

socialist standard

October 2013
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Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

The Spirit of '45 presents:

THE GHOST OF OLD LABOUR

Based on an idea by KEN LOACH

"Powerful, saddening,
doomed" CLEM ATTLEE

"I give it 6 months"
ED BALLS

"I like anything with
sects in it" BORIS JOHNSON



They tried to
unite the Left,
and spawned a
monster...



Shacked up in
the USA
page 6



Hots for hot rods
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Washington '63
remembered
page 23

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Introducing The Socialist Party

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

We use every possible opportunity to make

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

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

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

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

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



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OCTOBER 2013

Editorial

What about nuclear weapons?

WHEN SOMEONE enlists in a military or paramilitary organisation they swear or affirm their willingness to obey all orders issued to them by their superior officers. In turn, such officers, in ascending order, are subject to the orders and instructions of their superiors who, ultimately, must respond to a national executive of politicians or an individual with executive power.

Effectively, then, this means that armed forces throughout the world are composed of people who have abnegated their sense of right and wrong when such a sense is in conflict with the orders they are given. Like so many things in capitalism, it sounds absurd – and very frightening – but, in a world where there is at least one war going on every single day, it is consistent with the lunatic logic that underpins a wasteful and outmoded system of social organisation.

At the moment the problem preoccupying the most powerful nations of the world and their politicians is the conflicting politico-economic interests confronting the Syrian dictator and General Secretary of the Ba'ath Party, Bashar al-Assad, who took over power from his deceased father in 2000.

Like Saddam Hussein, his predecessor and holy war suppressant in Iraq, Assad's power lay in his ability to suppress the toxic feuding and internecine killing that reside in the different strains of Islamism – just as they do in Christianity. It is possible that the present Syrian conflict may be the prelude to a more diverse sectarian conflict in which the US, Russia, Britain et al, will have more direct sponsorship as the awful potential of Cold War politics returns.

In the old cowboy films the Sheriff could deal with impending strife by collecting the gun belts and guns of the gunmen. In capitalism this would not be possible nor would the capitalists and their political agencies desire it. The arms trade, bordering on some two trillion dollars per annum, is a major source of profit – and, of course, employment – for the major nations of world capitalism. But weaponry, necessarily visible weaponry, is essential in dictating the terms of the system's uneasy 'peace' agreements. Capitalism's temporary periods of peace, like its industrialised phases of killing, requires a heavy investment in armaments.

The Syrian crisis has again brought the shadow of the Cold War with the same players who terrorised the world for decades following the Second World War. Then – in what was openly referred to as 'a balance of terror' – they threatened the planet with nuclear destruction. The US, Russia, China, France and Britain produce the bulk of the world's armaments; all have stockpiles of nuclear weapons and, if they were not all-powerful and beyond the control of the United Nations Organisation, it is likely that all five would be adjudged 'war criminals'.

Obama and Putin lecturing the world about 'morality' and civilised human standards from behind their massive stores of the most awesome weapons demonstrates the veniality of what they defend as democracy. Yet in all the scores of interviews we see on our TV screens never is the issue of their nuclear weapons raised. Unquestioned virtue would appear to be the reward for power.



Songdo, South Korea - world's first smart city

SMART is the new black

PUT THE word 'smart' in front of just about anything these days and you are describing the techno-savvy reality of the 20-teenties. We have, or will soon have, smart cars, smart traffic lights, smart houses and smart cities like Songdo, or maybe even the Venus Project (see 'Tomorrow's Cities' at bbc.co.uk/news/technology-23517670). Now schoolkids can dictate essay questions into Google on their smart phones (unless they've got strong regional accents which the speech algorithms can't cope with). Pretty soon they'll be dictating into their smart watches instead, and not long after that, via their smart Google Glass lenses. It surely won't be long before the next horizon technology, wetware, creates reliable bio-interfaces to allow subcutaneous and perhaps even cranial smart implants, and who wouldn't want the knowledge and communication power of biblical gods? The 20th century pioneered cyberspace, but the 21st century will pioneer cybernetics. Better, faster, smarter, cheaper, Human version 2.0, or rather Worker version 2.0 is set to superheat capitalist technological development, each individual cocooned inside an artificially-tailored personal reality, and each a uniform functioning component of the global hive.

Well, that's one possible view of the near future. The technology news right now is breathless with excitement about smart watches, but Google Glass is just round the corner and third-party developers are secretly beavering away right now to come up with 'killer apps' which are supposedly going to persuade today's young generation of early adopters to start wearing spectacles even though they have perfect vision. No more embarrassing encounters with people whose names you can't remember – just silently run a facial recognition app while you're standing there chatting. Can't find that obscure little café? Pull up an on-lens GPS streetmap. Unimpressed with the forlorn pile of old stones in a famous historical site? Get an artist's reconstruction superimposed over the real thing. Want to leave a message for your friends that that obscure little café was overpriced? Dictate a piece of rude graffiti and leave it on the front door of the café, invisible to anyone but your friends, similarly glassed-up.

Socialists and other people who are accustomed to reading beneath the hype will of course ask the obvious question: does all this smart stuff make us any cleverer? The answer is equally obvious: no. The difference between smart and clever is the difference between technology and science. Smart is having good tools. Clever is knowing how to use them. Smart will win a war, but clever knows how to avoid the war.

There is no question that capitalism is smart, far smarter than any type of society that's gone before. Classical antiquity

was a time of remarkable sophistication in many ways, but it was rigidly obtuse in its slave-based economies and as a consequence never able to see the point of science or technology. But that doesn't mean modern society is especially committed to science or that modern populations understand much about it or its methods. But they can appreciate the labour-saving devices and the toys. Where old societies were swamped in myth and the supernatural, we are swamped in gadgets and technobabble. We congratulate ourselves that we invented reason, and yet we're probably no better at logical thinking than a Cro Magnon cave painter, and probably significantly less artistically talented. But hell, we have smarts, so it doesn't matter.

Smart is also an acronym, used a lot in businesses as a shorthand mnemonic for evaluating steps in a project. The letters are usually made to represent the following: S – Specific; M – Measurable; A – Achievable; R – Realistic; T – Time-delimited. If a step or course of action does not satisfy all these conditions, for example if it is too vague, or over-optimistic, or there is no failure condition or there's no deadline, it is not 'smart' and therefore it is not worth doing (you could reverse the acronym and use 'Trams' instead, to stop your project going off the rails).

Capitalism is 'smart' in this sense as well. It doesn't do things that don't seem achievable within a short time period. It doesn't do things that are not measurable with 'hard outcomes', which generally translates as money profit. It's always specific in its boardrooms and vague in its parliaments. It's realistic in its assessment of where the next profit is coming from. And its bottom line is always a deadline, the month-end, the quarterly profit statement, the annual report.

There is something fundamentally wrong with 'smart' targets. You can be perfectly smart and still do the stupid thing. Capitalism 'smartly' ignores the long term problems of climate change, resource-waste, war, global hunger and deprivation. Things that aren't specific or measurable, like quality of life, fulfilment, self-realisation, democratic freedoms, simply don't count. Pollution is not a measurable cost to anyone specifically, and there is no deadline to stop causing the damage.

Maybe this is why a lot of workers, forced to put up with managers at work wittering constantly about 'smart' targets, have learned to hate the very mention of the word. Not only are these smart targets invariably designed simply to extract more and more work out of the hard-pressed minions, suffering like crushed olives getting their third pressing, there is a strong sense that there is an overall dimension missing from the concept. If they were truly smart, these targets would make the workers happy too. And so with capitalism. If it's so smart, why is everyone so miserable in it?

What the world needs is more swots. SWOT is another of those acronyms, only it doesn't evaluate a step, it sizes up an overall situation, assessing the pros and cons of a big picture. It stands for S – Strengths; W – Weaknesses; O – Opportunities; T – Threats. Before you get smart, you should be a swot. Socialists aren't always smart, worse luck, but they are good at being swots. We recognise, sometimes better than capitalism's own defenders, what its strengths are and have been, a global smart machine that has brought us almost to the point of expansion into space. We recognise its weaknesses better too, because we don't dismiss them immediately as unavoidable. We see the enormous opportunity of a globally-connected, smart and (yes) clever working class to drive society forwards beyond class division, and we understand better than most what will happen to the world if we don't. That's why we would say, if you want to get smart, swot up on socialism.



Ice Age Art

Dear Editors

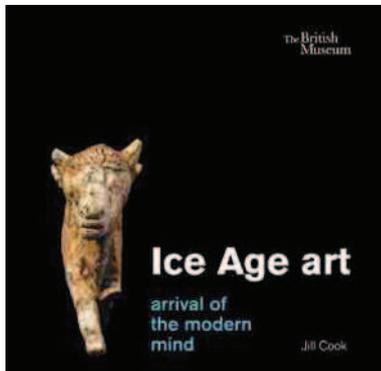
Thank you very much for forwarding the copy of the review (Mixed Media, September). It is great to read a piece in which the Marxist arguments are remembered and there are certainly excellent discussions to be had on these themes. More information on the topics mentioned can be found in the book that accompanied the exhibition. In both I tried to get away from the notion that these societies were 'primitive' or 'savage' as this is the language of the nineteenth century used to place modern western Europeans at the top of the evolutionary tree. The language of Marx and Engels that pursues evolution from savagery to barbarism and then civilization also need to be brought up to date with modern knowledge. It also sought to avoid the concept of Rousseau's noble savage that is also inherent in the Marxist approach.

Ice Age art shows the developing skills in language and communication that enable modern humans to form larger, successful communities with many forms of organisation. Hunter gatherer communities have to be collaborative to survive and as I say in the book, these people probably did have gender specific activities but without concepts of male/female superiority or measures of value for activities. Men and women served one world through different tasks. The breakdown of this comes with agriculture and the measured values for activities. The concept of *Mutterrecht* as fully expressed by Jung's disciple Erich Neumann also needs to be used with care.

The elaborate ornaments in the exhibition also express ideas about personal and social identities, wealth and status that may have been politically, socially or spiritually hierarchical but as always it is difficult to be conclusive about the implications from the archaeological record.

There is as ever much to debate.

Jill Cook, Curator Ice Age art: arrival of the modern mind, British Museum



Kenya school scam

Dear Editors,

I worked as a school manager at Bridge International Academies from 2010 to mid this year. The company's business is educating the less fortunate in society at an affordable cost. Most of the company's schools are constructed using iron sheets. And they are located in the slums.

Workers (teachers, school managers) in these schools are poorly paid, work for long hours and are not represented in any trade union. The proprietor of these schools is a top American capitalist. Profit is his main theme, though from time to time high quality education is dangled to parents and in prospectuses to attract them to the schools.

Workers are paid per the pupils who pay that month. Those who pay later on don't count for this and the money remains the profit of the company (worker's sweat). Any worker who makes an attempt to complain or show displeasure is shown the door.

Morale has been low and prospects of employees scaling the corporate ladder are slim as there is no upward mobility in the firm. The company pays US nationals handsomely while Kenyans are left to feed on crumbs.

Out of the 210 schools, 75 percent are profitable but this profit doesn't get to those who make this a reality (teachers and school managers).

If that's the way capitalism operates, then damn the system. It's ugly and



repugnant. Companies ought to realise that without their workers the wheels of their operations would grind to a halt.

Patrick.W.Ndege, Nairobi, Kenya.

Funny Money?

Dear Editors

Kaz's interesting article 'Propaganda Power... in your pocket' in

September's Socialist Standard sparked a mischievous thought:

How ironic it would be to find bank notes defaced with the briefest of messages: 'Abolish money - see SPGB'. I'm not suggesting a thing, mind.

Andy Cox (by email)

Maybe that's why they're thinking of changing to plastic notes?
- Editors.



Cheque or postal order (no cash) for £10.00 payable to SPGB SW Regional Branch, c/o Veronica Clanchy, FAO: South West Regional Branch, 42 Winifred Road, Poole, Dorset. BH15 3PU. Any queries, please phone 01202 569826. Please include own phone number or other contact details.

Thought About Joining The Socialist Party?

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Happy Bands of Pilgrims?

MEMBERS OF the Latin Mass Society are probably not best known for being the life and soul of the party. Their aims, as their name suggests, are for more use of Latin in the Catholic Church and, er, more Gregorian chanting. And, if their recent report on the popularity of the Church is anything to go by, they are not wildly optimistic about that either.

The number of baptisms in the Church today is less than half of those in 1964, they say. Catholic marriages, less than a quarter of those in 1968, and ordinations of new priests are now only a tenth of the 1965 figure.

Well, there you go. Sitting in a box with a priest who wants you to confess all your guilty little secrets, while the figure of a dead man impaled on a wooden cross glares mournfully down at you perhaps doesn't appeal to everyone.

The Bishop of Shrewsbury is no more optimistic. Addressing 1,000 young Catholics at a recent five-day prayer festival in Norfolk (the Catholic equivalent of sitting in the mud at Glastonbury) he gloomily advised them that 4,000 churches may close by 2020, and Christians in Britain could soon become a minority.

On top of all this, in August, the *Christian Post* website announced that a study of pastors found that the clergy are at a far greater risk of depression and anxiety than those in other occupations.

What they need, obviously, is a bit of razzmatazz – a few hearty verses of 'Jesus wants me for a sunbeam' maybe.

Meanwhile the happy-clappy, faith-healing, demon expelling, singing, dancing, tambourine bashing Pentecostals seem to be spreading like the plague. According to a report by the National Secular Society, there has been a 50 percent increase in the numbers attending Pentecostal churches in



London since 2005. And it's not only taking off in the UK.

In Nigeria some of the wealthier pastors rival the super-rich televangelists. A recent *'Christianity Today'* article entitled 'Private Jets for Jesus', gives details of four Nigerian Preachers each with their own private jets. One of them, 'Bishop' David Oyedepo, reportedly, owns three Gulfstreams and a Learjet worth almost 100 million US dollars.

So what is it that gets the punters flocking in and handing over their money? One ex-Pentecostal describes their attractions on his website. David Icke (yes, the man who alerted us to shape shifting lizards) says he attended a Pentecostal Church from the age of 17 to 19.

'The services were very emotionally manipulative' he says. 'They would lift us up and down with 10 minutes of loud, rousing music and everybody jumping up and down, punching the air and shouting, then 10 minutes of sad, reflective music with everyone crying, lying down on their faces weeping, lifting their hands and swaying slowly. And through all this, people rolling around, laughing hysterically, groaning, 'speaking in tongues' and shaking'. ... 'They were hugely concerned with making you believe you were gonna get rich and get better careers, very materialistic'.

These are apparently the mysterious ways in which the Lord now moves. No more Latin, and definitely no Gregorian chanting. Unfortunately, says Icke, 'The experience has left me very confused'.

The Times though, (22 August), was concerned by a different aspect. 'Too much religion can harm a society's economy by undermining the drive for financial success' it reported. 'Religiosity may curb ever-needed economic growth but may also thwart individuals and cultures from making risky financial decisions'. But, it added, 'Poor people can be happy with their lack of material wealth if they have religion'.

You have been warned.

NW

SWP Fallout

MANY STUDENT members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) have left in the past few months. Two new groups have been formed from the wreckage, the ISN (International Socialist Network) and the UK RevSoc (the Revolutionary Socialists) both composed largely of student ex-members of the SWP.

ISN published a prototype issue of a publication called *Cactus* (<http://www.internationalsocialistnetwork.org/>). Two UK RevSoc regional branches have made publications: Leeds RevSoc called *Dissent* (<http://revsocs.wordpress.com/rszines/dissent/>) and Queen Mary's RevSoc's two issues of *The Spark* (<http://revsocs.wordpress.com/rszines/the-spark/>).

Spark Issue 1 April 2013 has the look of a cut and paste pre-computer magazine. It has 23 pages of articles on Sussex University, Occupy Sussex, University Education, Womens' Militia, the EDL, Thatcher, the Youth, the British Spring, Illegal Music Downloading and Food. *Cactus* Issue 0 (so-called because it is a prototype) is much more professionally presented and has 140 smaller pages of articles on Egypt, Brazil, Bangladesh, Women's Oppression, Where Now For The Left and Culture. Richard Seymour (the key figure in ISN) suggests '[the ISN] is not, it seems to me, the 'true bearer' of the legacy of Marx ...' And 'We do not even place an undue premium on self-preservation. Indeed, if

all goes well, we won't exist for too long.'

Another article makes a plea 'The Left Unity project, in our opinion, has the potential to play the role of a broad, class-struggle party'. We disagree (see p12).

DJW





In or out: who cares?

SOCIALISTS SOMETIMES talk of 'the capitalist class' doing this or wanting that as if they were a monolithic whole with a single interest. In fact different sections of the capitalist class have different interests. Their attitude to the EU is a case in point.

Cameron has rather foolishly promised an in/out referendum on the issue; rather foolishly because (as the vote in parliament on bombing Syria shows) he cannot be sure that the result will be the one he wants, which will be to stay in with reforms, also the position of the Confederation of British Industry, which represents the biggest capitalist corporations operating in and from Britain.

One of the export-oriented big boys put the case for staying in to the *Evening Standard* (9 August):

'Britain should stay in the European Union to safeguard exports to the Continent, the boss of Hitachi's train operations in the UK urged today.... Mr Dormer... said exporters wanted Britain to have warm and stable relations with Europe. 'Europe is potentially our biggest market and we would not want anything to happen that would create barriers or damage the relationship,' he said.'

The previous day, the *Times* had reported 'Business leaders press for single market withdrawal':

'Business for Britain will call for the nation to downgrade its relationship with the EU and become part of a customs union instead... The plans would allow Britain to avoid tariffs when trading with Europe, while not having to sign up to various rules which harmonise business conditions across the 28 member countries. If a future government managed to negotiate such a change, it would put Britain in a similar trading position to Turkey.'

Business for Britain, the *Times* explained, 'claims to have the backing of 500 influential figures, including FTSE 100 directors and the owners of smaller businesses. They include Sir Stuart Rose, chairman of Ocado, Richard Burrows, chairman of British American Tobacco, and Ian Cheshire, chief executive of Kingfisher, parent company of B&Q.' Other backers are Lord Wolfson, CEO of Next, John Caudwell, founder of Phones4U, Sir Rocco Forte, executive chairman of Rocco Forte Hotels, Tim Martin, chairman of pub group JD Wetherspoon, and Charlie Mullins, managing director of Pimlico Plumbers.

It is easy to see what these have in common: they are all bosses of firms producing for the home market. The exception is BAT but they want to push their risky product in developing countries where restrictions on its sale are less than in Europe.

The same relationship to the EU as Turkey? The CBI has already rejected the even less distant relationships of Norway and Switzerland. Its director-general, John Cridland, had an article in the *Times* (4 July) headed 'In or out, Britain has to play by Europe's rules. Norway and Switzerland pay the costs of membership with no say over EU laws. That's a bad deal for UK businesses.'

This dispute within the British capitalist class has no class interest for workers. Whether British capitalism is in or out of the EU will make no difference to their position as a class forced to work for a wage or a salary and won't affect the problems they face either way.

So, if the referendum ever comes, you won't find us joining with the xenophobic right and the xenophobic left to line up behind Ocado, B&Q, Next, Phones4U, Wetherspoons, Pimlico Plumbers and other firms producing for the home market in saying No2EU. We'll be advising workers who understand their class position to write 'World Socialism' across their ballot paper.

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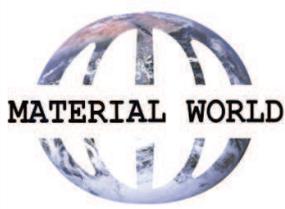
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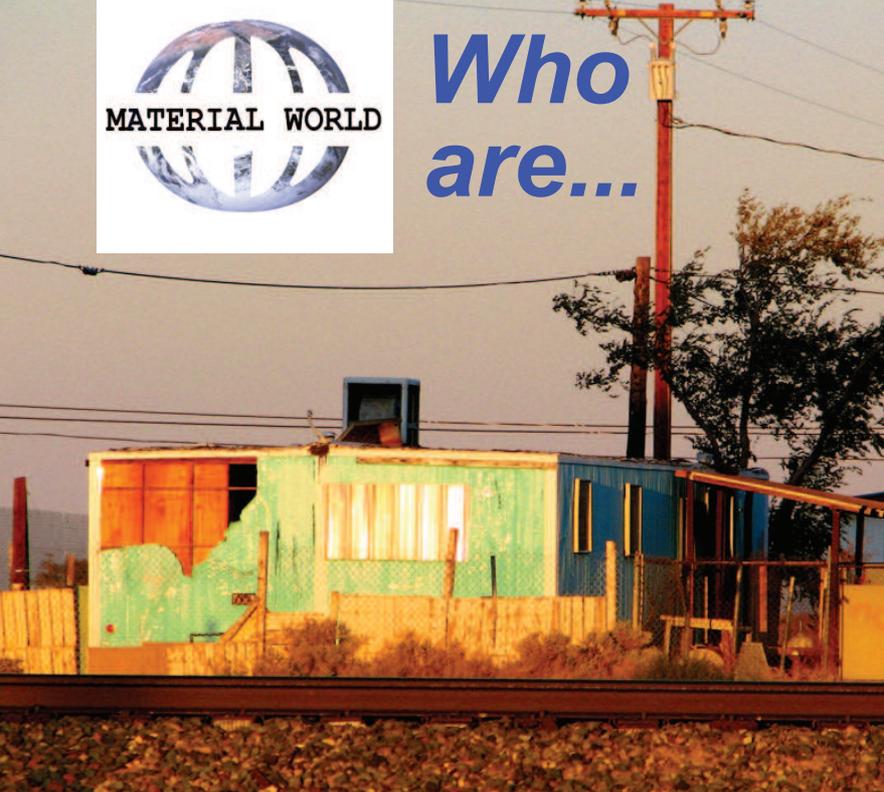
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Who are...

...‘the poor’?



minimum wage. The workers at a carwash near our home receive only \$5.75.

How can people possibly survive on such low wages? They work long hours or even in many cases two jobs. They also draw government benefits and get help from charity (so-called ‘income supports’). One increasingly important income support is the Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program, previously known as ‘food stamps’. The number of participants in SNAP has risen steadily from 17 million in 2000 to about 47 million at present. In fact, government and charities subsidize the employers of low-paid labour, who in the absence of such programs would have to pay higher wages to enable their workers to survive.

The near poor

The Federal Poverty Line is an unsatisfactory yardstick in several ways. It ignores taxes and ‘income supports’, it allows only for bare subsistence, and it takes no account of the huge regional variations in the cost of living.

Some researchers have tried to compensate for these defects by adding a category they call ‘the near poor’ – people with incomes from 100 up to 150 percent of the FPL. When this category is included, the poverty rate doubles to about a third of the population. A clear majority of children (57 percent) are ‘poor or near poor’.

These must still be underestimates because a family needs an income of anywhere from 150 up to 300 percent of the FPL – depending on the cost of living in the area where they live – just to cover ‘basic expenses’ (National Center for Children in Poverty, nccp.org).

Lifespan poverty experience

While those who are ‘poor’ at a particular moment may be only a minority, though a very substantial one, studies of ‘lifespan poverty experience’ show that a *majority* of Americans have the experience of being ‘poor’ at some time in their lives. Thus, a study published in 2001 found that 51 percent of 75-year-olds had passed at least one year in ‘poverty’ since the age of 25 (‘Signs of Declining Economic Security’, 28 July 2013, bigstory.ap.org).

It is this continuous large-scale movement of workers into and out of ‘poverty’ that gives the lie to the conventional idea of ‘the poor’ as a separate social group or even as a sort of special ‘underclass’. A large majority of Americans are always at significant risk of falling into ‘poverty’; the fear of ‘poverty’ occupies a crucial place in their psyche.

The typical suburbanite can become destitute and homeless very easily. All it takes is a single ‘negative life event’ such as the loss of a well-paying job, a serious illness or accident, imprisonment or divorce. Especially during a slump, masses of ‘middle class’ workers are rudely awakened from the ‘American dream’ to find themselves stranded among ‘the poor’.

‘Poverty’ and relative prosperity are alternate phases in the life of a single social class, the working class – a life marked by abject insecurity and dependence. Most members of the working class are not ‘poor’ most of the time, but it is ‘the poor’ who most starkly embody the essence of working class status.

STEFAN

SOCIALISTS ARE reluctant to talk about ‘the poor’ as a distinct social group. In a certain real sense, all of those excluded from ownership and control of the means of life – the large majority who make up the working class – are poor.

All the same, there are degrees of poverty. Being homeless or trapped in a rat-infested tenement is very different from living in a comfortable house (however heavily mortgaged) in a clean suburb. The focus here is on the people conventionally regarded as poor in the United States. Socialists might prefer to call them ‘the extremely poor’.

The US government defines a ‘federal poverty line’ (FPL) – currently an annual income of \$19,530 for a family of three or \$23,550 for a family of four – and equates being poor with falling below this line. By this definition, 16.3 percent of Americans (up from 12 percent in 1975) are poor, although for children the figure rises to 22 percent.

Poor = black? Wrong!

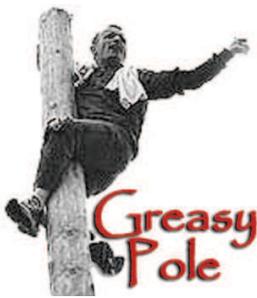
In the US ‘the poor’ tend to be identified with black people and especially with residents of the city ghettos, who occasionally draw attention to their grievances by rioting. It is true that the poverty *rate* is higher for blacks than for whites, but in absolute terms poor whites – sometimes called ‘the invisible poor’ – are far more numerous than poor blacks.

Millions of poor people live in small towns and rural areas. In large parts of the South the majority of them are black, but in some other depressed areas, such as the Appalachian Mountains in the East, they are mostly white.

Poor = unemployed? Wrong again!

There is also a tendency to identify ‘the poor’ with welfare recipients and the unemployed. In recent years, however, there has been growing recognition of the ‘working poor’ – the quarter of the American workforce whose pay is so low that despite long hours of hard work their income still falls below the poverty line.

According to a 2011 study by the Congressional Budget Office, 10 percent of US wage earners are paid under \$8.90 per hour. This is also the current median wage of workers in fast food outlets. The federal minimum wage is \$7.25, which if a bill now before Congress is passed will rise to \$10.10 by 2015. But many workers – especially but not only illegal immigrants – get less than the



Obsessed with Disorder

I AM grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his keen sense of anticipation for my interesting speech... I know that for the hon. Gentleman's

party it is always somebody else's fault..the hon. Gentleman is confused... the hon. Gentleman knows that I respect him... my hon. Friend is absolutely right... (Jim Murphy, Labour MP for East Renfrewshire, House of Commons 16 February 2011).

Debate

As the 2015 election draws nearer, we shall find ourselves under ever fiercer pressure to express our relieved gratitude for the courage and sanity of all the decisions taken by our Members of Parliament. As an early example of this, in summer last June there was a debate in the Commons about mental ill-health and the fact that sufferers of it are restricted in the opportunities open to them in employment and other fields. A surprisingly large clutch of MPs told of their experience of the illness in its various forms. Among them were Labour's former Defence Minister, the renowned bruiser Kevan Jones and the Conservative ex-general practitioner Sarah Wollaston. In particular, one who seems likely to make it his recurring theme was Charles Walker, MP for the Green Belt (although Sainsbury and Marks and Spencer occupied) Borough of Broxbourne in Hertfordshire. Walker's condition is not of a kind to make him uncontrollably violent or perilously demented; it is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) which holds him in a grip of needing to carry out everyday actions-washing his hands, turning lights off – in sets of four. Symptoms can be effectively numberless – and debilitating: Walker relates 'I say "My grandmother's hat is green" four times, and then just to be sure I say it another four times, and then in my head I think, better say it 16 times, just in case'. Other sufferers may be compelled to open a door repeatedly to see if there is anyone outside, or to sit with their legs crossed in a particular, even if uncomfortable, way.



Charles Walker

OCD

Walker was first aware of having the disease when he was 13 years old. It was worse at university, again when he worked at 'marketing' and then when he became an MP – after failing in the 2001 election against the immovable Steve Pound in Ealing North. He is inclined to 'catastrophise' – always prepare for the worst. (Although we might ask whether this may be connected with the requirements of 'marketing' and all that it implies in the need for unremitting drive to promote the processing of some commodities in the face of competition). And there was the House of Commons, inhabited with those inflated personalities who defend their self-constructed reputation for decisive and effective action against all questioners and faint-hearts, even although they fail to control this essentially anarchic social system. Informed by an interviewer that he is 'incredibly honest for a politician', Walker responds: 'Well I can barely lie' – which if it were true would in fact isolate him to a degree undreamed of by any victim of OCD.

Symptoms

Some of the speakers in the mental health debate described their symptoms in frighteningly colourful terms but Walker was not among them, preferring to flavour his account with a lighter touch, telling of his family likening him to an extra in *Riverdance* as he bounces in and out of the room. And he used some relaxed language: 'Look, it's not a problem, it really is not: let's get over it guys and move on'. And then winding up: 'Hon. Gentlemen, Hon. Ladies and friends, rock and roll, as they say'. But he is capable of a different type of colourful contribution. On 9 November 2005, when he was a new Member, the Blair government were defeated by 322 to 291 votes on their proposal to extend to 90 days the period of detention of terrorist suspects without trial. Walker got himself into the news by shouting 'Police state' at Blair, who left the chamber shaking his head in anger and later bitterly denounced his opponents. Walker is not always disrespectful to his leaders. On Margaret Thatcher he '... admired her from afar... a great woman, a great Prime Minister and she had love of this country emblazoned on her heart'. But he is not so bedazzled by the present leadership for on the matter of their opposition to the proposed rise in MPs pay he raged that Cameron and Clegg are 'crass' and 'trying to make capital off their MPs'. Even further – and perhaps dangerously, he thinks that 'there are many, many better people in parliament as humble backbenchers than those at the head of our parties'. He does not fit in completely with the *Daily Mail* stereotype of the predictable right-wing MP from a South England shire for while he thinks that immigration has been too free and rates himself as a Eurosceptic he supports same-sex marriage.

Failure

Mental illness does not take root and proliferate in isolation. There are many examples of it being a defence against the stress of survival in poverty – which validates those psychiatrists who might regard it as comparatively healthy, preferable to surrendering to those pressures. In another field there is a thicket of evidence about the psychiatric damage to soldiers who have survived one type of combat – Iraq, Afghanistan – only to find themselves laid low when they are invalided out and have to face the devastating disciplines of employment and shortage of money. On this basis it might be argued that politicians can endure the frustrations of struggling to reshape the savagery of capitalism only by diagnosing themselves as mental invalids. The history of politics is littered with examples of policies which governments have persisted with when, judged even by their own appalling standards, they were driving themselves into exposed failure. For example Iraq and Afghanistan were preceded by bloody episodes such as the Suez invasion in 1956, Kenya, Palestine... It is the same story in domestic politics, when ministers and their 'experts' apply their power over us by insisting on measures which were clearly doomed to failure – the Poll Tax, the Child Support Agency, Norman Lamont's ERM. Charles Walker may speak about his OCD, apparently unconscious of the fact that trying to govern – to control – capitalism must demand a disorder which is obsessional and compulsive because this is intrinsic to a government's priority to disguise the awful reality of their sick impotence.

IVAN

Mind the

Gap

A recent ILO publication looks at wage trends globally.

It is important to note several things about the ongoing crisis of capitalism we are experiencing. Firstly, that a crisis is a normal part of the ordinary functioning of capitalism. It isn't down to accident, or policy failures, but is almost a necessary part of the trial and error method of investment. The goldfish-like memory of politicians forgets that for every period of growth, there is a slow-down and a crisis to which we all have to react in panic. They proclaim a new age of prosperity with every year of economic growth and try to take the credit for it, and then blame someone else whenever crisis resumes.

Secondly, crises are not natural phenomena, but are a form of class struggle, as the owners of property try and protect themselves from losing their investments, and re-impose scarcity on the markets where they have over-invested (thus destroying their profitability). The inevitable result of any crisis is a rise of unemployment, and an attack on the wages and living standards of the working class as an attempt to restore profitability for the owners. Here Marx's observations are pertinent. Average socially-necessary labour-time determines the exchange value of the produce of capital thus the profits of that capital depend on the difference between the exchange value of the workers' skills and the amount of labour time they add to the product. There is a direct correlation between lowering wages and improved profitability of capital (in general).

Thirdly, aside from the specific crisis for the capitalists that we hear about at the top of the news headlines, there is the ongoing crisis of the workers, of the millions trapped in a life-time of poverty and servitude. Millions more will spend a life on low wages that will never substantially rise. They have to struggle daily for food and a place to live, with no security, let alone dignity.

Double dip in wages

Some of these themes are made clear by the *Global Wage Report 2012/13* report from the International Labour

Organization (ILO) (www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-wage-report/2012/lang-en/index.htm):

'In developed economies, the crisis led to a 'double dip' in wages: real average wages fell in 2008 and again in 2011, and the current outlook suggests that in many of these countries wages are growing marginally, if at all, in 2012' (p.5).

Of course, such trends are never even, and even within the 'developed economies' some people will have seen their wages rise at a rate faster than the trend. This is even truer on a worldwide scale:

'Real average wage growth has remained far below pre-crisis levels globally, going into the red in developed economies, although it has remained significant in emerging economies. Monthly average wages adjusted for inflation – known as real average wages – grew globally by 1.2 percent in 2011, down from 2.1 percent in 2010 and 3 percent in 2007. Because of its size and strong economic performance, China weighs heavily in this global calculation. Omitting China, global real average wages grew at only 0.2 percent in 2011, down from 1.3 percent in 2010 and 2.3 percent in 2007' (p. 13).

Longer term trends

Interestingly, one of the areas of wage growth, Latin America, has been where the massive protests of Brazil have recently been witnessed, with the workers demanding a share in the proceeds of growth. Indeed, Latin America is undergoing a period of social democratic governments building welfare states, and perhaps it is unlikely that this doesn't correlate with the overall economic growth.

Of course, wages do grow, over time, but not necessarily in a continuous and linear fashion, as the report notes:

'Taking a longer view, the report estimates that real monthly average wages almost doubled in Asia between 2000 and 2011, and increased by 18 percent in Africa, 15 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 5 percent in developed economies. In Eastern



“Crises are not natural phenomena but are a form of class struggle, as the owners of property try and protect themselves from losing their investments and re-impose scarcity on the markets”

Europe and Central Asia wages nearly tripled, but from a very low base following the economic collapse of the 1990s’ (p. 5).

That period, though, is the period of growth between crises, but it remains somewhat heartening that conditions for workers are improving in some of the most destitute parts of the world.

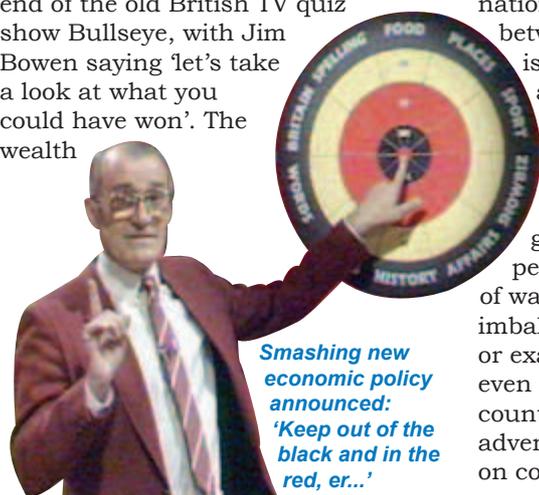
Declining share

According to figures collated by the House of Commons library, ‘average hourly wages have fallen 5.5 percent since mid-2010, adjusted for inflation’ (www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-23655605) in the UK, which compares with a 0.7 percent across the European Union as a whole. In Germany, by way of contrast, wages rose by 2.7 percent.

The problem is that even a growing real wage might not match the increases in wealth produced by labour:

Between 1999 and 2011 average labour productivity in developed economies increased more than twice as much as average wages [...]. In the United States, real hourly labour productivity in the non-farm business sector increased by about 85 percent since 1980, while real hourly compensation increased by only around 35 percent. In Germany, labour productivity surged by almost a quarter over the past two decades while real monthly wages remained flat’ (p. 14).

This is the rawest form of class struggle, and the hardest part to grasp, since it is somewhat like the end of the old British TV quiz show Bullseye, with Jim Bowen saying ‘let’s take a look at what you could have won’. The wealth



Smashing new economic policy announced: ‘Keep out of the black and in the red, er...’

created by increased growth has increased faster than the real take-home pay of the workers, but the workers have never had the wealth they’ve lost, and although it affects their lives in so many ways, they don’t feel the loss as directly as they would, say, an increase in taxes. Likewise, some of that erosion will have been through inflation, so the difference between nominal wages and real wages becomes complex to calculate at a personal level.

Setting worker against worker

An illustration of the centrality of this process is the furore over pensions. It’s true that the ‘dependency ratio’ (the number of pensioners compared to those in work) is due to rise from about 350 per thousand to about 450 by 2050. So our political masters tell us that we must all accept smaller pensions (that is, lower deferred wages), yet the rate of increase in the dependency ratio is less than the trend rate in the growth of productivity, fewer workers will be needed to do the same amount of work. The question is, therefore, who benefits from that growth?

As the ILO notes:

‘In terms of functional income distribution, which concerns how national income has been distributed between labour and capital, there is a long run trend towards a falling share of wages and a rising share of profits in many countries. The personal distribution of wages has also become more unequal, with a growing gap between the top 10 percent and the bottom 10 percent of wage earners. These internal imbalances’ have tended to create or exacerbate external imbalances, even before the Great Recession, with countries trying to compensate the adverse effects of lower wage shares on consumption demands through



Latin America: a wage-growth area

easy credit or export surpluses.’ (p. 15).

Such variation harms the capacity to unite the working class, as the few on high wages struggle to defend their relative advantage, and the owners try to stir up tension between countries as part of their currency and export competition.

The report notes the underlying cause of the declining labour share:

‘The drop in the labour share is due to technological progress, trade globalization, the expansion of financial markets, and decreasing union density, which have eroded the bargaining power of labour. Financial globalization, in particular, may have played a bigger role than previously thought’ (p. 14).

Globalization and expansion of financial markets are another way of saying that more people have been drawn into the global labour market (in part thanks to and also causing the wage growth in developing countries). The ILO, obviously, only recommends reforms to capitalism, calling for a rebalancing of investment, ignoring the pure class war being waged by the capitalists themselves. The long term balance is on the side of the owning class, and even when their crisis ends, ours will continue, until we organise to abolish its cause: the wages system itself.

PIK SMEET



In March, following the relative success of his nostalgic film about the post-war Labour government *The Spirit of 45*, Ken Loach launched an appeal for the formation of a new left-of-Labour (not to say Old Labour) party. The ball was picked up by others and a new Left Party is to be founded at a meeting in London on 30 November.

Loach's appeal brought in some 9000 replies, though only well under a thousand of them seem to have followed this up by getting involved in local 'Left Unity' groups. An appeal published in the *Guardian* (12 August) sets out the general aim of those calling for the new party:

'We urgently need a new party of the left. Labour will not provide the opposition to coalition politics that the situation demands. We need to provide a genuine alternative to the austerity policies which the three main parties support. A party that is socialist, environmentalist, feminist and opposed to all forms of discrimination.'

A meeting in May of those who had responded to Loach's appeal decided that the new party should be an individual membership organisation. This was in deliberate contrast to a previous attempt to form a new left-of-Labour party in the early years of this century – the 'Socialist Alliance', which was in effect an electoral alliance between the SWP and Militant and which eventually fell apart because of rivalry between these two Trotskyist groups.

The individual membership decision was, and was meant to be, a rebuff to such groups, though their members are still free to join as individuals. Some Trotskyist groups – 'Socialist Resistance' and 'Workers Power' – have accepted this. This is likely to cause the new party problems in the future as it is a well-known tactic of such groups to

'enter' a bigger party, form a 'faction' (whether open or clandestine) within it, and breakaway away at some point with, they calculate, more members than they went in with.

But why another Left party? Aren't there already a number of left-of-Labour parties which contest elections? Scargill's SLP, Galloway's Respect Party, the SWP, Militant (now calling themselves SPEW), TUSC and even the Communist Party of Britain (who run the *Morning Star*). The aim seems to be to form a party of a different type, one that is neither dominated by a single individual nor organised on Leninist lines; an open, more or less democratic party

Resistance', which claims to be the genuine 'Fourth International' and is the successor of the old IMG of the 1970s of which Tariq Ali was a prominent member.

More interesting is the second one, called the 'Socialist Platform'. It seems to be the initiative of one of the constituents of TUSC – the 'Independent Socialist Network', which caters for individuals who support TUSC but are not members of SPEW or of the RMT union. In fact the ISN seems to be on the brink of defecting from TUSC to the new Left Party.

The third – the so-called 'Class Struggle Platform' – can be dismissed

“Workers Power are nothing if not brazen. The new party has not yet been formed and they have already founded a ‘faction’ within it”

like, in the British context, the old ILP. Supporters of the new party cite existing European parties such as the Party of the Left in France, Die Linke in Germany and Syriza in Greece as examples they want to follow.

The general orientation of the new party has yet to be decided. That's going to be settled at its founding conference at the end of the November. In the meantime three 'platforms' for discussion at the conference are circulating amongst those who signed up to Loach's appeal.

One – the Left Unity Platform – is that of those who took the initiative to call for setting up the new party. They want a broad party that will attract any and every one to the left of Labour. In other words, an opportunist, catch-all party. They have the support of one of the Trotskyist groups, 'Socialist

fairly quickly. It has been put forward by another Trotskyist group, 'Workers Power', and just reproduces their programme. These people are nothing if not brazen. The new party has not yet been formed and they have already founded a 'faction' within it.

The 'Socialist Platform' is reproduced opposite. As can be seen, it is written in the same sort of language that we use; in fact we can agree with a large part of it, especially that 'capitalism does not and cannot be made to work in the interests of the majority' and clauses 6, 7 and 9. There are of course differences. For instance, clause 2 could imply that a 'state' will continue to exist in socialism. Clause 3 does not say explicitly that socialism has to involve the complete ending of production for the market. Clause 5 ends with a peculiar formulation on Europe (even though this is an

Statement of Aims and Principles for the [Left Unity] Party ('Socialist Platform')

1. The [Left Unity] Party is a socialist party. Its aim is to bring about the end of capitalism and its replacement by socialism.
2. Under capitalism, production is carried out solely to make a profit for the few, regardless of the needs of society or damage to the environment. Capitalism does not and cannot be made to work in the interests of the majority. Its state and institutions will have to be replaced by ones that act in the interests of the majority.
3. Socialism means complete political, social and economic democracy. It requires a fundamental breach with capitalism. It means a society in which the wealth and the means of production are no longer in private hands but are owned in common. Everyone will have the right to participate in deciding how the wealth of society is used and how production is planned to meet the needs of all and to protect the natural world on which we depend. We reject the idea that the undemocratic regimes that existed in the former Soviet Union and other countries were socialist.
4. The [Left Unity] Party opposes all oppression and discrimination, whether on the basis of gender, nationality, ethnicity, disability, religion or sexual orientation and aims to create a society in which such oppression and discrimination no longer exist.
5. Socialism has to be international. The interests of the working class are the same everywhere. The [Left Unity] Party opposes all imperialist wars and military interventions. It rejects the idea that there is a national solution to the problems of capitalism. It stands for the maximum solidarity and cooperation between the working class in Britain and elsewhere. It will work with others across Europe to replace the European Union with a voluntary European federation of socialist societies.
6. The [Left Unity] Party aims to win support from the working class and all those who want to bring about the socialist transformation of society, which can only be accomplished by the working class itself acting democratically as the majority in society.
7. The [Left Unity] Party aims to win political power to end capitalism, not to manage it. It will not participate in governmental coalitions with capitalist parties at national or local level.
8. So long as the working class is not able to win political power for itself the [Left Unity] Party will participate in working-class campaigns to defend all past gains and to improve living standards and democratic rights. But it recognises that any reforms will only be partial and temporary so long as capitalism continues.
9. The [Left Unity] Party will use both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary means to build support for its ultimate goal - the socialist transformation of society.
10. All elected representatives will be accountable to the party membership and will receive no payment above the average wage of a skilled worker (the exact level to be determined by the party conference) plus legitimate expenses.

“There is no chance of the ‘Socialist Platform’ being accepted at the founding conference of the new party. The Left Unity Platform will be adopted and a new wishy-washy, leftwing reformist party will come into existence”



The director (left), the film (below right) and the Big Idea

advance on the No2EU embraced by most of the Left). Clause 8 is the real stumbling block from our point of view as it opens the way for the party to campaign for reforms.

Others, too, have noticed its similarity with what we say. A supporter of the Left Unity Platform has offered the following criticism of it:

‘There is no acknowledgement that fighting for reforms in the short term is entirely compatible with aiming for socialism in the longer term. Absent is any idea that a fight for reforms can raise people’s self-activity and point towards escalating demands; instead we are offered something approaching impossibilism. Current struggles are played down in favour of visions of a utopian future.’

If you follow the link from the word ‘impossibilism’ it takes you

to a Wikipedia page which explains that the main current exponent of this in Britain is us (see: leftunity.org/which-way-for-left-unity-the-case-for-the-left-party-platform). The author, Tom Walker, is a member of a breakaway group from the SWP. So this is a case of a Trotskyist criticising the ‘Socialist Platform’ for being too like the SPGB, a damning argument amongst Trotskyists.

One group of Leninists who have signed it are not satisfied with it, but because they see it as non-Leninist. This group, calling itself the ‘Communist Party of Great Britain’ (even though they have nothing to do with the old, now defunct CPGB) and publishing the *Weekly Worker*, have proposed a series of amendments intended to turn it into a Leninist statement.

For instance, where the original version says:

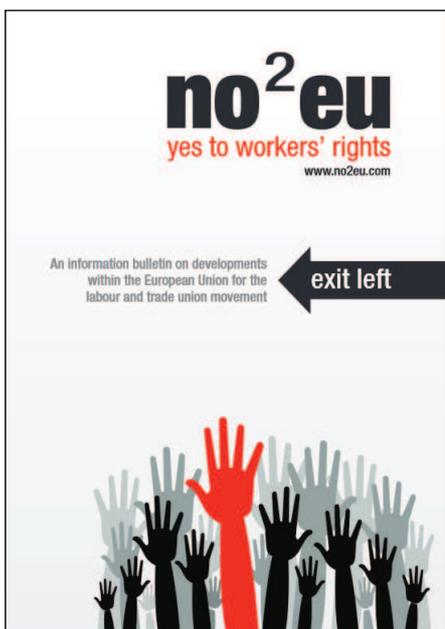
‘The Left Unity party is a socialist party. Its aim is to bring about the end of capitalism and its replacement by socialism’

they want to change this to:

‘It seeks to bring about the end of capitalism and its replacement by the rule of the working class. Our ultimate aim is a society based on the principle of ‘from each according to their abilities; to each according to their needs’, a moneyless, classless, stateless society, within which each individual can develop their fullest individuality.’

On the face of it this seems more explicitly socialist and of course we too want a ‘moneyless, classless, stateless society’, but what this is actually doing is introducing

Populist leftwing euro-politicking



Left Unity, broad church

IF YOU have ideas that aren’t supported, but you want your ideas to win support what do you do? Should you dismiss the ability of people to think and change and set out to deceive people not supportive of your ideas, since this is what most political parties do? Should you play down your ideas in an organisation, in order to win supporters, putting numbers of supporters as more important than your ideas?

Of course big ideas overlap, it would be sectarian to suggest otherwise, but what if those ideas are political and require political organisation for a political purpose? How important is sticking to your ideas, or what might be called principles, then? What if the idea is socialism, which represents a fundamental break with previous society? How important then, is clearly defining supporters from non-supporters?

The project called Left Unity then is going for the broad approach. There is a willingness to accept subscriptions from members not in agreement on political purpose with other members. Agreeing on action first, then (if at all) worrying about ideological agreement (as unfashionable as that is), is not the way to persuade people. Very quickly they will find out that some ideas negate other ideas, such as higher wages negates abolition of the wages system. Some supporters of the organisation will become ideological opponents (or at least non-supporters) when revolutionary change arises.

The greatest American orator for socialism once said ‘It is better to vote for what you want and not get it, than to vote for what you don’t want and get it.’

DJW

the Leninist distinction (which we reject and which was never in Marx's writings) between 'socialism' and 'communism'. We call a moneyless, classless, stateless society 'socialism' (or, occasionally 'communism', as the two words mean the same) and this may well be the view also of some of those who have signed the original platform. For us, this is the immediate aim, but for those behind the amendment it is only a far-off 'ultimate aim', just as it was for the government of the old USSR. Their immediate aim is a so-called 'workers state' in which money, classes and the state will continue to exist.

There is no chance of the 'Socialist Platform' being accepted at the founding conference of the new party. The Left Unity Platform will be adopted and a new wishy-washy, leftwing reformist party will come into existence.

The trouble, for them, is that such a left-of-Labour party already exists in the Green Party. The only difference is that the Green Party does not claim to be 'socialist', only 'environmentalist, feminist and opposed to all forms of



discrimination'. Apart from that, the policies that the two parties will be advocating will be the same, for instance, defence of the welfare state, bringing the utilities back into 'public' ownership, failed Keynesian policies as a supposed alternative to austerity, against overseas

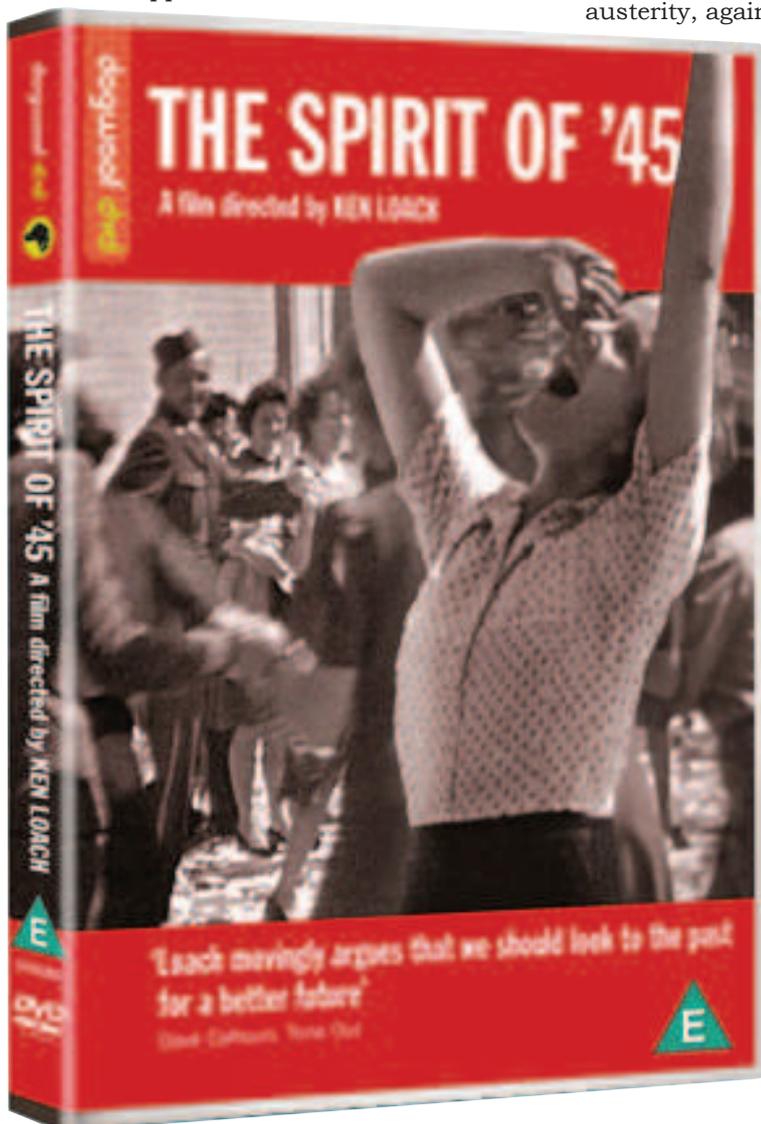
military action... So, to succeed, the new party will have to replace the Green Party. Which

hardly seems likely.

Then there are the other smaller left-of-Labour parties competing on the same ground. They are not going to go away. Nor will the Trotskyist groups that have decided to 'enter' it. So the new Left Party is likely to be a non-starter and will probably end up as just another such small party, so adding to the confusion as to what socialism is and how to get it.

The only positive thing that could come out of this is for some of those who signed the 'Socialist Platform' to realise that a socialist party, on sound socialist principles, already exists and is already campaigning for socialism and nothing but.

ALB



Back to the future for working conditions

Conditions for workers today in Britain are moving back towards those in Victorian Britain. The struggles of the working class in Britain in the nineteenth century to ensure better working conditions and humane working hours are documented by Marx in Chapter ten *The Working Day in Capital Volume 1*. With zero hours contracts we have gone 'back to the future'.

The capitalist class in the UK have about 1 million workers on zero-hours contracts. These contracts mean there is no guarantee of work and pay each week, no holiday or sick pay. The balance of power favours the employer and makes it hard for workers to complain. Workers are often only told how many hours they will work when weekly or monthly rotas are worked out, but are expected to be on call for extra work at short notice, like the day before. If you don't comply you don't get any work.

Cinema chain Cineworld, Buckingham Palace's 350 summer workers, retailer Sports Direct (20,000 of its 23,000 staff), Pub group JD Wetherspoon (24,000 of its staff - 80 percent of its workforce), 1/3 of the voluntary sector, 1/4 of the public sector, McDonalds, Boots, Amazon, Abercrombie & Fitch, and Tate Galleries all use workers on zero hours contracts.

There are now fees for lodging claims at industrial tribunals. A worker has to pay a fee when a claim is lodged at the tribunal and another one at the hearing. Level 1 claims include those for unpaid wages, payment in lieu of notice and redundancy payments which cost £160 and a hearing fee of £230. Level 2 claims include unfair dismissal, discrimination, equal pay and whistle blowing which cost £250 and a hearing fee of £950. There will be higher fees for those cases where there are multiple claimants.

Currently an employer could discuss offers of settlement with a worker to terminate his or her employment on a 'without prejudice' basis, which means they could not be divulged in future tribunal proceedings as evidence against that employer. There would need to be a prior 'dispute' for an employer to take advantage of this protection. Under new rules, employers will now be able to engage in pre-termination negotiations/early exit discussions with a worker even where no formal dispute has yet arisen. The new law allows employers a free reign at any time to enter termination discussions with their



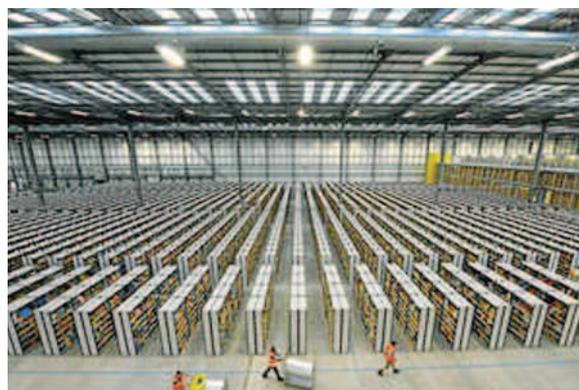
Above: Aidan Burley.
Above right: Amazon's vast premises at Rugeley

staff without fear of it being used against them.

The maximum compensation that could be awarded for routine unfair dismissal claims at an employment tribunal was £74,200. Now it will be the equivalent of 52 weeks' pay or £74,200, whichever is the lower. Average salary today is £26,500 for full time workers.

These changes prompted Elizabeth George, a barrister in the employment team at law firm Leigh Day to say:

'This sends a very dangerous message to employers who will be less inclined to abide by their legal obligations as the risk of being challenged will be much reduced, these fees will disproportionately hit those suffering discrimination because of their age, race, disability and gender, the disproportionate fees will mean many people having to put up with discrimination and unable to challenge unfair dismissals, however badly they



had been treated. We have already seen guidance from lawyers advising employers to wait to fire people as it will be cheaper and the chances of being taken to tribunal will be less following the introduction of fees. Instead of standing up for people suffering unlawful discrimination in the workplace, the government is doing the exact opposite'. (*Guardian*, 29 July)

Online retailer Amazon opened a huge processing centre in Rugeley, Staffordshire in 2011. Arthur Valdez, vice-president operations Amazon said at the time: 'We look forward to assembling a team of talented people who will play their part in ensuring that customers receive the millions of items that will be ordered' (*Daily Telegraph*, 10 July 2011). Mike Dell, president of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce concurred: 'It's excellent news. It brings jobs to an area that desperately needs it'. Aidan Burley, local Tory MP put his tuppence in: 'It's absolutely fantastic news for Rugeley. People are crying out to get back into work'. (BBC News Stoke and Staffordshire online, 10 July 2011)

A recent Channel 4 investigation discovered at the Amazon factory in Rugeley timed toilet breaks, workers' movements were monitored by GPS trackers, workers

continued page 21

Confessions of a fetishist

Given the context of this essay only a minority of readers will have any misconceptions about the content. It was Karl Marx that first defined what we now know of as 'Commodity Fetishism'. He meant by this the inherent power that a commodity has over its producer in contrast to any rational relationship between mankind and the products of its labour. This occurs because of the alienated nature of production within capitalism where profit is the goal rather than human need. If a profit is not created then production is considered 'useless' and thus the labour involved is likewise considered a waste. The commodity has become the master of labour and production itself. Entering the market of exchange for profit the product is divorced from the labour and the people that created it. It becomes 'fetishised' in that it appears independent of the producers and confronts them only as an object of consumerism. The need that this commodity serves can be entirely dependent on the need for social status i.e. jewellery, expensive clothing, electronic gizmos and, the one that this essay will focus on - cars.

The automobile has become a 'paradigm' of fetishised commodities. In terms of 'status symbols' it would be hard to find a better example; from

Minis to Rolls Royces they all represent a statement about the owner. Or, more precisely, a statement that the owner wants to socially broadcast. My friends rarely fail to notice any perceived inconsistency between my lifestyle and my 'principles' as a socialist. My love of racing cars is one example. For many seasons I was to be found trackside enjoying my favourite sport - Drag Racing. My love of 'hot rods', 'muscle cars' and dragsters goes back to the summer of 1973 when, as a teenager, I got my first whiff of nitro methane. Since then I have been addicted to power, speed and, let's be frank, the glamorous aesthetic of racing cars. What follows will not be a defence, but rather an attempted explanation of a sometimes uncomfortable love affair. It will also explain my hatred of Ferraris.

In contrast to the European tradition in motor racing the American experience was generated by working class, or as they say in the US 'blue collar' culture. After the end of World War 2 the returning GIs had to fill the

chase, especially on the west coast, motor racing. Given the relatively cheap price of gasoline and production cars they began to modify the chassis and tune the engines to acquire more speed. Races were held on Bonneville salt flats to test these 'hot rods'. Clubs were formed and illegal street races (drag races) began to take place all over America. Because of the danger to all involved a group called the National Hot Rod Association started to try and organise these races at unused Air Force bases where the runways were perfect for quarter mile side by side racing.

This hot rodding counter culture was soon noticed by the Detroit car manufactures and in an attempt to cash in on this new youth market they started making 'muscle cars'. Dodge Barracudas, Ford Mustangs and Chevrolet Camaros were seen on the drag strips every weekend competing for the dollars in the pockets of these new performance consumers. Massive v8 engines were crammed into street legal coupes and saloons and you could drive one of these monsters straight out of the showroom onto the race track with 11 second 100+ mph quarter mile performances. The kids went crazy! Of course it couldn't last and by the time I was beginning to enjoy the English version of hot-rodding (mid 70s) the hey-day was coming to an end courtesy of rising oil prices.

Drag racing was held in contempt by the 'motor racing' establishment in this country. Hill climbers, sports car racers, rally car drivers and, of course, the holy of holies, Formula One looked down from a great height on the lowly working class hotrodders. But this suited my personality perfectly and only served to

vacuum of a return to civilian life with some form of excitement. Many



reinforce my love of the culture. The fact that a mildly tuned Chevy v8 in a mildly modified Chevelle would out-accelerate any Ferrari or even an F1 car gave me immense satisfaction even before I understood it as part of the cultural 'class war' in this country.

So I 'identified' with the hotrod culture of late 60s to late 70s America. To me any one who could virtually build his own performance car from the chassis up was superior to a rich man who would simply buy his Maserati or Aston Martin from the dealer without any involvement in its production. This was how I rationalised my love of American muscle cars but, of course, there is more to it than that. I like to think that on some level it was a reaction by American youth against consumerism. They took Detroit's alienated products and humanised them - made them 'real' as products of the labour of their class and then of themselves as non-alienated individuals. The car lost its power as a fetishised commodity and became what it really is - a product of social and individual labour.

Unfortunately, or some would say, inevitably corporate America soon subsumed the culture and turned it in to a meaningless symbol of 'Americana'. TV shows like 'American Hotrod' and 'Wrecks to Riches' are examples of the corruption of hotrod culture where a rich 'customer' walks into the workshop and orders a hotrod like it's a steak or a Ferrari. The subsequent struggle of the production staff to meet 'deadlines' is an archetype of alienated labour creating a fetishised commodity which is the very antithesis of hotrod culture.

Occasionally I still attend drag races but although the performances are truly staggering (4 second quarter miles with 330mph top-end speeds) all the fastest cars have corporate sponsors and I miss the 'Golden Age' when a guy could turn up with a dragster built in his shed and still have a chance to win. Recently a reaction against the 'big show', as corporate drag races are now called, has spawned something called 'Nostalgia Racing' where engines and bodies/chassis are restricted to 1970s technology making it possible for a low budget racer to be competitive. I enjoy these races but, as the name implies, there's something reactionary and non-progressive about it all. It seems to be part of the retro culture of post-modernism where sport takes its place alongside music and the other arts as part of the bankrupt capitalist culture of the 21st century. When humanity finally gets around to progressing once more (after the revolution) I wonder if they'll let me fire up my Chevy occasionally at weekends?

WEZ



The death of the middle class

IN AN article in the *Daily Mail* (23 August) lamenting 'the death of the middle classes' Dominic Sandbrook wrote:

'One day, predicted Karl Marx, 'the lower strata of the middle class — the small tradespeople, shopkeepers and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants', would begin to sink down the social ladder, crushed by the cruel economic logic of modern life. Society, he thought, would inexorably be divided into haves and have-nots, and tension would turn inevitably to violent revolution. Marx gloried in his own prediction. As the founding father of Communism, he looked forward to the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', when the middle classes would be extinguished and capitalism would be torn down.'

In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels did write something like this, but not exactly. Discussing the origin of the 'proletariat', or working class, defined by Engels in a footnote to the English edition of 1888 as 'the class of modern wage-labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live', Marx and Engels wrote:

'The lower strata of the middle class the small tradespeople, shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants — all these sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which Modern Industry is carried on, and is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists, partly because their specialised skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production. Thus the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population.'

Earlier in the *Manifesto* Marx and Engels had pointed out:

'The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers.'

Which has gone on ever since, despite the rise of the so-called 'new middle class' of salaried employees; these have not even been 'reduced' to 'selling their labour power in order to live' as they never were independent owners of their own business.

Sandbrook in fact takes it for granted that his 'middle classes' have to work for an employer when he writes 'middle-class men and women once expected to have a job for life.'

Society is already divided into two classes: those who, not owning means of production, are forced to sell their labour power, whether for a wage or a salary, to live and those Engels in his footnote called 'the class of modern Capitalists, owners of the means of production and employers of wage labour.'

It is true that the 'tension' between the two classes did not turn into 'violent revolution' as Marx and Engels had expected in 1848. Later they envisaged the possible conversion of universal suffrage into 'an agent of emancipation', not that this has happened either.

It is true, too, that Marx occasionally used the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat', but what he meant was the exercise of political power by the majority class of wage and salary workers, which he considered should be done democratically.

To tear capitalism down? Yes, by converting the means of production from the property of a tiny minority into the common ownership of the whole of society, so allowing production to be geared to meeting people's needs instead of for sale on a market with a view to profit.

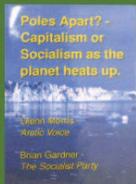
To extinguish the middle class? Yes, in fact of all classes. Together with the rest of the wider working class, today's so-called middle class will commit suicide by abolishing itself.

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Coming home from the mill, 1928



LS Lowry

THE LOWRY exhibition currently at Tate Britain in London includes all the popular ‘matchstalk men and matchstalk cats and dogs’ paintings paid tribute to in the 1978 song by Brian Auger and The Trinity. Lowry portrayed working class life in Pendlebury, Salford and Manchester from the economic depression of the 1930s to welfare state Britain of the 1950s or as John Berger wrote in *New Society* in 1966: ‘this is what has happened to the ‘workshop of the world’, the production crisis, the obsolete industrial plants’.

The ‘matchstalk’ paintings such as *Coming Home from the Mill*, *People Going to Work*, *Returning from Work*, *Coming from the Mill* and *Outside the Mill* are repetitive and convey the world of factory whistles, wage slavery



The Lake, 1937

and payday for the Manchester working class only a few generations after Engels wrote his investigative book.

Lowry’s more interesting work includes the 1926 *A Northern Hospital* which is fundamentally a workhouse (‘a Bastille of the proletariat’) which contrasts with the NHS in *Ancoats Hospital Outpatients Hall* from 1952. For all his ‘solid Lancashire conservatism’ Lowry quietly welcomed the post-1945 new world of the NHS and welfare state.

Lowry’s industrial landscapes and *The Pond* commissioned for the 1951 Festival of Britain are impressive panoramic views of industrial Manchester. *The Pond* with its smoking chimneys, terraced houses and the Stockport Viaduct was used as a Christmas card by prime minister Harold Wilson in 1964.

Lowry’s 1937 *The Lake* is all fetid spillage in an industrial scene and demonstrates clearly his opposition to sentiment in art and his statement that he ‘was affected and inspired by the beauty of the industrial scene’.

Going to the Match from 1953, one of his football

paintings which the Professional Footballers Association bought for £1.9 million in 1999 depicts Burnden Park, home of Bolton Wanderers Football Club, which was the scene of a disaster in 1946 when 33 football fans were crushed to death. Football was central to masculine working class culture at this time and Burnden Park was later used prominently in the 1955 Arthur Askey film *The Love Match*.

The Funeral from 1928 and the cemetery in *Necropolis* of 1947 are a reminder of the centrality of death in life but also the financial cost. Today there is a rise in ‘public health funerals’ which is another name for ‘paupers funerals’ and the working class have to resort to pay-day lenders and credit cards to pay for funerals.

Although conservative in many respects, Lowry was an enemy of privilege and turned down all ‘gongs’ and a knighthood.

Hedda Gabler by Henrik Ibsen

IBSEN’S 1890 drama *Hedda Gabler* was recently staged at the Old Vic theatre in London starring Sheridan Smith as Hedda and Darrell D’Silva as Brack. The play is a plea for bourgeois liberal feminism but also a portrayal of a Nietzschean existential heroine. Hedda is in a lineage of strong women constrained by patriarchal society from Clytemnestra in Aeschylus to Medea by Euripides.

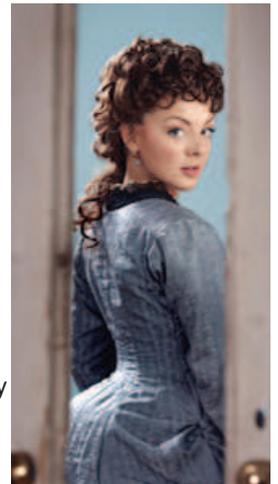
Ibsen dissects middle bourgeois family life, its morality, niceties, home, hearth and happiness which Nietzsche castigated as ‘it is not your sin but your moderation that cries to heaven’. It is a place where women have a subordinate role to men and the expectation that Hedda become pregnant. In his preliminary notes Ibsen wrote ‘women aren’t all created to be mothers’ but Marx saw that ‘the bourgeois sees his wife as a mere instrument of production’. Hedda refers to ‘love’ as ‘that glutinous word’. Alexandra Kollontai saw that ‘the outward observance of decorum and the actual practice of depravity, and the double code, one code of behaviour for the man and another for the woman are the twin pillars of bourgeois morality’.

Hedda says to Brack ‘I’m content so long as you don’t have any sort of hold over me, subject to your will and your demands. No longer free! That’s a thought that I’ll never endure’. Emma Goldman wrote ‘true emancipation begins neither at the polls nor in the courts. It begins in woman’s soul’ although Eleanor Marx wrote of women ‘that the question is one of economics. The position of women rests, as everything in our complex modern society rests, on an economic basis’.

Hedda is an existential heroine in the sense of ‘*Vivre ? les serviteurs feront cela pour nous*’ (‘Living ? Our servants will do that for us’) from *Axël* by Auguste Villiers de l’Isle-Adam. Brack is enamoured of Hedda’s feminine strength but fears her advocacy of what Nietzsche described as ‘to live dangerously’ and does not understand Hedda’s views on Lovborg’s suicide; ‘there is beauty in this deed, an act of spontaneous courage to take his leave of life so early’. This is reminiscent of Nietzsche’s dictum ‘voluntary death that comes to me because I wish it’. However Hedda cannot meet Nietzsche’s idea of ‘amor fati’, the ultimate affirmation of life and instead accepts a terrifying nihilism.

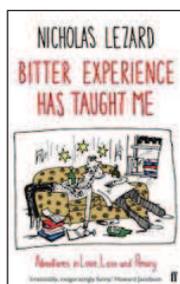
In socialism Engels wrote ‘what will most definitely disappear from monogamy, first, the dominance of man, and secondly, the indissolubility of marriage’. Eleanor Marx concluded that ‘the woman will no longer be the man’s slave but his equal’.

STEVE CLAYTON



Lounge Lezard

***Bitter Experience Has Taught Me.* Nicholas Lezard, Faber and Faber, 2013. £9.99.**



Lezard is a *Guardian* book reviewer and critic, with a column in the *New Statesman* called 'Down And Out in London'. This book has been adapted from that column and is a self-deprecating and

amusing account of his life after being kicked out of the family home by Mrs Lezard for a wide variety of inadequacies and misdemeanors. In near financial ruin, he shares a dilapidated house near Baker Street called 'The Hovel' with his friend Razors and the focus of this book is his struggle to maintain his head above water while also maintaining his daily wine habit (Lezard is an erstwhile companion of Jeffrey Bernard).

Originally from a relatively privileged background, Lezard is a left-wing, professional cynic who also thinks nothing of inviting police attention by playing midnight cricket – after a few glasses and with real cricket balls – on the chi-chi streets of Marylebone. The contradictions are often what make the humour here, and Lezard is an engaging writer.

He claims to have often annoyed his right-wing father (who at an earlier time of life had been rather bizarrely awarded the Order of Lenin, Fifth Class) with his forthright, radical politics. Interestingly, on one occasion this involved young Nick 'urging everyone to vote for the Socialist Party of Great Britain' during a mock election at school, with himself as the candidate. Inexplicably, he seems to have done worse than we normally do, and we can only hope that this psychological trauma didn't influence his subsequent life path too much.

DAP

Red Round-Up

Spanish Anti-Fascist 'Prisoners of War' in Lancashire, 1944-1946.

Richard Cleminson, Northern Earth, 2012 (£2.50)

This short pamphlet, although primarily of local interest, is of considerable value in highlighting wider issues. After having escaped Franco's victorious armies in 1939,

most Spanish Republican fighters were interned in 'democratic' France, often in appalling conditions. After May 1940, those lucky enough not to be shot on site were 'volunteered' as slave labourers by the Nazis.

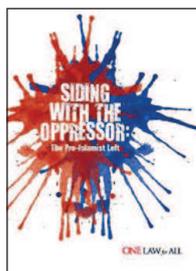
1944 was far from the liberation many had expected: Condemned as collaborators, many of the 'Spanish Reds' were again rounded up and imprisoned, this time by the Allies. By various convoluted routes, some 226 of these 'POWs' ended up in Hall o' the Hill Camp near Chorley. The disrespect shown to the credentials of these honourable individuals is a clear indication that the Second World War was by no means a clear anti-fascist struggle.

Particularly interesting are the pictures, which were mostly taken by Marie Louise Berneri, the famous anarchist, and the all-too-brief personal stories of the individuals involved. The message is somewhat undermined by the copious references, a result of the text being taken verbatim from an academic journal. The publishers would be well-advised to adapt any future texts, bearing in mind that literature intended for the general reader does not have to be as rigorously sourced as scholarly works.

KAZ

Islamist brothers

***Siding with the Oppressor: The Pro-Islamist Left.* John Miller. One Law for All, 2013. £4.**



This is a well-documented pamphlet describing the hobnobbing of the Labourite politicians George Galloway and Ken Livingstone and of the SWP (via

its front organisation 'Unite Against Fascism', Stop the War Coalition and, till 2007, Respect) with Islamic fundamentalists connected to the Muslim Brotherhood. It is a shameful story.

Galloway and Livingstone were in search of votes while the SWP was pursuing the tactic of a 'people's front' against Western intervention in Afghanistan, Iraq, and (via Israel) Palestine, and now Syria. This last must be causing problems today as previous praise for the Assad and Iranian regimes will no longer be welcomed by the Sunni Muslim fundamentalists they courted, now that Hezbollah are fighting the Sunni

jihadists.

Galloway, Livingstone and the SWP bear a heavy responsibility for having encouraged immigrant 'communist politics' in Britain, so also encouraging the opposing 'White communalists' of the BNP and EDL. In doing so, they have dragged the name of socialism through the mud and, as the pamphlet points out, betrayed not only secularist principles (One Law for All campaigns against the application of Sharia and Jewish religious law in Britain) but also those Muslims and ex-Muslims resisting the reactionary views of the likes of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Iranian Ayatollahs. From a socialist point of view, it's a negation of class politics and a confirmation of their anti-working class stance and activity.

ALB

Film Review

Le Capital



Le Capital is a European financial thriller made in France by Greek director Costa-Gavras that had its première at the Toronto Film Festival in 2012, was nominated for the 2012 Special Jury Prize at the San Sebastian International Film Festival but to date has not been released in Britain. Costa-Gavras is notable for his Academy Award winning film *Z* (1969), *Missing* (1982) which won the Palme d'Or at Cannes and *Music Box* (1989) winner of the Golden Bear at Berlin.

Costa-Gavras based his film on the 2004 novel *Le Capital* by French banker Stephane Osmont but was also inspired by the book *Totalitarian Capitalism* by Jean Peyrelvade. The film stars Moroccan actor Gad Elmaleh and also Gabriel Byrne, the Irish actor memorable in the 1995 noir film *The Usual Suspects*.

Le Capital is a fast-paced film set in the closed world of investment banking full

of cunning boardroom politics, billion-dollar banking takeovers, supermodels, corporate suits in jets globe-trotting from Paris to London, New York, Tokyo and Miami. The main protagonist played with a reptilian self-awareness by Elmaleh occasionally breaks the fourth wall and gives 'Brechtian' asides to the audience. Elmaleh has the best lines such as 'money makes people respect you, money is the master, money never sleeps'.

The film is dominated by memories of the global financial capitalist meltdown of 2008 caused by overproduction in the housing sub-prime market, deregulation of commercial bank securities such as the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act, and the use of collateralized debt obligations (CDOs) and other derivatives described as 'financial weapons of mass destruction' by Warren Buffett. The crisis was such that Ben Bernanke, head of the US Federal Reserve, feared the end of capitalism and said of the \$700 billion emergency bailout of banks: 'if we don't do this, we may not have an economy on Monday'. According to Roger C Altman in *The Great Crash 2008* losses totalled \$8.3 trillion.

Costa-Gavras makes reference to the 'cowboy capitalism' of a 'brutal hedge fund' who are 'preachers of instant profit'. Elmaleh delivers lines such as 'I am a

modern Robin Hood who takes from the poor to give to the rich'. There is also a possible allusion to Dominique Strauss-Kahn, head of the IMF who in May 2011 was subject to allegations of sexual assault. The working class represented by one character accuses the bankers: 'You are bleeding the world thrice, the markets want blood, you fuck people with lay-offs, you fuck them with loans and debt, money rots everything'. A female English banker with a 'conscience' delivers an indictment near the end of the film: 'Banks in the claws of predatory stockholders, the dictatorship of the markets, speculation, the rating agencies that run the economy for politicians that threaten society, democratic states that can no longer govern or get rid of banks who stifle them'.

Costa-Gavras concludes in *Le Capital* that the bankers 'have fun and will go on having fun until everything is blown up in pieces'.

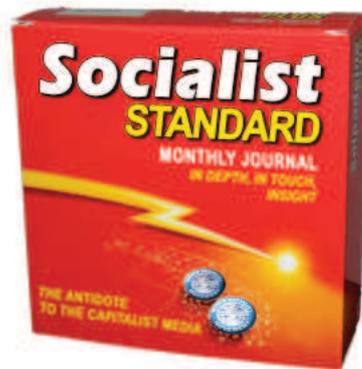
STEVE CLAYTON

from page 16

given 30 minutes for lunch in a ten-hour shift, 20 minutes of which were spent walking to and from the canteen, workers were issued penalty points for talking to colleagues, taking sick leave, or even spending too long in the bathroom. This all on a 'three strikes and you're out' basis. Workers were searched for stolen goods at airport-style security checkpoints before going into the canteen, and temporary staff laid off to avoid giving them the same benefits and rights as permanent workers. Zero hours contracts were used extensively which meant those staff having no job security and were forced to make themselves available for work with no guarantee they will be offered a shift on a particular day. Also Amazon tried to avoid paying out hundreds of pounds in accrued holiday pay to agency staff by instructing agency representatives not to inform employees that it was owed to them.

We should always remember that the capitalist class demand the free exploitation of working class labour-power. Engels wrote *The Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1844 and Marx's *Capital* came out in 1867. There are differences between life today and life then but fundamentally there is no change as the capitalist mode of production grinds relentlessly on, a person has to 'sell their labour or starve'. Capitalism can never operate in the interests of the working class.

STEVE CLAYTON



SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX FOR 2012

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Left In The Dark

WOULD A few days without electricity turn you into a hysterical, paranoid, petrol-siphoning looter? Perhaps, if *Blackout* (Channel 4) is as realistic as it hopes to be. This

one-off docudrama imagines what would happen if the National Grid was shut down for a week by a terrorist 'cyber attack'. Footage from real riots and protests is mixed with actors improvising what their characters film on mobile phones. This gives the programme a scary amount of verisimilitude, if you ignore how implausibly long-lasting the batteries in their phones must be. Through the blurry, wobbly camerawork we follow a couple of lary lads on a looting spree and a woman with her comatose boyfriend in a hospital with its backup power dwindling. There are a few examples of individuals helping strangers, but the show focuses more on how relationships would be strained further. For instance, the character who starts out smug about having his own generator cracks under the pressure of keeping it from would-be thieves while struggling to provide for his family.

The shakily-filmed action is broken up with sombre captions giving some less-than-reassuring statistics. Emergency lighting in most public buildings usually lasts no more than three hours, apparently, while if you're relying on a life support machine, then you'd have around five days before its back-up batteries are prioritised elsewhere. Like its grim forerunners about pandemics and nuclear war, *Blackout* points out that society's current infrastructure would collapse within days of a serious catastrophe. However, the loss of electric power isn't shown to lead to a loss of state power. Defending itself through the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the state would bring in temporary courts, armed forces on the streets and 'Emergency Relief Centres', which in the drama turn out to be empty. A lack of decent contingency planning is to be expected in our society, focused on protecting the interests of the few and making the cheapest cutbacks for the rest of us. So, if the programme is right about this, would its predictions about chaos on the streets also be proved right? Such a bleak view ignores how groups of people have worked together to get through worse disasters in real life. The show would have been more interesting if it had explored how we could co-operate, but in that respect it leaves us in the dark.

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/>

East Anglia

Saturday **12 October** 2.00 - 5.00pm
 "Is a Recovery Underway?"
 Speaker: Adam Buick
 Nelson Hotel (opposite the train station)
 Prince of Wales Road, Norwich NR1 1DX
 (The meeting room can be accessed by going through the Costa Coffee Café and down the stairs. The room is towards the Prince of Wales Road end)
 All welcome.

Salisbury

Saturday **12 October** 2.00pm
 UKIP: The Capitalist Class Protest Group ("more Enoch Powell than Oswald Mosley").
 Speaker: Steve Clayton.
 The Railway Tavern, 135 South Western Road, Salisbury SP2 7RR.

London

Clapham
 Saturday **26 October** 10.30am - 1.00pm, and
 Sunday **27 October** 10.30am - 5.00pm.
AUTUMN DELEGATE MEETING.

Saturday **26 October** 2.15pm
 Party meeting to discuss Party Poll called by the EC. Both meetings held at Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

West London

Tuesday **15 October** 8.00pm
 "Is a Recovery Underway?"
 Speaker: Adam Buick.
 Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W4.



Labour, Lib-Dem, Tory

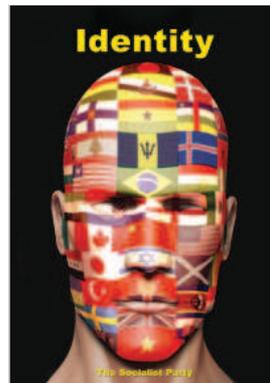


The Socialist Standard examines their case

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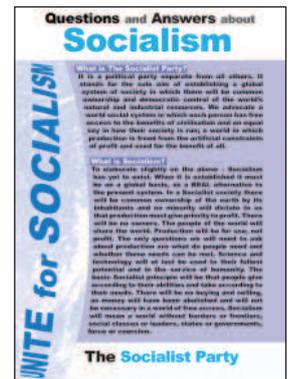
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Declaration of Principles

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

Object

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

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

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

a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

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

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

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

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of

the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

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

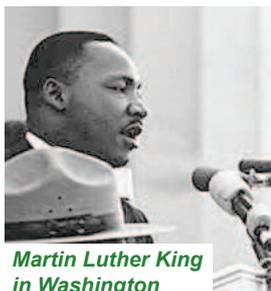
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that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

50 Years Ago

Demonstration in Washington

THE DEMONSTRATION by two hundred thousand people in Washington recently to protest at discrimination against the American Negro was an example of self-disciplined protest —restrained, yet massively determined. August 28th marked the flaring of accumulated frustrations that had smouldered for over two centuries. From this time forward the character of the Negroes' struggle is altered, they have a national organisation and specifically formulated demands that they can pursue in the spotlight of world-wide publicity.

'Nobody knows the trouble I seen' is a familiar lament of a Negro blues song. It expresses the special misery of 19 million people who have inherited a legacy of hatred and violent suffering. Although it is possible to recognise it as a fact, nobody who has not experienced it can feel on his shoulders the harrowing burden of American Negro history. And even now, for the Negro, life offers unstinted humiliation, for added to his exploitation as a wage worker, in every



Martin Luther King in Washington

corner of American social life he faces the pointed finger that accuses him of racial inferiority. (...) It is vital that sooner or later Negroes

should transcend any strong identification they have with what they may regard as an exclusively 'Negro' interest. At the moment, at least in America, this is made extremely difficult for them. In a hundred and one ways, American life drives the Negro into insularity and narrow fugitive attitudes, and to some extent, especially where democratic rights are concerned, their views can be understood.

At the same time, it must be remembered that there are no solutions to the problems of this world that hold out hope to any particular section of men without holding out hope at the same time to all men. Individuals have had the courage and the generosity to rise above the embittering agony of their recent history. James Baldwin writes 'I am not a nigger—I am a man.' We equally wish to simplify things and join in the refutation of 'Niggers,' 'Yids,' 'Wogs,' 'Proddydogs,' 'Yocks' and 'White Trash'. We too want to celebrate —Man.

(from article by P. L., *Socialist Standard*, October 1963) Note: today we would say 'Human'.

ACTION REPLAY

Close of Play

THIS SUMMER'S Ashes series was a success financially, with matches sold out, and in media terms, with lots of interest in England's victories and Australia's relatively weak performance. But behind the scenes cricket at the top level is encountering plenty of problems.

Essentially, Test cricket, with five-day matches that often end in draws or are ruined by rain, is losing out in popularity to shorter versions, especially Twenty20 (T20), where each side bats for just twenty overs and a game generally takes about three hours. Matches can be played in the evening, increasing their attractiveness to live crowds and those watching on TV.

T20 is also popular with many players, who can earn far more from it than from Tests. The highest-paid cricketer last year was the Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (pictured) with income of \$31.5m, the vast majority of which comes from product endorsements rather than directly from playing in Tests and the Indian Premier League. But he still got \$3.5m



from playing. Meanwhile, top England players get at most £400,000 a year on central contracts from the England and Wales Cricket Board. Up-and-coming young players may have to make a choice between Tests and T20, since rather different skill-sets are needed for both.

It is often claimed that T20 has led to cricketers becoming fitter and more agile. But it may also be behind poorer performances at Test level, particularly from Australian players. The Australian domestic competition is the subtly-named Big Bash, or, to give it its full name, the KFC T20 Big Bash League. Like all the shorter versions, it prioritises big hitting over patience and technique, so it is bound to undermine true Test quality. Also, pitches are prepared to increase the chances of a clear result.

According to Cricket Australia, 'The league has been successful in attracting a new, diverse fan base in its first two years with its mix of big hits, great value and explosive action... If you look at the average crowds and TV audiences over the past two years, the league compares more than favourably with other sports and has claims to being the most popular summer sports league in the country' (bigbash.com.au). So competition is not just among teams but among sports and indeed different versions of the same sport.

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Voice from the Back

Even The Smiles Are Fakes

Not only do the capitalist class demand that workers produce surplus value for them they want them to smile while they do it. 'Smiling all the time can be hard work, which is why airline crew and shop workers are turning to the latest plastic surgery fad, the 'perma-smile'. South Korean surgeons are removing nerves and muscle at the corners of the mouth to mimic the ancient expression of welcome' (*Sunday Times*, 1 September). Guest speakers from South Korea will inform the American Association of Plastic Surgeons how it is done this month. One female who works in a jewellery shop in California has already had the \$3,500 operation. A phoney smile for a phoney society.



A Lifetime Of Exploitation

Britain's pensions crisis was laid bare as official figures showed almost a million over-65s are working or looking for a job. They include 158,000 people over the age of 75. According to the most recent census, the number of residents of England and Wales aged 65 and over rose by nearly a million to 9.2 million between 2001 and 2011. One in 10 of those was employed or jobhunting. The number of those aged between 65 and 74 who were still economically active rose by 413,000 from 8.7 per cent to 16 per cent. 'Michelle Mitchell, of Age UK, said: 'People are living longer and are generally in better health, so many are likely to want to carry on working. However, rock-bottom annuity rates combined with low interest rates on savings mean others have no choice but to carry on working because they cannot afford to retire'' (*Daily Express*,

7 September). Even after working for almost fifty years many workers still cannot afford to retire.

Politics And Health

Overwhelmed accident and emergency departments have suffered the worst summer in a decade, new figures show. They reveal almost a million patients are waiting more than four hours for treatment, nearly treble from four years ago. 'Over the same period, key A&E departments missed Government targets for about 80 per cent of the time. Since last September, Jeremy Hunt's first year as Health Secretary has seen 980,068 patients waiting longer than four hours to be seen in A&E units. Between 2009 and 2010 the figure was 353,617' (*Sun*, 8 September). The figures also reveal 172,266 A&E patients were kept on trolleys last year for between four and 12 hours, 47 per cent higher than the previous year, and 219 patients waited more than 12 hours on a trolley, more than double the previous figure. We wonder how our caring MPs would relish 12 hours on a trolley awaiting treatment.



Not So Cool

When workers use new up-to-date technology they imagine they are being ultra cool and extremely modern,

but they are inadvertently supporting work practices that would put Victorian sweatshops to shame. The new cheaper iPhone that Apple will unveil to a global audience is being produced under illegal and abusive conditions in Chinese factories owned by one of America's largest manufacturing businesses, investigators have claimed. 'Workers are asked to stand for 12-hour shifts with just two 30-minute breaks, six days a week, the non-profit organisation China Labor Watch has claimed. Staff are allegedly working without adequate protective equipment, at risk from chemicals, noise and lasers, for an average of 69 hours a week' (*Guardian*, 5 September).

A Strange Kind Of Communism

Wang Jianlin is a property magnate who can count the world's largest cinema chain amongst his business interests, in addition to dozens of shopping centres and five-star hotels. 'Now Wang Jianlin can add another accolade befitting his billionaire status –he has been named China's richest man by Forbes. The 58-year-old Sichuan native, whose Dalian Wanda Group conglomerate this summer acquired a 92 per cent stake in the luxury British yacht manufacturer Sunseeker, whose boats have appeared in a number of James Bond films, is worth £8.9bn, the influential publication said' (*Independent*, 10 September). How can the Chinese government claim to be a communist country when they have a member of the capitalist class 'worth' £8.9 billion?

Correction

In an item in Voice from the Back last month we quoted the *Times* as writing that Britain's most expensive parking place had gone on sale for '£3,000,000'. This was a misprint for '£300,000'.

FREE LUNCH

