler-dealer. He has the attention span of a gnat and a tendency to fantasise.' More widely among the legislators of Westminster, he is known as 'Keith Vazeline.' It is clear that he will continue to need all his talents for survival. But if he were to go under again, what reason is there to believe that any replacement will be noticeably different? These people – Vaz, Bridgen and the like – are typical of those who from the green benches fashion the laws and regulations which impel us to behave in accordance with the demands of this society of class repression. There is, overwhelmingly, reason for us to be 'disturbed' by this, to the effect that we organise to bring it to an end.

IVAN

# Slavery and the US Civil War

*150 years ago President Lincoln proclaimed the end of chattel slavery in the United States.*



The Proclamation of Emancipation freed slaves in the southern Confederate states that were fighting to secede from the Union. Up until this point the declared war aim of the northern states was to preserve the Union against the attempt of the southern states to secede. The war had always really been about slavery but it was only with the Proclamation of Emancipation of 1 January 1863 that it become openly so. Slavery had always been controversial in the US and had come close to being abolished in all states in 1787. By the early nineteenth-century it was outlawed in all states north of the Mason-Dixon line (which separates Maryland from Pennsylvania) but the growth of the cotton industry in the southern states gave slave-holding a new impetus. By the 1850s these states were seeking not just to defend but to expand slave-holding.

Lincoln was against slavery but was a moderate and pragmatic politician and he hoped first to restrict slavery to those states in which it already existed but ultimately



Artist's impression of the signing of the Proclamation of Emancipation

to enact a policy of abolition with compensation for slave-owners. With the victory of Lincoln and the new Republican party in the 1860 elections the long-term survival of slavery was threatened. Unable to expand production into avenues that did not depend on simple labour, slave-holders required new land to expand production and avoid land exhaustion. Without the ability to expand into new territories, southern slave-owners were doomed to a slow decline. The future of slavery in the US depended on the secession of the southern slave-holding states and so began the U.S. Civil War, a war in which around 750,000 soldiers and 50,000 civilians died over the rights of a narrow oligarchy to own slaves (300,000 were slave-owners, 1.5 percent of the total US population).

A short new book by James Heartfield, *British Workers and the US Civil War* (ISBN 978-0956806123, £4), looks at the attempts of the British government to intervene in the US Civil War on the side of the Confederates. Though not overtly pro-slavery this intervention was aimed at denting the power of the USA in North America and drew on anti-democratic sentiment prevailing in the British establishment at that time. The British press and politicians were overwhelmingly in favour of intervention on the side of the slave-owners. They were unsuccessful, however, in creating a *casus belli* to assist the Confederate states despite efforts to do so. The case being made was one of supporting a fledgling state in its attempts at independence. In this context an attempt was made to mobilise the cotton mill workers of the north-west of England in support of intervention on the side of the Confederate states on the grounds of the state of their trade due to the shortage of cotton imports from the southern states. This shortage was due both to a blockade of southern exports by the Union navy but also

deliberate withholding by Confederates to provoke such intervention. Unemployment and short-time working impacted heavily on British cotton mill workers, but they refused to support the cynical attempts to engage their political support in favour of slave-owners.

With the working-class radicalism of the Chartist movement still within memory for many, a counter movement emerged to support the Union cause. This was focused on the radical Union Emancipation Society which contained a core of working class supporters. By contrast the far more establishment British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society refused to take sides in the civil war. The popular support for the Union anti-slavery cause was assisted by Lincoln's astute political move of issuing the Proclamation of Emancipation which made the war openly about the future of slavery. Thereafter it became politically impossible for the British government to intervene in favour of slavery. Having played an important part in preventing the possibility of war in support of the Confederates, the pro-Union anti-slavery agitation fed into a renewal of British working-class radicalism which helped to secure the 1867 Reform Act. Heartfield's book is a timely reminder of how, decades after the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, the British ruling class had few qualms about intervening in a war that would have secured it elsewhere for their own ends and how working class radicalism played an important part in preventing it.

Marx and Engels considered the US Civil War to be the second revolutionary phase in the history of that country, involving the end of slave labour and the expropriation of slaver-owners. The thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth amendments of the US constitution abolished slavery



Collecting the remains of the dead in Virginia

with no compensation to the slave-owners, granted citizenship to all those born or naturalised in the US and granted the right to vote and hold public office to all citizens. From its struggles with the expansionist southern slave-owners the northern industrial capitalists had emerged truly dominant in the US. With 'free labour' now the unchallenged form of exploitation, independent labour politics could develop in the US. As Marx put it: 'Labour in white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in black skin.' By the late nineteenth-century labour and socialist movements appeared to be flourishing in the US. However, we know what happened next. The history of the twentieth-century was one of the failure of labour politics and state capitalism and the marginalisation of revolutionary socialism. The US was the scene of a long battle against the rampant racism that still prevailed in the wake of slavery. It remains for the cause of the emancipation of labour to renew itself in earnest.

**CSK**

# The Great(er) Emancipator — Frederick Douglass

*If Hollywood is ever ready to demystify the Civil War, it should give Frederick Douglass the star treatment.*

How can you make a film about Abraham Lincoln and the abolition of slavery and leave out Frederick Douglass? Steven Spielberg found a way, apparently, in his recent film *Lincoln* (for a review see page 14).

The film's screenwriter, Tony Kushner, reportedly said that he had to leave out 'dramatic scenes with Frederick Douglass' as a 'tradeoff' for focusing the plot on Lincoln's 1865 effort to round up enough lame-duck Democrats in the House of Representatives to pass the Thirteenth Amendment (abolishing slavery). Kushner recalled that when Spielberg suggested limiting the film to this topic, both laughed at what seemed 'an insane idea' because the 'whole movie was just going to be a bunch of guys talking.'

The insane part, though, is not the bunch of guys talking—a refreshing change from the bloody bore of the war itself—but the relative insignificance of an abolition debate at the very moment Sherman and Grant's armies were uprooting slavery in fact. Spielberg chooses the denouement, *after* Gettysburg and Lincoln's landslide re-election, and just a few months before General Lee's surrender.

Spielberg and Kushner, by most accounts, have made the best of their material, but their 'tradeoff' sounds like a bum deal. Why not *keep* Frederick Douglass and choose a more dramatic episode? Any number of points during the Lincoln administration could shed a sharper light on his politics and the debate over slavery, and the presence of Douglass in each case would heighten understanding.

Setting the film even a few months earlier, to look at Lincoln's re-election campaign, would have raised the dramatic tension: the stakes then were still high. Douglass feared that an election victory for the 'revived' Democratic Party, led by Gen. George B McClellan, would prevent a 'final settlement' to the conflict, leaving it 'to tear and rend the country again at no

distant future'—and he campaigned vigorously for Lincoln.

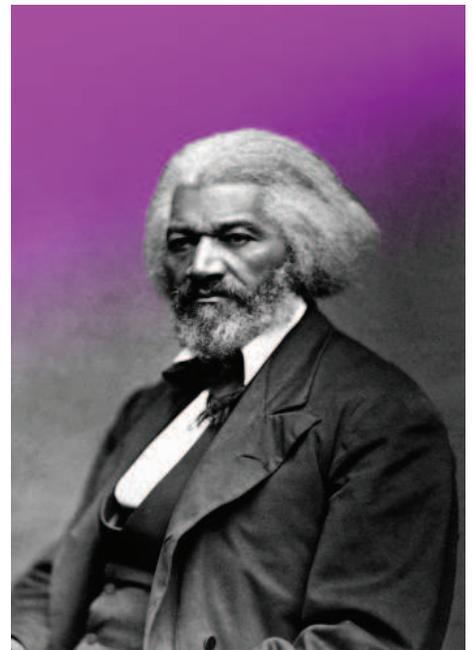
Even more interesting is the 1860 Presidential campaign, whose outcome sparked the war. Douglass campaigned for Lincoln in that election, too, but with many reservations. 'With the single exception of the question of slavery extension', he wrote at the time, 'Mr. Lincoln proposes no measure which can bring him into antagonistic collision with the traffickers in human flesh,' and offered the prediction that, 'The Union will, therefore, be saved simply because there is no cause in the election of Mr. Lincoln for its dissolution.' This illustrates the wide gap between Lincoln and the abolitionists at the time. Douglass's prediction was wrong, of course, but only because, 'the South was mad, and would listen to no concessions.'

And then there are the eventful months leading up to the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation. A film set then could examine how the war's necessities, more than high-blown principles, led the Lincoln administration to (finally!) take the first cautious steps toward abolition. Douglass welcomed the Proclamation, but found it 'extremely defective' and 'not a true proclamation of liberty but one marked by discriminations and reservations.' Including his views would help brush a few cobwebs off Lincoln's much-praised but half-hearted executive order.

Any one of these settings seems more promising than Spielberg's odd choice, but there is probably method to his madness. Narrowing his film down to the Republicans' debate with the demoralized Democrats at war's end, rather than with principled abolitionists at its outset, would seem to spare the director the ordeal of grappling with Lincoln's evolving policy. Instead, he can present viewers with the more familiar sight of political arm-twisting and horse-trading over an issue that is, by that point, a near formality. That level of politics may be more 'relevant' to our own, but really that is an argument *against* choosing it, dramatically speaking.

Better Fred than Abe

An even better idea (Steven, if you're listening): Why not cut out Abe Lincoln altogether and make Frederick Douglass the star?



His life, stretching from 1817 to 1895, is full of gripping, conflict-ridden tales, intertwined with the drama of slavery's demise and rise of industrial capitalism. For dramatic plot lines and entertaining dialogue, the screenwriter need look no further than Douglass's brilliant, overlapping accounts of his own life: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (1845), *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), and *The Life & Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881).

The story of his life begins in eastern Maryland, where he was born in a 'dull, flat, and unthrifty district . . . surrounded by a white population of the lowest order, indolent and drunken to a proverb, and among slaves, who seemed to ask, *Oh! What's the use?* every time they lifted a hoe.' His grandparents raised him several miles from the plantation where his mother and other slaves toiled, and where he was sent around age seven or eight to begin working himself. Douglass had the good fortune to be removed from the plantation—'before the rigors of slavery had fastened upon me'—and sent to the home of his master's relative in Baltimore, where a somewhat freer atmosphere prevailed. Except for a harrowing period back on the plantation, where he worked in the fields and plotted a (failed) attempt to escape to the North, he remained in Baltimore. And in 1838, disguised as a sailor, Douglass escaped by train from the city to New York.

He settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts, working on the shipbuilding docks as he had done in Baltimore. Within a few months of gaining his freedom he was a subscriber to *The Liberator*, the abolitionist newspaper of William Lloyd Garrison, whom Douglass met in 1841 at an anti-slavery convention in Nantucket. The impromptu speech Douglass delivered there created a sensation and launched his career as

an abolitionist agitator, beginning with his work as an 'agent' and lecturer for Garrison's Anti-Slavery Society.

Douglass, to the consternation of some, soon outgrew his role as 'escaped slave,' which his ever-growing eloquence as a writer and speaker made 'unconvincing' to many audiences. He also outgrew, or grew apart from, his mentor, Garrison, rejecting his general aloofness to politics and his insistence that the Constitution was a pro-slavery document. After returning from a tour of England, Douglass moved to Rochester, New York, away from the sphere of the 'Garrisonians,' and in 1847 began issuing his own newspaper, *The North Star*. He would continue to publish a weekly or monthly newspaper over the next fifteen or so years, under a number of different titles.

There is something thrilling, especially to socialists, about the abolitionist movement around the time Douglass entered it. Unlike typical reformists, with their laundry list of incremental improvements, the abolitionists aimed to uproot an entire (semi) mode of production, and would settle for nothing less! And they set about the task with passion and patience, using the written and spoken word as their weapons.

As the 1850s progressed, the abolitionists found that the tide of history was finally beginning to flow in a direction more favourable to their cause. The great national crisis was coming to a head. These are cinematic years of constant political and social upheaval: the disintegration of the Whig Party, the rapid rise and fall of the Free Soil and Know Nothing movements, and the birth of the Republican Party, while the nation staggered from one patched-together compromise and crisis to the next until the election of Lincoln. The Civil War itself is far less gripping than the decade that preceded it, and no one trained a

keener eye on the political currents than Frederick Douglass.

Of course, the story of Douglass during the Civil War is also immensely instructive. His writings at the time and his later reflections reveal how reluctant Lincoln was to do more than merely preserve the Union. From the outset, Douglass urged the President to wage an 'abolition war' and was deeply frustrated by how long it was taking the 'slow coach in Washington' to get moving in that direction. He berated the Republicans because they 'fought with the soft white hand, while they kept the black iron hand chained and helpless behind them; that they fought the effect, while they protected the cause.' But Douglass believed the necessities of the war would turn Republicans into abolitionists, wisely appealing to their pragmatic interests rather than their sense of morality. His analysis proved correct in the end but the war also turned Douglass the abolitionist into a stalwart Republican, which he would remain until his death.

After the war, as Garrison was disbanding his Anti-Slavery Society, Douglass felt that there was still work to be done; that the aim had been 'not merely to emancipate, but to elevate the enslaved class,' and that the former slave was now 'free from the old plantation' but with 'nothing but the dusty road under his feet' and a 'slave to society.' But his efforts to aid black workers were hampered by his loyalty to the Republican Party. This blind support for the party of industrial capital painted black workers into a corner, and allowed the Republicans to take their votes for granted. The contradictory position Douglass found himself in, as black leader and diehard Republican, sets the tone for his last three decades—a period of history that revealed how the Civil War freed capital from its chains, too.

## An inspiration to wage slaves

Knowing Hollywood, and its hankering for hagiography and historical melodrama, it's just as well, perhaps, that Douglass hasn't been given the star treatment; I would hate to see him reduced to a saint or superhero. The curious are better off going straight to the source by reading his autobiographies.

All three books bring the history of nineteenth-century America alive. But what makes them even more powerful is that while slavery may be officially dead and buried, exploitation and class rule are very much alive. You may pick up one of his autobiographies with the intention of learning about the past, only to encounter passages that remind you of your own lack of freedom as a worker—a wage slave.

It would be ridiculous, of course, to ignore the differences between a wage worker and chattel slave—starting with the auction-block tragedies that broke up slave families—but Douglass himself noted the similarities: 'The white slave had taken from him by indirection what the black slave had taken from him directly and without ceremony. Both were plundered, and by the same plunderers.' We need to think of ourselves as wage slaves, not to belittle the past horrors of slavery, but to keep in mind our real position under capitalism today.

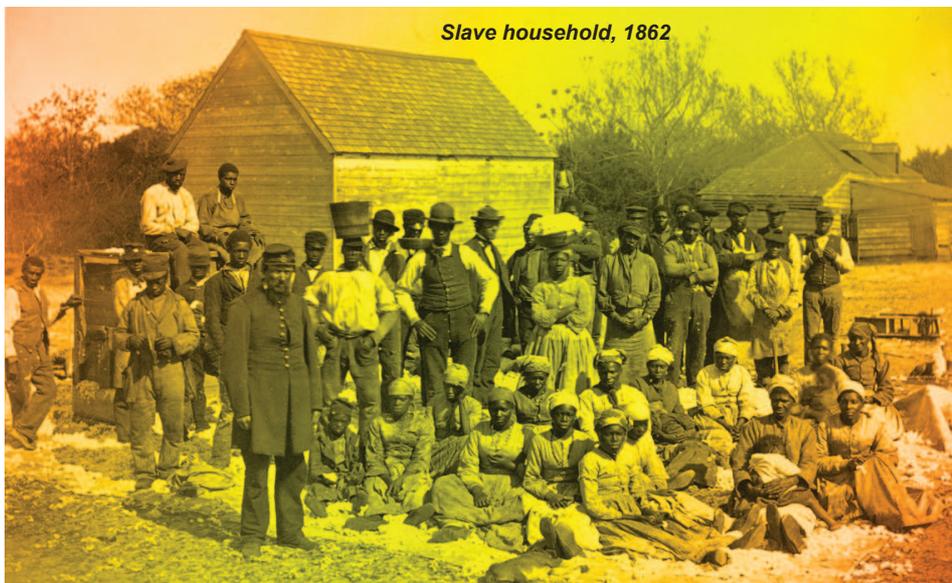
The great 'advantage' the slave has over the wage worker, although rooted in a bleaker situation, is in having no illusions about being free. Ever since Douglass, as a little boy, learned about a 'mysterious personage' named 'Old Master' who owned his grandmother and 'all the little children around her' (including himself), his state of bondage was a transparent fact, and gaining his freedom an obsession. This early revelation left young Frederick with 'something to brood over after the play and in moments of repose.'

His restless, probing mind went straight to the heart of the matter, asking himself: 'Why am I a slave. Why are some people slaves and others masters?' The stock answer he was given—much like today's 'That's just the way it is'—was that 'God, up in the sky' made everybody and 'made white people to be masters and mistresses, and black people to be slaves.' This struck Frederick as an odd thing for a benevolent God to do, and the source of the knowledge was unclear ('Did they go up in the skies and learn it?'). Also, he knew of many whites who were not masters, and blacks who were not slaves.



*Lincoln in the field, 1862*

Slave household, 1862



## Film Review: *Lincoln*

Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln*, written by Pulitzer Prize winner Tony Kushner is based on *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* by Doris Kearns, and has another acting tour de force by Academy Award winner Daniel Day-Lewis as the 16<sup>th</sup> US president. Kushner's political thriller, set in the White House and Congress in Washington DC in January 1865, tells of Lincoln's struggle to have the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment (abolishing slavery) to the US constitution passed in Congress before the defeat of the Confederate slave states in the Civil War. Its back room deals,

But he wasn't long in making his first great discovery that there were slaves brought directly from Guinea and those whose fathers or mothers were stolen from Africa. 'It was a kind of knowledge,' he recalled, 'that filled me with a burning hatred of slavery, increased my suffering, and left me without the means of breaking away from my bondage. Yet it was knowledge quite worth possessing.' From this he knew, 'what man can make, man can unmake.'

How many workers today are asking themselves: Why am I a wage slave? How many would even accept that self-description? We can learn from the attitude of the young Douglass who already was scrutinizing his social world and taking the first steps toward emancipation.

Another great lesson Douglass learned at a tender age—dispelling the 'painful mystery' of the 'white man's power to perpetuate the enslavement of the black man'—was that slavery had to enforce ignorance. The lesson was driven home by his master in Baltimore who forbade his wife to continue teaching Frederick how to read, saying in front of him: 'Learning will spoil the best nigger in the world.' Douglass drew the appropriate conclusion from his master's 'exposition of the true philosophy of slavery,' knowing from that moment knowledge is 'the true pathway from slavery to freedom.'

Along with his hard-fought struggle to develop his mind as a tool for confronting slavery, Douglass throughout his life had to fight to protect his dignity—even

politics and legalities are reminiscent of Aaron Sorkin's *The West Wing*.

Lincoln was a moderate, pragmatic abolitionist, he had written to Horace Greeley in 1862 of 'my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free,' and he is generally featured as the stern bearded president portrayed on the five-dollar bill and the imposing Lincoln Memorial. Day-Lewis gives Lincoln a soft-spoken, conversational tone and portrays him as a flesh and blood president who is politically cunning, charming, a loving husband and devoted father, an intellectual but also the folksy 'prairie lawyer' from Illinois. Marx believed Lincoln represented the idea that 'ordinary people of good will can accomplish feats which only heroes could accomplish in the old world.' Sally Field is outstanding as Mary Todd Lincoln especially in a heart bursting scene with Day-Lewis about the bereavement for their dead son.

Tommy Lee Jones gives a scene-stealing performance as Republican Party radical congressman Thaddeus Stevens who could be the 'hero' of the film. This contrasts with how he was portrayed in DW Griffith's 1915 paean to the Ku Klux Klan, *The Birth of a Nation*, where Stevens is denounced as a 'race traitor.' The American Civil War which left 800,000 dead was about slavery and Marx identified this in 1861 when he wrote 'the South already declared that the continuance of slavery was no longer compatible with the continuance of the Union.' Lincoln needed the help of radicals like Stevens to pass the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment. This would 'legalise' and expand the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 which was dependent on Union military victory, and had stated 'that all persons held as slaves' within the Confederate States 'are, and henceforward shall be free.'

*Lincoln* is probably Spielberg's best film, lacking his usual sentimentality and is the third of his films looking at the African-American experience, the others being the 1985 adaptation of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, and the 1997 story of the slave ship revolt *Amistad*. *Lincoln* directed by Spike Lee would be interesting. *Lincoln* as a period film is comparable to the 1993 *The Age of Innocence* by Martin Scorsese which portrayed the 'haute bourgeoisie' of 1870s New York City.

Lincoln played by Day-Lewis portrays 'the single-minded son of the working class, to lead his country through the matchless struggle for the rescue of an enchained race and the reconstruction of a social world' which is how the International Working Men's Association (drafted by Marx) wrote to Lincoln in 1865.

### STEVE CLAYTON

as a 'freeman' in the North, where he confronted segregation on trains and in restaurants and hotels. Douglass ignored such 'rules' and if necessary physically resisted attempts to enforce them, believing that the 'way to break down an unreasonable custom, is to contradict it in practice.'

His 'take-no-crap' attitude dates back to his earliest experiences as a slave, from which he learned, 'He is whipped oftenest, who is whipped easiest.' The great turning point in his own life, wonderfully narrated in his autobiographies, came the day he physically resisted the 'Negro-breaker' Edward Covey's attempt to beat him

into submission. Douglass fought back, giving his attacker (who never laid a hand on him again) the worst of it. 'I was a changed being after that fight,' he recalled. 'I was nothing before; I was A MAN NOW. It recalled to life my crushed self-respect and my self-confidence, and inspired me with a renewed determination to be A FREEMAN.'

That fight (and the example of Douglass's entire life) recalls lines from Byron that Douglass loved to quote, and which speaks to the working class today:

*Hereditary bondsmen! know ye not  
Who would be free, must strike the first  
blow?*

**MICHAEL SCHAUERTE**

# The SWP: an undemocratic, Leninist organisation

*In view of the undemocratic nature of the SWP, which has recently been exposed, we reproduce below part of an education document we produced about them in 1995.*

At the beginning of 1968 the IS group was organised on relatively democratic lines. There were branches; there was an annual conference of branch delegates which debated and voted on motions proposed by branches; there was an executive committee elected by the branches and responsible for the week-to-week administration of the group's affairs and for the implementation of conference decisions.

Within the framework of the group's overall political position, branches were free to choose which line of activity to engage in; some chose to concentrate on the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign; others on tenants' associations; others on combating racism; others on students, and so on. In the light of the various

is necessary to make it effective, this seemed a reasonable proposal and it was eventually accepted. In Cliff's mind, however, this change was not seen as a move to make democracy function more effectively but as a step towards changing the IS group into an organisation based on Leninist 'democratic centralist' lines in which the executive committee would become a policy-making leadership.

IS entered the 70s with a constitution which was still recognisably democratic, similar in fact to the rulebook of a typical trade union. The annual conference remained the body which made the major policy decisions; its purpose remained to discuss the report of the executive committee and to debate and vote on motions proposed by branches. A given number of weeks before the conference branches were invited to submit motions; these were included in a provisional agenda that was sent to branches to allow them to submit amendments, which were then circulated in the form of a finished agenda for

branches to vote and mandate their Conference delegates on. To take account of the increase in membership a new body was established between the Conference and the EC – the National Committee. The members of this large committee (of some 40 members) were elected by the conference from nominations made by branches and in turn they elected the EC from amongst their number; they met on a regular basis in between conferences to hear reports from the EC.

Cliff, however, was still not satisfied with this structure. The main problem for him was that it didn't give the EC as the leadership a free enough hand since, at least on paper, it was still subject to some degree of control by the National Committee which elected it. Various ways were found round this: the composition of the EC was changed; its members were all made full-time officials; the EC arrogated to itself greater powers. In the end, however, the group's constitution was changed to end the EC's formal status as an emanation of the National Committee. In 1975 the EC was given the more Leninist-sounding name of 'central committee' and was to be elected by the Conference rather than the National Committee; this latter was reduced to the role of a purely advisory body to the new Central Committee.

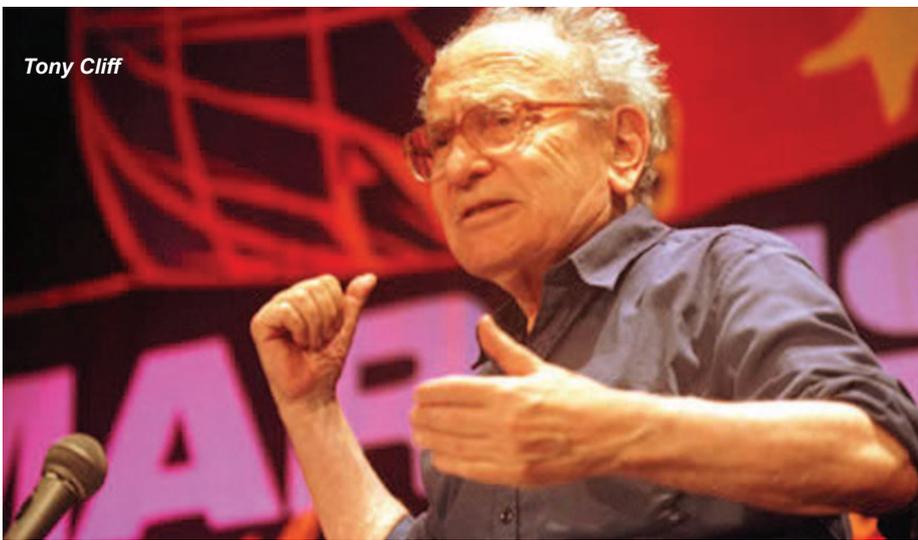
It was with this structure that the IS became the SWP at the beginning of 1977. But, as the experience of all trade unions (and, according to the

momentous events of 1968, which had led to a tripling of the size of his organisation, Cliff decided that this was not good enough and inaugurated a campaign to rein in branch autonomy. He proposed a more centralised structure which would allow the group's interventions in the various struggles that were going on at any time to be organised in a more co-ordinated way; the body that would co-ordinate and to a certain extent direct the activities of the branches was to be the executive committee.

Since some degree of centralism is compatible with democracy, indeed



Tony Cliff



partisans of the so-called 'iron law of oligarchy', of all large organisations) shows, there is a difference between an organisation's formal constitution and the way it actually functions. On paper, the SWP's statutes still allow some degree of democratic control by the membership: the branches could still decide policy and could still control the Central Committee through electing to it only those who carried out their will as decided at the annual Conference; the National Committee could check in between Conferences that the Central Committee was implementing Conference decisions. But this is not the way the SWP works in practice; nor is it the way it is supposed to work since such control from below, by the membership, has no place in the theory of 'democratic centralism' as laid down by Lenin.

David Lane has provided an objective and neutral description of what Lenin meant by this term:

By 'democratic' Lenin understood that decisions should be resolved according to majority vote of the central committee (of the executive) of the Party and that all Party members had the right to participate in general Party policy-making. The Party Congress was to be supreme over policy. There were to be periodic elections of the leading officers of the Party (. . .). By 'centralism', Lenin meant that once general policy was agreed, the day-to-day operation of the Party had to be decided centrally, where all information and the Party leadership are located, and the decisions of central bodies were absolutely binding on lower bodies. In Lenin's view, democratic centralism was a synthesis between democracy and central control: it gave members the right to participation and it gave a creative

role for the leadership' (*Leninism: A Sociological Interpretation*, 1981, p 48).

Such a structure institutionalises the principle of leadership. Most existing political parties and trade unions do operate on this basis, where those at the top make all the keys decisions and generally control the organisation. Normally, however, this is not how these organisations are supposed to function; they are supposed to be controlled by their members. In this sense the practice of leadership is a departure from their formal constitutions and rulebooks. Leninism makes a virtue of this by not accepting that it is desirable that a political organisation of the sort they want should be organised on the basis of democratic control, and maximum participation in decision-making, by the membership. They are not afraid of the 'iron law of oligarchy'.

### How the SWP Central Committee is selected

**The CC consists of members elected by Conference according to the following procedure:**

**The outgoing Central Committee selects and circulates a provisional slate for the new CC at the beginning of the period of pre-Conference discussion. This is then discussed at the district aggregates where comrades can propose alternative slates.**

**At the Conference the outgoing CC proposes a final slate (which may have been changed as a result of the pre-Conference discussion). This slate, along with any other that is supported by a minimum of five delegates, is discussed and voted on by Conference. (Rule 5 SWP Constitution)**

They like it and want to facilitate its operation, indeed to institutionalise it.

The SWP is unashamedly a leadership organisation, not just in the sense that it seeks to lead the working class but also in the sense that it is organised internally on a leadership basis; in fact on a hierarchical basis where each layer of leadership has power over the levels below it, with the party's national leadership – the members of its central committee – at the top.

The national leadership decides everything important and then seeks to get the membership to follow their lead. This is not necessarily a difficult task since the membership, who also believe in the organisational principle of 'democratic centralism', accept the leading role of the leadership and are generally prepared to follow. So Lenin's 'democratic centralism' places an enormous power in the hands of the leaders and in practice reduces the rank-and-file members to a mere consultative role.

### Conference procedure

In Lenin's scheme, as described by Lane, the supreme policy-making body is the Party Congress; this decides the general line which the Central Committee has to follow until the next Congress. This is the theory; the practice is that the Central Committee completely dominates the Congress (or Conference, as in one concession to the more normal usage in Britain, the SWP's Congress is called).

The main item on the agenda is a report by the Central Committee on the political 'perspectives' which is usually a document of pamphlet-length. The Central Committee also submits other reports – on work in special areas of activity (industry, students, women), internal organisation, finance – for the Conference to discuss. In the SWP, branches still have the formal right to submit motions, but they are strongly discouraged from doing so. As an explanatory note intended for new members, accompanying documents submitted for the party's 1983 Conference put it:

'Branches can submit resolutions if they wish and these may [sic] be voted on. But in recent years the practice of sending resolutions to conference has virtually ceased' (*Socialist Review*, September 1983).

What this means is that it is the Central Committee – the leadership – which quite literally sets the agenda for the Conference. The

**Continued on Page 18**

# Mali: the background

*A correspondent originally from the wider region comments.*

**M**ali became independent on 20 June 1960 under the name of Sudanese Republic. This Republic was joined by Senegal in the Mali Federation. However after two months Senegal seceded. As a result the Sudanese Republic changed its name to the current Republic of Mali.

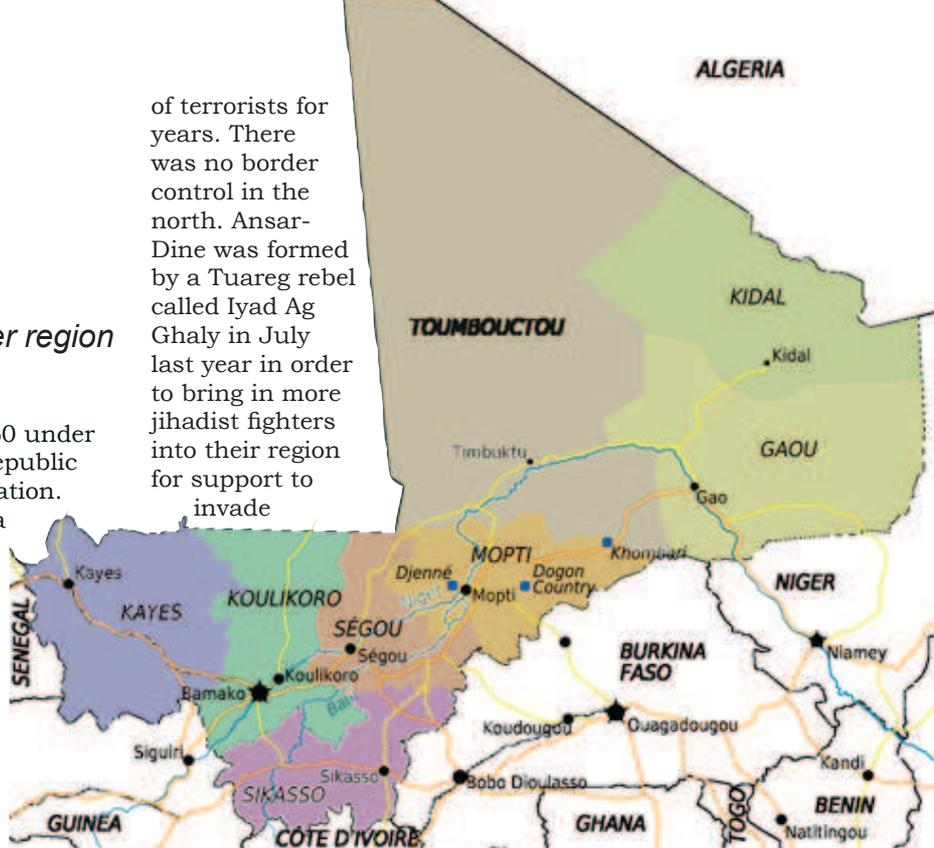
The first President of Mali, Modibo Keita was born to a Madinka Moslem family in Bamako. He took over power as an elected President on independence in 1960. Keita introduced a single party state and Pan-Africanism, like other presidents that promoted Pan-Africanism in their various countries: Azikiwe in Nigeria, Nkrumah in Ghana, Sekou Touré in Guinea-Conakry, Nyerere in Tanzania, and Kenyatta in Kenya.

On 19 November 1968 General Moussa Traoré removed President Keita in a bloodless coup d'état. He spent some weeks in detention in Kidal in the northern of Mali and died in May 1977. Keita's death attracted demonstrations that were violent. These were organised by his party and the Madinka ethnic group that felt humiliated and maltreated by General Traoré and his cohorts.

Mali has been on a barrel of gun powder for years since independence. The northern part of the country which is comprised of cities like Timbuktu, Kidal, Gao, Sevare, Tesalit, Djabali, Konne, and Mopti has been protesting to the Bamako government about the lack of development in their region. They feel marginalised by the government. Each time they rise up against the government, they are decimated.

In the 1980s the Tuareg rebels were the only force confronting the Bamako government, demanding their independence in the north. But, because the rebels lacked sophisticated weapons to go into full offensive against the Mali regime, the Mali government did not bother to counter them. Northern Mali has been the zone

of terrorists for years. There was no border control in the north. Ansar-Dine was formed by a Tuareg rebel called Iyad Ag Ghaly in July last year in order to bring in more jihadist fighters into their region for support to invade



northern Mali.

In 2006 the Tuareg rebels looted weapons from the army depot in the town of Kidal for their struggle, but that did not send a signal to Bamako that trouble was on the way. The regime in Bamako has been on soft pedal with the Tuareg because of a lack of weapons to confront them. And the rebels, noticing that the regime was handicapped and incapacitated to confront them, started seeking support from other jihadists from other countries like Boko Haram of Nigeria, Al-shaabab of Somalia, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. These terrorists have the common goal to achieve Sharia law in Islamic religion. They are better organised than the government because of their belief in sharia.

In January 2010 an offensive was started by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). The movement assumed momentum after the fall of Gaddafi in Libya in 2011. These terrorists stole many sophisticated weapons from the Gaddafi regime and crossed the desert to start a rebellion in the northern Mali. So these weapons, sold to Libya government by the French government, ended up into the hands of bandits and terrorists.

And to worsen the situation, on 22 March 2012, a group of angry army officers led by Captain Amadou Sanogo did a coup d'état and appeared on television to announce that they had seized control of the country. They said their reason for taking over the country was because President Dioncounda Traoré was not handling the conflict in the north very well. The coup d'état did not succeed as the military only controls the south of Mali, leaving the north, known as Republic of Azawad, to MNLA, Ansar-Dine and Al Qaeda terrorists to control. Dioncounda Traoré, who had been forced by the junta to go into hiding, was re-instated. The Tuareg rebels that used to be in control of

WHAT IS now Mali has a long history. The Malinke Empire ruled the area from the 12th century to the 15th century. Then, the powerful Songhai empire ruled over the Timbuktu-Gao region. In 1591 Morocco conquered Timbuktu and ruled the city for two centuries. In the 19th century the land became a French colony after the Berlin Conference and the Scramble for Africa. In 1946, the land became part of French Union.

Mali, situated in West Africa, lies in the Sahara region. It has a land area of 1,240,000 sq km, which is four-fifths the size of Alaska in the USA. Mali is land-locked and shares a border with Algeria, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. The north has a porous soil and dry weather, while the only fertile soil is in the south where rivers Niger and Senegal provide water for irrigation. Its natural resources are cotton, maize, millet and groundnuts. These crops are mainly produced from the south because of the irrigation system around them.

It is estimated that Mali as of 2012 is 15,000,000 people (growth rate is 2.6 percent; birth rate is 4.6 percent). Infant mortality rate is 11.36 percent. Life expectancy is 52.1. Density per sq km 10. Mali has about 51 tribes such as Madinka, Bambara, Kunta, Soninke, Arabe, Pere, Sarahule, Bobo, Bozo, Kado, Sawraye Tamachec, Kroloboro, Tuareg, Arabs, etc. As to religion, 90 percent are Muslims, 7 percent Christians and 3 percent animists.

The capital is Bamako with 1,325,300 in the metropolitan area and the currency is the CFA franc that is used among francophone countries in West Africa.

the north were chased out by MNLA, Ansar-Dine and Al Qaeda Maghreb as they had no weapons to hold on to the region.

### French and African military intervention

In January, the Islamist fighters decided to take more cities from the south in order to build a well-balanced Azawad republic. They captured the central town of Konna and planned to push further south to Bamako. The government of Bamako had no other choice than to ask France for help and Paris responded as a colonial father by sending 550 troops and tanks, at the same time carrying out air strikes on rebel positions in the north.

A rebellion that could have been crushed within one week of its existence stayed ten good months before French intervention and other allied forces such as Nigeria with 1200 soldiers. Other African states such as Benin republic, Niger, Togo, Chad, and Burkina-Faso also sent troops. Other western countries like USA, Britain, Germany and Belgium are supplying the logistics.

In April 2012, when the jihadists took the north of Mali, they committed human right abuses by amputations, flogging, stoning to death those who oppose their

interpretation of Islam. All these severe pains inflicted on innocent people could have been avoided if UN had done their work well. But it is a waste of time for any nation in crisis calling the UN for intervention.

Maliens are nice and hardworking people with beautiful music and culture. They welcome and respect people. Malians have nothing, but the little they have is shared among people that are around them, even to a piece of bread. It is callous and total negligence by the entire world that resulted in Malians facing the brutality of the Islamic jihadists. I am convinced that if Mali had oil in their soil, a lot of capitalist powers could have gone to Mali a long time ago without waiting for UN security council approval.

On 25 January, France promised to give \$452 million to the Mali government. How is this money going to help an ordinary citizen of Mali from south to north? A lot of millions have been donated to African leaders by the West. And this money ended up in pockets of individual leaders while the masses are left to rot. If the money given to Mali government passed through the village Alkalis, or village heads, of every community this would help ordinary Malians and mean that they would reject every offer coming from jihadists, be it food or cash.

The jihadists donated some food items to some people in order to win support and it worked for them. They used that trick and won the hearts of some parents who voluntarily gave their children to jihadists as child soldiers. But those that refused to give their children, their children too were forced to join the rebels.

Whatever the French government's motives for intervening, there can be no doubt that most Malians welcomed it. The spokesperson for Malians living in Orleans, France, Habib Doucouré, said that they were happy with French and African military intervention as it saved Mali from Al Qaeda destruction.

**Cebiloan HYACINT, France.**

Tuareg tribesmen, 2012



## Continued from Page 16

branch delegates meet, therefore, to discuss only what is put before them by the Central Committee. Not that the delegates are delegates in the proper sense of the term as instructed representatives of the branches sending them:

'Delegates should not be mandated . . . Mandating is a trade union practice, with no place in a revolutionary party.'

Since voting on motions submitted by branches is dismissed as a 'trade union practice', another procedure, more open to manipulation by the leadership, is operated:

'At the end of each session of conference commissions are elected to draw up a report on the session detailing the points made. In the event of disagreement two or more commissions can be elected by the opposing delegates. The reports are submitted to conference and delegates then vote in favour of one of the commissions. The advantage of this procedure is that conference does not have to proceed by resolution like a trade union conference.'

No branch motions, no mandated delegates, what else? No ballots of the entire membership either. In the first volume of his political biography of Lenin, Cliff records in shocked terms that 'in January 1907 Lenin went so far as to argue for the institution of a referendum of all party members on the issues facing the party', commenting 'certainly a suggestion which ran counter to the whole idea of democratic centralism' (*Lenin, Building the Party*, p. 280).

In fact no official of the SWP above branch level is directly elected by a vote of the members. One power that the branches do retain is the right to nominate members for election, by the Conference delegates, to the National Committee, but, as over presenting motions, they are discouraged from nominating people who do not accept the "perspectives" espoused by the Central Committee. So elections do take place to the National Committee but on the basis of personalities rather than politics. However, it is the way that the Central Committee is elected that is really novel: the nominations for

election to new central committee are proposed not by branches but . . . by the outgoing central committee! Once again, in theory, branches can present other names but they never do.

It is easy to see how this means that the central committee – the supreme leadership of the organisation – is a self-perpetuating body renewed in effect only by co-optation. This is justified on the grounds of continuity and efficiency – it takes time to gain the experience necessary to become a good leader, so that it would be a waste of the experience gained if some leader were to be voted off by the vagaries of a democratic vote. Choosing the leadership by a competitive vote is evidently something else 'with no place in a revolutionary party' any more than in an army.

*The full education document can be found here: <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/education/study-guides/where-swp-coming>*



Shakespeare's Roman tragedy *Julius Caesar* was recently staged by the RSC at the Noel Coward Theatre in London. Director Gregory Doran has used an all-black British cast and transposed the plays setting to a modern African state. This play in particular had political resonance for imprisoned ANC leader Nelson Mandela. In 1937 the Mercury Theatre production by Orson Welles drew a specific analogy between Caesar and Fascist dictator Mussolini. The new RSC version makes subtle references to African dictators Mugabe, Mobutu and Amin, and also the recent 'Arab Spring'.

The central theme of the play is the conflict between republicanism and tyranny, and the political necessity of assassinating a dictator ('an emerging adder'). Caesar, played with a superior dignity by Jeffrey Kissoon, is a demagogue who is arrogant ('immortal Caesar') and posturing, speaks of himself in the third person, compares himself to the northern star, and whose political hubris means he will not 'beware the ides of March.'

The tragic protagonist of the play is really Plutarch's 'angel,' Brutus, 'the noblest Roman of them all,' played with humanity by Paterson Joseph. It is Brutus's inner conflict between his love for Caesar, and his love for Rome and its republican ideals that form the psychological drama of the play. Brutus is full of personal integrity; he commands trust, friendship, love and devotion in others; he is gracious with friends, guards, servants and has a tender relationship with his wife Portia. The funeral oration by Brutus is rational: 'not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more.'

In contrast to Brutus, Mark Antony, played with a beguiling Machiavellianism by Ray Fearon, is all emotional political opportunism. The political mistakes by Brutus of not killing Antony and also allowing Antony's funeral oration ('Friends, Romans, Countrymen') clearly highlight Brutus's lack of political guile, and are the cause of his ultimate defeat, death and the end of republican Rome.

Shakespeare based his play on Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, but an interesting source that Gregory Doran could have used is Suetonius *Lives of the Caesars* which identified Julius Caesar as 'every woman's husband and every man's wife.' Caesar's rival triumvir, Crassus is portrayed in a homoerotic vein in *Spartacus* by Kubrick.

Shakespeare rejects 'deus ex machina' and portrays humans in charge of their destiny ('Men at some time are masters of their fates') which recalls Marx in *The 18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*; 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please.'

## Philip Glass at 75: Koyaanisqatsi

To celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> birthday of Philip Glass, the Barbican screened the 1982 Godfrey Reggio film *Koyaanisqatsi*, accompanied by 'minimalist' composer Philip Glass and his Ensemble, the Britten Sinfonia, and the Trinity Laban Chamber Choir performing a newly expanded orchestral version of his score for the film. Glass worked with Ravi Shankar in 1966 on music for the film, *Chappaqua*, but *Koyaanisqatsi* was his first film score and was followed by scores for *Mishima* and *Kundun*. Glass wrote it is 'music with repetitive structures.'

*Koyaanisqatsi* was inspired by Marxist 'Situationist' Guy Debord, and David Monongye, Hopi Native American traditional leader. It is memorable for the acceleration of time lapse photography and slow motion filming.

The film opens with the pictographs of paleo-indian rock art at Horseshoe Canyon in Utah, and Glass uses a basso profundo vocal reciting 'Koyaanisqatsi' over a sombre four-bar organ bass line; then the image changes to the launching of a Saturn V rocket. *Organic* is haunting woodwind, cellos and horns over film of the desert landscape of Monument Valley. *Resource* is a looping organ over images of the rock formations in Mono Lake in California then film of mining operations, oil pipelines, electricity pylons and the Glen Canyon Dam. It concludes with an atomic bomb explosion and the ominous mushroom cloud. *Vessels* is choral and organ looping with images of sunbathers on a beach in the shadow of a nuclear generating plant, a long take of Boeing 747 jumbo jets taxiing in the heat haze, and concludes with strafe bombing in Vietnam. *Pruitt-Igoe* is cellos and choral looping with images of Harlem during the two day electricity blackout in New York City in 1977 which was notorious for looting, arson, vandalism, theft and 4,500 arrests. This is followed by footage of the demolition in 1975 of the modernist Pruitt-Igoe housing estate in St Louis.

*Slow-Mo People* features portraits of people, notably the bouffant hair of Las Vegas croupiers. *The Grid* is horns, organ, choral looping, gradually accelerating to a frenetic pace. At its fastest a synthesizer plays the bass line ostinato. The music accompanies film of factory production lines, traffic on freeways, video games, and rush hour pedestrians. The combined music and film evokes alienation and exploitation in modern capitalist society. *Prophecies* is a quiet reflection on victims of capitalism such as street drinkers, beggars, and homeless people. The film closes with the launch and explosion of the Atlas Centaur rocket in 1962.

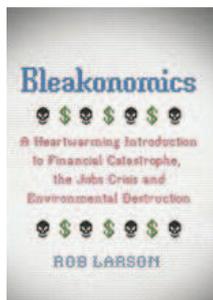
*Koyaanisqatsi* is Hopi language for 'life out of balance' or 'a state of life that calls for another way of living'.

**STEVE CLAYTON**



## Capitalism's diminishing returns

**Bleakonomics** by Rob Larson. Pluto Press. 2012.



Larson has written an engaging polemic against free-market capitalism and its proponents, focusing on the role of 'externalities' such as environmental destruction and the inadequate

consideration of these by conventional economics.

Indeed, the chapters on capitalism and the environment are amongst the strongest, making very clear – with some well-chosen examples – how the market is unable to allocate resources in an environmentally-friendly and sustainable way. The Deepwater Horizon oil well explosion and spill, and the Great Pacific Garbage Patch ('a Texas-sized ocean eddy saturated with minute plastic particles') are just a couple of the externalities of capitalism that Larson highlights to useful effect.

Larson discusses class division intelligently for the most part, along with the excesses of a system that rewards the top one percent merely for their ownership of wealth, though there is a sense that he thinks a regulated capitalism wouldn't create nearly as many problems as the private enterprise version that exists in America and has spread across much of the world.

He is more consistently effective when he discusses some of the fundamental flaws of conventional bourgeois economics, such as the theories of marginal utility and marginal productivity. An excellent chapter on 'Economics as a Failed Science' recounts practical research into how businesses make their decisions and illustrates that diminishing returns on the growth in productive capacity doesn't typically happen in practice. This is important, because one of the contentions of conventional economics is that these diminishing returns limit the production of individual firms and keep these enterprises small relative to the total market. This is a key factor underpinning the notion that capitalism is based on competitive markets that respond to subtle price signals influencing the ebb and flow of new entrants to an industry.

But the research shows this doesn't happen in practice – economies of scale are a far more important fac-

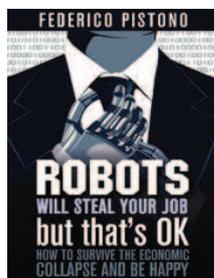
tor for companies, leading them to expand their production to secure cheaper costs per unit produced. This in turn helps create two of the most significant features of capitalism: first, the drive by companies to expand production as if there is no limit to the market for their products, which leads to overproduction and economic crisis. Then the same phenomenon also leads to the concentration of capital into fewer hands, with a resulting tendency towards oligopoly. This was illustrated in the 2007 US Economic Census, which showed that 97 per cent of cigarettes in America are produced by the four largest manufacturers, the four biggest brewers produced 90 per cent of the beer and the top four oil refining firms produced almost half the petrol and diesel.

So, on this front Marx was right again, even though Larson doesn't mention his analysis directly. Larson does quote, tellingly, from Einstein and his analysis of the anarchy of capitalist production and focuses on the calls for 'economic democracy' made by the Occupy movement among others as the remedy to the problem. But what he doesn't say is that this remedy can only take effect when the anarchy of the market and the tyranny of money and prices have been destroyed, to be replaced by common ownership and production directly for use, rather than under a 'regulated' capitalism.

DAP

## Robots

**Robots Will Steal Your Job, But That's OK: How to Survive the Economic Collapse and Be Happy** by Federico Pistono. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012.



Imagine a world in which supermarkets are replaced by giant robotic vending machines; in which cars drive themselves; and in which journalists are replaced by computer generated

reportage. Only, you don't need to imagine such a world: it's ours. The technology for all these things exists now (at the very least, at the developmental stage). This book invites us to imagine the impact of the roll-out of these technologies. It's a sobering thought to realise that hundreds of thousands worldwide work in super-

markets, whose jobs could be extinguished in very short order by this technology.

The centrepiece of the book is an examination of the implications of Moore's law, which is, roughly, that computer processing capacity doubles every two years. A great deal of the book is spent explaining the implications of this exponential growth. In short, it means the advent of machines which can replicate human-like thought processes. Pistono notes that whether these processes are 'intelligent' is unimportant: it's the work they can do, and the processes they can reproduce that counts. He gives the example of radiographers: computers now have the capacity to 'look at' medical images and recognise a variety of conditions. This removes the need for a skilled human, trained over many years, to make the examination. As the book notes, though, as with the automated supermarkets, the machines will also displace unskilled labour.

The book is limited in its exposition, beyond telling us these bare facts. Pistono notes that he has not heard any good counter-arguments against the idea of technological unemployment, but his failure to rebut them in detail does not help build his argument. Luckily for us, Marx did address them in his book *Capital*:

'The instrument of labour, when it takes the form of a machine, immediately becomes a competitor of the workman himself. (...) When machinery seizes on an industry by degrees, it produces chronic misery among the operatives who compete with it' (*Capital* v. 1, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch15.htm#S5>).

Marx addressed the 'theory of compensation': 'that all machinery that displaces workmen, simultaneously and necessarily sets free an amount of capital adequate to employ the same identical workmen.' His rebuttal was:

'The labourers that are thrown out of work in any branch of industry can no doubt seek for employment in some other branch. If they find it, and thus renew the bond between them and the means of subsistence, this takes place only by the intermediary of a new and additional capital that is seeking investment; not at all by the intermediary of the capital that formerly employed them and was afterwards converted into machinery.' (<http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch15.htm#S6>)

Marx realises that technological unemployment is off-set, in part, by the increased demand this will create in the branches of industry that

supply the newly mechanised fields of production. The extent to which these will soak up some of the workers made redundant by machinery, however, 'depends, given the length of the working-day and the intensity of labour, on the composition of the capital employed, i.e., on the ratio of its constant to its variable component' (a ratio Marx termed the Organic Composition of Capital). Marx also identified a growth in luxury production and of the servants (what we would now call 'service industries') as a result of the improved productiveness of the factory system.

These off-sets would be of little help, however, if all industries were simultaneously and continuously subject to more and more technological innovation.

Pistono's book is of little help in addressing these problems. The solutions put forward are frankly laughable: we all will have to learn to get by with less and be happy with it. Drive less; insulate your house; grow your own food: these are the suggestions put forward. These are all well and good if you own a patch of land (or even your own house) but absolutely useless for the millions of propertyless semi-skilled and unskilled workers of the world. Millions in mega-slums are already showing us how to make do with less.

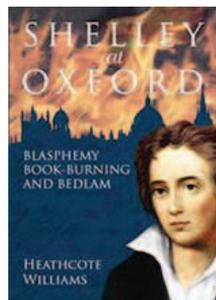
At best, this book is a useful primer to introduce people to the concept of incoming and widespread technological unemployment. It is hampered

by its lack of detail in explaining the debates around the issue and its abject failure to present anything like a sensible response. At its best, it is a heartfelt tract, with some useful facts and bibliography.

**PS**

## Atheist

**Shelley at Oxford by Heathcote Williams. Huxley Scientific Press, Oxford.**



Sadly, for this reviewer, Heathcote Williams disdains the discipline of what would have been called prosody in Shelley's day. Still, in these 30 pages of free verse, the language is Shelley-

ian, as is the anger and contempt for the latter-day version of capitalism.

Sub-titled 'Blasphemy, Book-burning and Bedlam' Williams's poetic narrative depicts the reaction among the bishops, aspiring bishops and potential managerial functionaries of the Christian church in 1811 when confronted by a pamphlet written by a 19-year-old Oxford student which challenged the sacred bona-fides of their founder.

A young upstart of impeccably aristocratic descent had written a pamphlet affirming *The Necessity of*

*Atheism* here! In the sacred precincts of class-orientated, male-dominated Christian culture. Obviously there had to be a Christian response to this attack on the sinews of faith in God and the church system. Oxford bristled with divine erudition and an abundance of faith. But faith was simply belief without knowledge and the core beliefs of Christianity were logically unsustainable; so the holy men of Oxford and its wider hinterland turned to its traditional processes of defence: fear, intimidation and suppression

Heathcote Williams says now, with the forthrightness of Percy Shelley: 'A theological mafia with every whim indulged

By their colleges' underpaid servants Which is hired to cook up the date of Creation

Or to invent the location of Eden.'

Oxford and its professors of myth abandoned argument in favour of direct action. The single bookshop that had been persuaded to take *The Necessity of Atheism* was threatened and ostracised; the book was publicly burned and the author expelled for thinking out loud. Ten years later, when the news of his death by drowning was made public the holy ardour and charity of Christianity was expressed thus in the columns of the *London Courier*:

'Shelley, the writer of some infidel poetry has been drowned; now he knows whether there is a God or no.'

**RM**



## Night Of The Living Tweet

SOMETIMES, WHEN channel-hopping through the desert of reality TV and costume dramas, you can still find a rewarding oasis of originality.

Charlie Brooker's sci-fi anthology series *Black Mirror* (Channel 4) has returned to challenge and unnerve the viewer. Although its stories are set in the future, *Black Mirror* itself also reflects the past. In the 60s and 70s, sombre one-off plays exploring the implications of science appeared on our screens as often as kipper ties did. Now, programme makers prefer to play safer than this kind of speculative drama. The future's not what it used to be.

We're introduced to Martha and Ash, a happy couple living in a few years' time. When Ash is killed in an accident, Martha is distraught. A friend suggests 'something that helps', and signs Martha up to an online service for the bereaved. Its software gathers up all Ash's facebook updates, tweets and website postings, and uses them to recreate a virtual version of his personality. 'The more it has, the more it's him'. Martha cautiously starts swapping online messages with the artificial Ash. By uploading his private messages and voicemails, she can even talk with

the software as it mimics his speech. Then, 'Ash' suggests the next level, which 'might sound a bit creepy'. Martha's soon taking delivery of a mannequin, waiting to be brought to simulated life by data from Ash's appearance on any saved videos. And their relationship resumes, until she realises that 'he' can't take Ash's place.

Like Martha, the viewer is drawn in by what initially sounds like plausible technology. Surely, software which can analyse our online footprint and use it to mimic what we could say isn't too far off? We're already halfway there with facebook timelines and targeted online adverts which use our internet history to guess what we might want to buy. Lured in, the drama makes us accept this software as the thin end of an increasingly unsettling wedge. But despite our doubts, how many of us would be tempted to bring back something of a lost loved one?

Brooker's drama makes us think about how much we share our identities using technology. He doesn't dwell on the potential threats to our already-restricted liberties which come with our online presence. Instead, he makes us question how accurate are the personas we create through our tweets, texts and facebook updates. If anything, though, Ash's resurrected persona is more level-headed than how many of us portray ourselves online!

**Mike Foster**

## Meetings

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

### Salisbury

Saturday **6 March** 2pm  
CAN SOCIALISM WORK?  
Speaker: Bill Martin  
Railway Tavern, 135 South Western Road, Salisbury SP2 7RR.

### Clapham

Sunday **10 March** 6pm  
WILL THERE BE AN ECONOMIC COLLAPSE?  
Discussion with Federico Postoni, author of *Robots Will Steel Your Job, But That's OK: How to Survive the Economic Collapse and Be Happy*.  
Socialist Party speaker: to be announced.  
Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High St, London, London, SW4 7UN.

### Islington

Tuesday **12 March**  
Business meeting to discuss Conference Agenda and local by-election  
New meeting venue  
The Coronet, 338-346 Holloway Road, London N7 6NJ

### Norwich

Saturday, **16 March**  
11am-1pm. East Anglia Regional Branch Business Meeting: Consideration of Annual Conference Agenda.  
2-5pm *Are You In A Bad State?* 1987 film by *Spectacular Times* creator, Larry Law. Nelson Hotel (opposite train station).  
Prince of Wales Road, Norwich NR1 1DX (Meeting room accessed via Costa Coffee Café and down the stairs. The room is towards the Prince of Wales Road end.)

## 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

### Manchester

Saturday **16 March** 2 pm  
MONEY vs DEMOCRACY  
Unicorn, Church Street, M4 1PW  
London N7 6NJ

### Chiswick

Tuesday **19 March** 8pm  
PARIS COMMUNE COMMEMORATION MEETING  
Speaker: Steve Clayton  
Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, London, W4 4JN (nearest tube: Chiswick Park).

### Glasgow

Wednesday **20 March** 8.30pm  
THE RISE OF CHINESE CAPITALISM  
Speaker: Dick Donnelly  
Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow G20 2YE.

### London

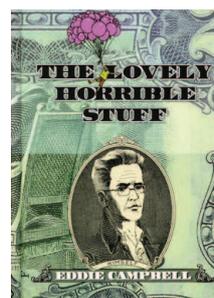
ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
Friday **29 March** 10.30 to 5pm  
Saturday **30 March** 10.30 to 5pm  
Sunday **31 March** 11 to 5pm: Workshop on opportunities presented by present state of capitalism.  
Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN.  
(Nearest tube: Clapham North. Overground: Clapham High Street).

#### Picture Credits

**Cover:** Tony Cliff – cpbg.org.uk. Mali fighter – biyokulule.com. **p4:** Supermarket meat, 2009, Mattes, Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike license  
**p5:** *Accrington Pals* play – tripadvisor.com  
Capitalism class - beginnersinvest.about.com.  
**p6:** The Pope, 2009, The White House  
**p8:** Traffic jam, 2005, Osvaldo Gago, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic license; bicycles, 2011, Ollios, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.  
**p9:** Keith Vaz - keithvazmp.com **p12-14:** Frederick Douglass, Lincoln, a slave household, c.1860s, PD  
**p17:** Mail map, 2009, Peter Fitzgerald, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license;

## Book Reviews

**The Lovely Horrible Stuff** Eddie Campbell (Author). ISBN-13: 9780861661749



This is not so much a graphic novel as a graphic essay. Using sequential art, the comic book author/artist Eddie Campbell delves into the emotional and familial effects of money. It is ap-

parently autobiographical, showing how money has intruded on his work and into his personal life, detailing, in particular, a long-running family feud with his father in law.

It then segues into a discussion of the stone money of Yapp, and how it has come to be used (perhaps, it suggests, erroneously) in economics lectures and theory. This leads him to a sufficiently weighty image upon which to close his meditations.

Its narrative and art help to illustrate the hold that the 'lovely horrible stuff' has on our lives, and perhaps it has more reach than any number of detailed textbooks on economics. It doesn't draw any conclusions.

**PS**

Tuaregs, 2012, Alfred Weidinger, Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license.

**p19:** Julius Caesar, rsc.org; Philip Glass, 2008, MITO SettembreMusica, Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license.

**p20:** *Bleakonomics* - kobobooks.com. *Robots Will Steal Your Job* - lulu.com

**p21:** *Shelley at Oxford* – countrycalling.co.uk **p22:** *The Lovely Horrible Stuff* - momentofcerebus.blogspot.com.

**p23:** President de Gaulle - Bundesarchiv, B 145 Bild-F015892-0010 / Wegmann, Ludwig / CC-BY-SA. Mhairi Spence – teamgb.com.

**p24:** US soldiers, 2009, US Army, PD; vegetable market, 2005, Karen, Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license.

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.

# 50 Years Ago

## The Common Market

WELL, IT didn't come off.

Mr. Heath and his men came back defeated from Brussels and presented the British public with another bogey man who was yesterday's friend. President De Gaulle is now the evil man of British capitalism.

The Beaverbrook press took a somewhat different view, implying hopefully that the British government had seen the light from the *Express* building and had themselves broken off the negotiations.

"And Now—Forward," screamed the *Express* headlines. Forward, we may ask, to what? Whatever the *Express*, or the Government, or anyone else, has to offer can only be another of capitalism's gambles.

When the British government decided, several years ago, against joining the European Common Market, they were



De Gaulle

gambling. When they decided that that gamble had failed they put their money on another—on the application to join Europe. They made it quite clear that that was

a gamble, that they were not sure whether membership of the EEC would benefit them or not.

So it is with all capitalism's attempts to defeat its own problems.

President de Gaulle is gambling, now that Europe can unite as an independent capitalist power dominated by a Franco-German axis. But there have been plenty of other such gambles and plenty of other such pacts and many of them have failed even by capitalism's standards. There is no reason to assume that France and Germany, whatever their pact says, will not end up fighting one another again.

Capitalism, in fact, is one big gamble. Since its fortunes hang on the tail of its unpredictable market, it can never be sure of what to do to secure its own interests.

The great tragedy is that the gambles are always paid off in working class lives and security.

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

### SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX FOR 2011

For a copy send 2 second-class stamps to: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN

# ACTION REPLAY

## Out of the medals

MHAIRI SPENCE is a modern pentathlete who won in both the individual and team competitions at the 2012 world championships. So at last year's Olympics she was one of the favourites for the gold medal. But after various mishaps she finished twenty-first and was utterly distraught, saying, 'I felt it destroyed part of me' (*BBC Online*, 25 January). She attempted to 'disappear' by going backpacking in Australia.



City footballer Michael Johnson was paid off from his contract at the age of 24, five years after being described as a likely future England player. Injuries plus a liking for a night out had undermined his fitness and his attitude, but there was more to it than that. 'I have been attending the Priory Clinic for a number of years now with regard to my mental health,' he told the *Manchester Evening News* (22 January), 'and would be grateful if I could now be left alone to live the rest of my life.'

This is a rare glimpse into the pressures that are inflicted on top sportspeople. In spite of the potential rewards, it is a tough and very competitive business, and for every success there are plenty of people who don't quite make it and who then have to

live more 'ordinary' lives if they can. A few can become millionaires but most do far less well. Stress affects almost everyone under capitalism, including those who flirt with celebrity and have more chances to do well than the rest of us.

live more 'ordinary' lives if they can. A few can become millionaires but most do far less well. Stress affects almost everyone under capitalism, including those who flirt with celebrity and have more chances to do well than the rest of us.

PB

**SUBSCRIPTION OFFER** **WORTH £9.95**

**FREE**

**SOCIALISM OR YOUR MONEY BACK**

Articles from the *Socialist Standard* 1904 - 2004. A running commentary of 100 years of capitalist history by a socialist journal.

- Two World Wars
- The Russian Revolution
- The Rise of Hitler
- The Spanish Civil War
- Hiroshima
- The Silicon Chip
- Pop Music
- ...and much more

WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE TO the **socialist standard**

*This collection will revive a jaundiced spirit... Every home should have one.*

**THE INDEPENDENT**

For more details about The Socialist Party, or to request a free copy of *Socialism Or Your Money Back* and a subscription to the *Socialist Standard*, please complete and return this form to **52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN**.

Please send me an info pack  
 Please send me a free copy of *Socialism Or Your Money Back* and a subscription to the *Socialist Standard*. I enclose a cheque payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain' (see page 2 for subscription rates).

Name.....

Address.....

.....  
.....  
.....

Postcode.....



# Voice from the Back

## A Redundant Society

Capitalism is a social system based on slumps and booms and no amount of political posturing by so-called statesmen will change that. 'The number of jobless people around the world rose by 4 million in 2012 to 197 million and is expected to grow further, the UN labour agency warns. In a report, the International Labour Organization (ILO) said the worst affected were youth: nearly 13% of the under 24s were unemployed. It said global unemployment was projected to rise 5.1 million this year and by a further 3 million in 2014' (BBC News, 22 January). This immense waste of human endeavour is the norm for capitalism. Inside world socialism think of the abundance that these millions of potential producers could contribute to society.

## Bravery, Bombast And Reality

Hollywood is fond of portraying the heroism of warfare. We are asked to believe that there is something ennobling about military conflict. These figures from the USA show that the horrors of war are so great that they often force soldiers to take their own life. 'In 2012, for the first time in at least a generation, the number of active-duty soldiers who killed themselves, 177, exceeded the 176 who were killed while in the war zone. To put that another way, more of America's serving soldiers died at their own hands than in pursuit of the enemy. Across all branches of the US military and the reserves, a similar disturbing



trend was recorded. In all, 349 service members took their own lives in 2012, while a lesser number, 295, died in combat' (Guardian, 1 February). War inside capitalism is far from being a noble experience. It is brutal, inhumane and terrifying.

## Political Promises And Poverty

Politicians like to pose as the friend of British working families but government ministers have admitted for the first time that as many as 100,000 children from working families will be forced into poverty as a result of the government's plans to cut benefits for the poorest. 'Official figures show that a total of 200,000 youngsters from all families will be pushed into child poverty as a result of George Osborne's 1 per cent cap on benefits from April, in effect a real-terms cut in welfare payments. But Steve Webb, the Liberal Democrat pensions minister, revealed in a parliamentary written answer last week that 50 per cent of those children come from families where at least one parent is in work. This new figure undermines claims by the Chancellor, George Osborne, that the cap on benefits is designed to target Britain's jobless 'shirkers'. The children will join the 3.6 million already classed as living in poverty. Two-thirds of those are in families where at least one parent works' (Independent on Sunday, 3 February). The real 'shirkers' of course are members of the owning class who have no intention of working.

## ...And Steadily Improving Living Standards

'Food prices are rising more than three times faster than the average worker's pay package as the cost of living 'crisis' continues, official figures revealed yesterday. While the average private sector worker's pay has risen by just 1.4 per cent - and millions of State workers are subject to a pay freeze - food prices have risen by 4.5 per cent in the last

year, according to the Office for National Statistics. The crippling cost of the weekly trip to the supermarket is the most striking figure in the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) for January' (Daily Mail, 13 February). A food price rise of 4.5 percent against a 1.4 percent wage rise? It doesn't take a master statistician to see this isn't a 'steadily improving standard of living'.



## Tough At The Top?

The new governor of the Bank of England has taken over this top post at a time when we are told we will all have to make sacrifices in order to get out of this economic slump. 'The next Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, has been forced to defend his £800,000-a-year deal under questioning from MPs. Mr Carney's base salary of £480,000 is more than that of his US and European equivalents combined - and he will also receive a £250,000 housing allowance on top. ... Justifying the housing allowance, Mr Carney pointed out that London was a far more costly place to live than his present home city of Ottawa. "I am moving from one of the cheapest capitals in the world to one of the most expensive," he said' (Independent, 7 February). Mr Carney is an example to us all. He is prepared to scrape by in expensive London on a mere £250,000 housing allowance. Such fortitude!

## FREE LUNCH

