

socialist standard

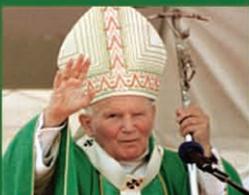


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Game over?

The killing of Bin Laden, pages 10 - 13



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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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Editorial

Which kind of capitalism – or the alternative?

AROUND THE middle of the last century there were a group of nice people who called themselves Moral Re-armament. They saw some nasty things about the world in which they lived, but they put this down to miscreants who behaved in illegal or immoral ways. They approved of well-earned profits, a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, and all that jazz. The Socialist Party debated with them.

Then came the unacceptable face of capitalism, in the shape of the 'bad cops' who did a bit too much of what the 'good cops' were doing routinely. Greed was good, but too much of it by the wrong people was bad. Workers who wanted more wages or salaries were to be deplored. Capitalists who wanted more profits were OK – they helped to 'grow the economy'.

The latest take on the profit system is that we have two kinds of market – the fundamentalist and the free. The fundamentalist market is the one in the black hat. It is part of a bidding culture that sets one group or interest against another. If one wins the other loses.

According to Philip Pullman (Guardian, 29 January), this bidding culture has "imported the worst excesses of market fundamentalism into the one part of our public and social life that used to be free of the commercial pressure to win or lose, to survive or to die,

which is the very essence of the religion of the market".

But Pullman is not optimistic about the future. "I'm afraid these fundamentalists of one sort or another will always be with us. We just have to keep them as far as possible from power."

Now the oxymoronic free market. Very beneficial to the capitalist class, not so beneficial to the working class. Owners of capital are free to invest in it to 'earn' rent, interest or profit. Workers are free to offer themselves on the labour market – they may or may not get employment. Whether they do or not – especially if they do not – they suffer material and mental deprivation.

Moral or immoral, with or without an acceptable face, involving fundamentalist or free markets, capitalism shouldn't be supported by the majority it exploits.

We don't have to choose the lesser of two evils – we can help towards something better. A world where the resources of the planet have stopped being the property of rich individuals, corporations or states and have become the common heritage of all. On that basis goods and services can be produced directly to meet people's needs without the intervention of markets. Neither a free market nor a controlled market but a non-market society.

The next bubble

INVESTORS ARE bulging at the wallets with hype over the recent stock market flotation of LinkedIn.com, the business executive's Facebook, although the initial price offer (IPO) of \$45 per share was widely considered too high, given that it was a valuation around 17 times the company's estimated 2010 income and given LinkedIn's own prediction that it won't make any profit this year. The IPO peaked on the first trading day at \$122, but this was no great surprise since so far this is the only social media business you can buy shares in. LinkedIn is at the time of writing trading at 25 times earnings compared to Google's modest six, and what goes up can come down. After the recent flotation of China's version of Facebook, Renren, the share price initially rocketed but soon dropped to below the IPO. And all of this is nothing compared to the hysteria likely when the expected flotation of Facebook takes place, and analysts are already worrying that this could be the start of the next big bubble ('LinkedIn share price raises bubble fears', *BBC Online*, 18 May).

Eyebrows might descend to new heights at the idea of a huge internet bubble so soon after the devastation of the housing bubble. But in fact conditions are right for it. The banks are not taking any chances after their recent drubbing, but investors are sitting on huge piles of cash while rising inflation nibbles away like mice at their wads. Now is not the time to be holding paper money, and with the housing market still in free-fall and consumer spending screwed down there's not a lot apart from the odd stray Rembrandt for the money rich to sink their loot into. So what to spend money on when there's nothing to spend money on? Well, those social media johnnies are showing pretty strong market growth, so worth a punt surely? Doubly so if everyone else is at it too.

Better luck next time...

IF YOU'RE reading this, then the globally promoted May 21st doomsday predictions of one Harold Camping have not come to pass, earthquakes and cataclysms have not riven and rent the firmament, and 200 million people have not been 'raptured' to heaven by the merciful beardie in the sky. But 250 of them will have got a double disappointment, as one (atheist) entrepreneur has succeeded in charging them up to \$135 each for looking after their 'Eternal Earthbound' pets, and he gleefully adds that he

doesn't do refunds ('Rapture' apocalypse prediction sparks atheist reaction', *BBC Online*, 20 May). Meanwhile atheists in North Carolina have been organising parties, presumably to fiddle while Earth burns, and another group in Washington have called their celebration 'Countdown to back-peddalling'. Whether Camping renounces all his beliefs in the sober light of May 22nd remains to be seen, however he did make a similar prediction in 1994. But that one, say his followers (he has followers!) didn't count for some reason.



Well, that's what they thought about web growth back in 2000, when dollar signs rolled down the punters' eyeballs faster than the hit-counters on the hot websites. But the dollars turned to tears then as panicky shouts set off a share price avalanche. And they probably will this time too. The trouble is that it's hard to put a real value on new and unproven social and commercial structures, but investors by nature are addicted to optimism. With the cool objectivity of those with no real money to throw at such ventures we might ask what do these social media really amount to? Whereas Ebay has been a success because people can actually make real savings on purchases, social media exist simply because they can, not necessarily because we need them. A combination of inane (and sometimes damaging) gossip and online narcissism can be amusing for a time, sure enough, but isn't it just a fad most people will tire of eventually? In a Me-world where everyone is a celebrity, the problem is that nobody listens to anyone but themselves, and how boring does that become? What do people really get out of it, in concrete terms? A bunch of 'friends' they've mostly never heard of or haven't got anything to say to, and business contacts they've no real use for. More is not always better. We may not even be evolved for this sort of endless connectivity. 'Dunbar's Number' sets a theoretical limit - roughly 150 - to the number of social relationships the human brain can feasibly cope with, a number derived from anthropological research. Still, who's to say what limit there is on 'virtual' relationships? You don't even know your neighbour's name, but so long as you've got a who's who in your smart phone then you're a functioning member of society, Jack. Just keep up the subscription payments and don't worry about it.

But surely all this sub-light-speed handshaking has facilitated social protest and anti-establishment thought? Well, that's what one would hope, but as fast as radical ideas sweep into the cyber-synaptic networks they seem to sweep out again, creating a series of political Mexican waves that leave the mass unmoved and the air only slightly disturbed above their heads. Should we be glad of the new mass attention, or bewail its lack of attention span? Maybe both. At any rate, socialists unlike capitalist investors have seen enough novelty not to expect too much from novelty.

Of course the owners of LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter have made millions, but then so do crooks who start pyramid schemes. It doesn't mean there's anything of value there. There's no real labour, for one thing, or any real product, just a frenzy of connections, sound and fury, signifying nothing. Here's an idea for the next decade's hottest investment opportunity - Friends Unplugged.



Throwing away the keys

TECHNOLOGY NEWS has lately been dominated by news of security leaks. Google's Android operating system for smart phones has been haemorrhaging personal data that unscrupulous data-miners can collect and use. Sony's Playstation network had a security breach through which a cyber attack stole account details of 100 million people. Meanwhile the smug smiles were wiped off the faces of Mac users convinced they lived a charmed life as hundreds have been hit by a 'scareware' attack, and an anti-piracy firm has itself been hacked and now made to walk the plank by the French government that employed it. It may be a trivial observation, but in a common-ownership society that is not fundamentally at war with itself like capitalism, there would be no more incentive to hack, crack or create viruses than there would be to vandalise buildings or burgle houses. And then we could dispense with all these firewalls, speed-dragging virus-guards, and those endless, endless, endless bloody passwords.

Open Letter to a Dissident Republican

Fellow Workers

I received Issue 1 of your handout Resistance from a friend and, on the assumption that your group or organisation are members of the working class whose political aspiration is the achievement of socialism, I would like to make a fraternal criticism of its content. I am, incidentally, a member of the World Socialist Movement.

You are right in combining the words freedom and socialism; effectively they are synonymous terms. Even in the most politically democratic countries on the planet the producers of all real wealth, the working class, are simply wage slaves whose lives are dominated by the money-shuffling activities of a minority class of capitalists which, by controlling their means of life, controls their lives and denies them freedom.

Unfortunately you make no attempt to offer those targeted by your leaflet any suggestion of what you mean by 'freedom and socialism'. On the contrary your inference that it is possible to establish socialism in a republic – the ideal state of the capitalist class – suggests that you envision socialism as a political instrument that can regulate capitalism's system of commodity production in such a way as to end its exploitative role.

Class struggle

The pioneers of scientific socialism, people like Karl Marx, after the most penetrating analysis of capitalism, affirmed that it was a system of social organisation in which a relatively small class exploited the great majority by its ownership and control of the means and instruments of production. The method by which these owners, or capitalists, carry out this exploitation is the wages and money system. Given then that capitalism is a system based on the exploitation of the working class it is patently absurd to suggest that there can be any form of national government that can make it function in the interests of the class it exploits.

Within capitalism there is obviously an inevitable conflict of interest, a class struggle, between the overwhelming majority who produce but do not own and a relatively small minority class who own but do not produce. Members of the working class do not voluntarily elect to join this class struggle; we are mostly born into it and it governs the way we live. To promote the notion that the area of our birth ('our' country) or a religious or political ideology transcends or neutralises our class status or gives us a common cause with a class that socially deprives and demeans us, that imposes either mere want or grave poverty on our lives and the lives of our families, is to be cruelly deceived by the political machinations of capitalism.

Policy

Your leaflet implies that the police are deliberately promoting or permitting the growing anti-social behaviour in working-class areas of Northern Ireland. Socialists are under no illusions about the 'law and order' served by the capitalist state and its enforcement agencies – and, paradoxically, viewed by the various paramilitary forces here as the ultimate basis for the enforcement of social norms. But the growth of anti-social behaviour in ghettoised housing estates created specifically for working class families – like zoos for animals – is just another general facet of capitalism's atrophying social culture. The subject is a complex one, but that its roots are in contemporary capitalism is borne out by the identity and location of its victims.

And whether we like to admit it or not, those engaged in anti-social behaviour, the vandals, the thugs, the

thieves and villains are also victims of capitalism; often alienated rejects in a world where education is a commodity dispensed to the class that produces all real wealth in proportion to its wealth-creating potential and ultimate profit for the capitalists; almost always socially alienated young people with no sense of social fraternity. There is no denying the problem nor the misery that anti-social behaviour of all kinds inflicts on the wider working-class community. But it is just another part of the shadow cast by capitalism, with its wars and its economic murder of those peoples who do not represent a viable market for its profit-making.

Capitalism's legal framework, its system of law and order, are designed to protect the system that generates anti-social behaviour. Despite the pretentious norms of the 'respectable' class it is the Grand Theft – property itself – that is quintessentially anti-social. Unfortunately the response of republican paramilitaries to the problem has been to use the miscreant youth in certain situations and at the same time to impose the most brutal physical punishment – including murder – against them in order to win endorsement for a perceived policing role in the local community.

Armed struggle and socialism

From the art work at the head of your leaflet it would appear that you condone armed struggle as a means, or the means, of social emancipation. That raises a serious question about your perception of socialism.

Socialism is the complete antithesis of capitalism.

In a socialist world private and/or state ownership of society's means of life will give way to social ownership and production of goods and services solely for use. So goods and services will no longer be produced as commodities for sale and profit. Accordingly there will be no role in socialist society for a means of exchange; hence, the entire, utterly wasteful commercial sinews of capitalism will be obsolete. The classless, wageless, moneyless society envisaged in the socialist aphorism: "From each according to their ability; to each according to their needs" will become a reality. A world free from the corruptive influences of money and power where government of people will give way to a simple administration of things.

Such a society – founded on co-operation instead of competition – could not be established by guns, bombs or violence. It can only be established and only maintained by the conscious democratic action of the majority. Such a majority would be the democratic foundation of a free, socialist world. If the question of counter-revolutionary violence is hypothesised then obviously that violence would have to be eliminated; as socialists have traditionally said "peacefully if we may; forcefully if we must", but, given the conditions created by a socialist-conscious majority, capitalist reaction would be deprived of material nourishment.

There is no doubt that a combination of events, including paramilitary violence, has brought about the end of a police force which was little more than the armed wing of a reactionary political party, and has largely removed the sectarian element in employment and the provision of social housing. We question whether the relatives of all those murdered and maimed by the violence would agree that such changes justified the murders and maiming or even that these latter caused such changes. Ironically, too, the current economic crisis of capitalism has cast a long shadow over employment and social housing and severely aggravated those factors which fuel sectarian division.

Hopefully, what I have said here will provoke your questions and we can discuss or debate these, privately or publicly, in the future.

Yours for Socialism
RICHARD MONTAGUE





The waste of luxury

LIKE HUNGER and homelessness, the global trade in luxury goods is booming. Turnover fell from \$254 billion in 2007 to \$228 billion in 2009 – a decline that observers attributed to “luxury shame”. Rich people could still afford all the luxuries they wanted, but apparently they felt a trifle uneasy about flaunting their wealth at a time of crisis. They soon got over their unease. Sales recovered to \$257 billion in 2010 and are expected to surge to \$276 billion in 2011. “Luxury shame is now over,” declared marketing consultant Claudia d’Arpizio in March.

So the long-term trend still points sharply upward. This reflects the continuing polarisation of the distribution of wealth – that is, the process by which the rich get richer and the poor poorer. It also reflects the rapidly growing number of rich people in fast-growing economies like Brazil and China (already the second largest market after the United States).

The figures are misleading, in that they refer only to goods purchased over the counter – liqueurs, fashionable apparel, cosmetics, perfumes, jewellery, gold watches, handbags, luggage, etc. They do not include fancy cars, yachts and jets, for instance. Or mansions and penthouse apartments.

Estimates based on a broader definition are harder to locate. But I did find a figure of \$445 billion for sales of luxury goods on the “broadest definition” in the United States alone in 2005. Extrapolating to the global level and allowing for growth, I derived an extremely rough ballpark figure of *two trillion dollars* (\$2,000 billion) a year.

Comparisons

A couple of comparisons will help put this huge number in perspective. Annual world military expenditure is also roughly two trillion dollars. Thus, the luxury consumption of the wealthy ranks alongside military expenditure as one major component of the waste of resources under capitalism.

Now let’s compare spending on luxury goods, which is concentrated in the richest strata of the population, with spending on staple foods, which is concentrated in the poorest strata. Average per capita annual spending on staple foods is about \$300 in low-income countries (population roughly 5.5 billion) and \$800 in high-income countries (population roughly 1.5 billion).

There are complications in interpreting these figures. In particular, some staple crops are grown and consumed by subsistence farmers rather than sold on the market. In general, money is an inadequate measure of resources in many ways. But it can give us at least some idea of relative scales of magnitude.

And here the overall message is clear. The resources devoted to the luxuries of a few *million* wealthy parasites are on a comparable scale to the resources used for the basic nourishment of *billions* of the world’s poor. Cancelling by a million on both sides of the equation, the luxuries of one roughly correspond to the necessities of a thousand.

Serving the parasites

And yet this is still a gross understatement of the waste of luxury. We have been considering only luxury *goods*. What about services?

The wealthy use a wide range of services. This often takes the form of hiring workers to provide personal service, usually full time – servants. In most cases, obsequious servants are their only point of contact with

the great majority of the population who have to work for a living.

I am not talking only or even mainly about servants of the *Upstairs Downstairs* variety, although they still exist – cooks, gardeners, butlers and all. In fact, butling has undergone something of a revival (to butle – a colloquial verb meaning “to serve as a butler”).

The staff of the “family office” that handles the financial affairs of a wealthy family. The tutors who teach their children. The caterers who arrange their parties. The personal assistant who makes travel arrangements. The “concierge physician” who limits his practice to a handful of rich patients, who each pay a yearly retainer of \$25,000. The accountant who finds ways for the rich to pay less taxes. The legal adviser. The call girl or “sugar daughter”. A tennis coach, perhaps. These too are all servants.

So in addition to the parasites themselves, society has to bear the burden of all these people who do nothing with their working time and diverse talents except serve the parasites. This in itself represents no small waste of human resources.

Environmental footprint

One of the problems with using money as a measure of resource use is that it takes insufficient account of ecological impacts. And the consumption pattern typical of the wealthy leaves a disproportionately heavy environmental footprint.

One reason is that the rich travel around the world a great deal, usually by air and often on private planes. It is common for them to maintain residences in far-flung countries, cross an ocean just to go shopping, and fly numerous guests to the venue for a celebration. Air travel harms the environment and needs to be minimised: not only do aircraft engines run on petroleum-based fuel, but they also emit particulates and gases that contribute to climate change.

The rich are also largely to blame for the fact that so many species are threatened by extinction. Apart from the depredations of wealthy hunters, wealthy consumers create most of the demand for body parts of endangered species – elephant tusks for ivory, leopard skins for fur coats, various parts of numerous traditional Chinese medicinal use, and so on.



In response to TUC calls to ‘pay your workers more’, the annual Institute of Directors meeting retorted that ‘the world is full of dreamers’ and instead bewailed the profligate spending habits of the average worker: “We’re all told you must go on holiday all the time and do all these other things ... There’s more to be gained from teaching employees how to manage their money more effectively than giving them more money to mismanage” (‘Bosses’ pay increased by 45 percent last year, but the Institute of Directors won’t give you a rise’, *Observer*, 15 May).



cooking the books

The truth about tax

THE BURDEN of taxation does not rest on the shoulders of workers. Although taxes on wages appear to come out of wages, in reality taxes come out of profits. Workers should therefore ignore all the false promises and baloney about taxes that politicians use in order to try to win votes at election times, and concentrate their efforts instead on the class struggle, seeking to raise their wages and improve their living and working conditions. We often make this argument in the pages of this journal and, although the argument has its roots in the analysis of Ricardo and Marx, we stand alone in making it these days.

Not entirely alone, however. In his new book *Business As Usual* (Reaction Books: 2011), reviewed in last month's *Socialist Standard*, the Marxist analyst Paul Mattick makes the following argument.

"Tax money appears to be paid by everyone. But despite the appearance that business is undertaxed, only business actually pays taxes. To understand this, remember that the total income produced in a year is the money available for all purposes. Some of this money must go to replace producers' goods used up in the previous year; some must go in the form of wages to buy consumer goods so that the labour force can reproduce itself; the rest appears as profit, interest, rent – and taxes. The money workers actually get is their 'after tax' income; from this perspective, tax increases on employee income are just a way of lowering wages. The money deducted from paycheques, as well as from dividends, capital gains and other forms of business income, could appear as business profits – which, let us remember, is basically the money generated by workers' activity that they do not receive as wages – if it didn't flow through paycheques (or other income) into government coffers" (page 81).

Our point precisely. As Mattick also points out in his book, while "neither economists nor businessmen have an adequate theoretical understanding of capitalism, the latter at least have a practical sense of how it works". This applies in the case of tax. Listen carefully, and you can occasionally hear the representatives of the capitalist class admit to the truth of our stand on tax. In the Channel 4 documentary *Britain's Trillion Pound Horror Story* (reviewed in the January 2011 *Socialist Standard*), to take just one recent example, the argument was made that taxes are bad because they raise the costs of labour. Very true: but the logical implication is that this is a problem for those who pay for labour – the capitalists – not for those obliged to sell it. Capitalists understand that raising taxes on wages will just put upward pressure on wages, raising the cost of labour for the capitalist. As we put it on our website:

"Of course, this will not happen automatically but as a result of an economic tendency for the working class to receive the value of its labour power. When there are tax reductions this will be a major factor in stiffening the attitude of the employers. With tax increases, this stiffens the pressure of the workers for higher wages, especially when unemployment is low. It should be noted that this tendency for workers to receive the value of their labour power is helped by trade union action."

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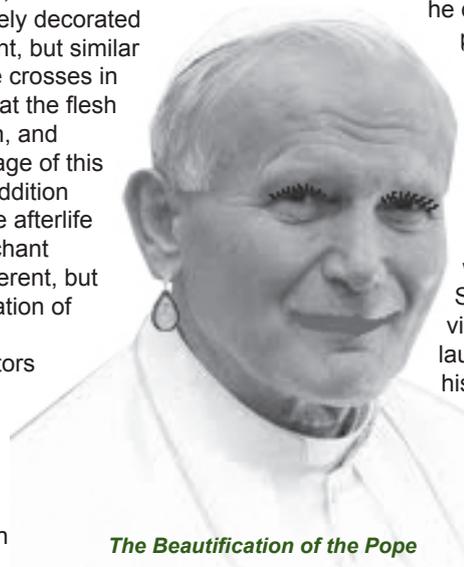


The circus comes to town

THERE ARE still in remote communities today medicine men who after daubing strange symbols on their bodies in blood, donning feather headdresses and taking up their magic bones, will go into a trance and chant unintelligible messages to invisible gods. These performances can be carried out to heal the sick, to drive away demons, or to bring a dead body back to life as a zombie. They have been practiced with simple, unquestioning faith for hundreds, probably thousands, of years.

Also today, in modern 'civilised' cities, there are men (and women) who dress up in elaborately decorated robes and headwear to perform different, but similar mysterious rituals. They solemnly trace crosses in the air with their fingers, symbolically eat the flesh and drink the blood of a long dead man, and carry little wooden crosses with the image of this same dead man impaled on them. In addition to praying for the welfare of souls in the afterlife they will swing their incense pots and chant messages (in Latin if required) to a different, but equally magical god with every expectation of being taken seriously.

Should you ask one of the witch doctors from a shantytown shack in Haiti, from Lambeth Palace, or the Vatican, what arrangement he had with the god to persuade him to perform a miracle, or to take, or avoid a certain course of action, he would tell you not to question



The Beautification of the Pope

such things but to have faith. He would assure you that the invisible ones move in mysterious ways which only the initiated can understand.

One such event that must have been the biggest religious magic show for years took place on 1 May in Rome.

Starting at the Circus Maximus, and being broadcast live on giant video screens across the city, the faithful from all over the world gathered to see a dead pope being 'beatified'. And what a circus it must have been. According to Italian police, more than a million people turned up.

Hopefully they were easily pleased and didn't expect a scientific explanation of what exactly was going on. Apparently a bottle of the dead pope's blood was involved, but what Pope Benedict XVI had to do to his predecessor to 'beatify' him, and how the dead pope benefited is unclear.

Being *beatified* (as opposed to being *beatified* – he died in 2005 after all) is apparently a kind of promotion after death for anyone who has shown a heroic degree of holiness. According to Pope Benedict he "reclaimed for Christianity that impulse of hope which had in some sense faltered before Marxism and the ideology of progress".

The Catholic Free Press reported how impressed one onlooker was: "Pope John Paul was a wonderful pope", said Isabel Marin from Spain, "he was like us. My mom showed me a video where he was watching a clown and really laughing. And I saw another video where he moved his feet when the people were singing, following the beat."

A pope who could laugh, keep time to the music and fend off those nasty Marxists all at once. Just what is needed in the modern world.

NW

Tiny Tips

The African nation of Congo has been called the worst place on earth to be a woman. A new study released Wednesday shows that it's even worse than previously thought: 1,152 women are raped every day, a rate equal to 48 per hour. That rate is 26 times more than the previous estimate of 16,000 rapes reported in one year by the United Nations:

<http://tinyurl.com/6kvn84a>

The textbook's "Origin of Life" chapter details lab experiments that have failed to create life from inorganic materials, concluding that there is a huge gap between "life" and "non-life". But from there it makes the considerable leap that biological explanations for the origin of life are discredited. "[T]he legitimate scientific hypothesis," it argues, is that "life on Earth is the result of intelligent causes."

<http://tinyurl.com/6es6m9h>

A United Nations report on the cholera outbreak that has sickened 300,000 Haitians since last fall, killing nearly 5,000, finds evidence to suggest that the disease may have originated at a United Nations military camp north of the capital, which spilled raw sewage into a tributary of the Artibonite River.

<http://tinyurl.com/5th2zg3>

Indian environmentalist-philosopher Vandana Shiva has said for years that microfinance is only a solution in a particular context. "But credit, loans and money circulation cannot solve the problems of alienation," she stressed. "Privatisation of water leading to a high cost of water could be financed by

flows of credit, but the solution to access is really about the basic right to water."

<http://tinyurl.com/3uf3bcg>

Migrants are crammed into catastrophically damaged vessels that would normally end up as scrap. Few have radios and GPS is non-existent. If the weather turns without warning, as it so often does in the Mediterranean at this time of year, a crammed and barely stable craft quickly becomes a sinking coffin. The result is a weekly litany of deaths on a scale that would lead the front pages of every European newspaper were the victims white...

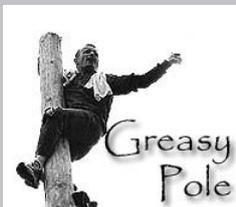
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Despite growing controversy about the cost and relevance of aircraft carriers, navies around the world are adding new ones to their inventories at a pace unseen since World War II. The U.S. — with more carriers than all other nations combined — and established naval powers such as Britain, France and Russia are doing it. So are Brazil, India and China — which with Russia form the BRIC grouping of emerging economic giants.

<http://tinyurl.com/3zwofeg>

Doomsday predictor Robert Fitzpatrick remains in Times Sq. facing the reality of his false claims of apocalypse. He said: "I don't know what happened. I don't understand. I did what I had to do. I'm just surprised - I obviously haven't understood it properly because we're still here," he said. "Let's just say I'm surprised that nothing has happened - everything in the bible indicated it."

<http://tinyurl.com/3clphm2>



Wind At Daybreak For The New Politics



Alexander - no more trumps

AS DAWN broke on 6 May Danny Alexander, the fresh-faced Chief Secretary to the Treasury, sat alone in the Sky TV studio and, in what one seasoned observer called “a Facebook moment”, relieved himself of an explosive fart. At the time he was composing himself to spout some predictably scripted excuses and evasions about the LibDem losses in the local elections and their disappointment at the result of the AV referendum. Somewhere outside the studio

the Tories were gloating. He assumed he was unobserved but his contribution to the day’s entertainment was recorded on some 100 monitors. Well it was a change from the usual noxious emissions from the mouths of politicians but should we be worried about Alexander and his flatulence? Was it the only way for him to relieve his despair at the exposure of the LibDem’s deceit, their savaging by their supposed Tory allies and the crumbling of a generation of baseless ambitions? Was it heralding his guilt at his own part in provoking his party’s debacle?

He rose, after all, through the ranks as a personal assistant of the disastrous Nick Clegg. He was deeply involved in composing the LibDem election manifesto – including those pledges such as opposing any rise in tuition fees – and he was at the lead in negotiations to form the coalition, heedless of the disastrous effect on his party of previous such arrangements. Which did not affect his enthusiasm for the job of Chief Secretary and its work of “deficit reduction”, which entails reducing the incomes of masses of people who so meekly vote for a social system which brings them such misery and fear. Any examination of Alexander must reveal that his ailments are chronic and resistant to treatment.

Clegg

However hapless his condition, Alexander cannot rely on any therapeutic example from his colleagues (and, of course, his rivals) in his party. Clegg, for one, persists in what might be called his optimism were it not so perilously separated from reality. On the first anniversary of those blissfully exciting days when the coalition came into being in the fragrance of the rose garden at Number Ten, he said: “There is a reason neither of the two bigger parties won last May. Neither of them were really trusted to deliver both a strong, dynamic economy and a fair society. We can be trusted on both counts...I am confident that showing we can combine economic soundness with social justice – competence with a conscience – will make us an even more formidable political force in the future.” Those words were breathtaking in their audacious refusal to acknowledge the real situation – for example the survey for ITV News which showed 49 percent regarding the Coalition as “bad for Britain” and 63 percent saying they do not trust Clegg.

Then there was his boss Cameron, who made a contemptuously obstinate dismissal of LibDem claims to be able to smooth the crueller edges of Tory policies: “I don’t accept the whole idea that the role of one party is somehow to moderate the other. The Conservative

Party, under my leadership, has changed. It is a new and different Conservative Party.” That statement is crammed with falsehood, paying no attention to the fact that the Liberal Party – whatever alliances it has embroiled itself in, however it has re-shaped its name – has not been a nationally considerable political force for some ninety years. Their typical response, when their real situation became too distasteful, was to gorge themselves on fantasy.

Steel

One notable addict of that variety of political narcosis was David Steel who was Liberal leader between July 1976 and July 1988 and who, perhaps as consolation for joining the ranks of failed leaders of his party, was in 1997 transformed into Baron Steel of Aikwood. During his time in charge he did a favour to James Callaghan’s ailing Labour government by joining a pact to keep them in power in return for being consulted on some aspects of policy. That arrangement fell apart with Thatcher’s 1979 victory but Steel became excited again by the scent of power in 1981 when the Gang of Four broke from the Labour Party and, in spite of his former gruesomely futile expedition into such territory, he felt encouraged to join a SDP/Liberal Alliance. Here, he thought, was at last a real chance of worming his way into a position of fame and influence which would get the cameras watching him striding along Downing Street smiling at the reporters’ cheeky questions, then emerging from the black door to issue some history-making declaration to the waiting world.

There was some encouragement in such dreams by the opinion polls which indicated that the despair about the previous Labour government was widespread and deep enough to give the Alliance a realistic hope of success. Steel was impressed enough by this to bellow at the 1981 Liberal Assembly that party members should “...go back to your constituencies and prepare for government”. And when the ecstatic uproar caused by that historically embarrassing, desperately forgettable, blunder had died away there was Thatcher and the war in the Falklands and a smashing win for the Tories in 1983 and the virtual death of the Alliance and all its dreams and nightmares.

Conservatives

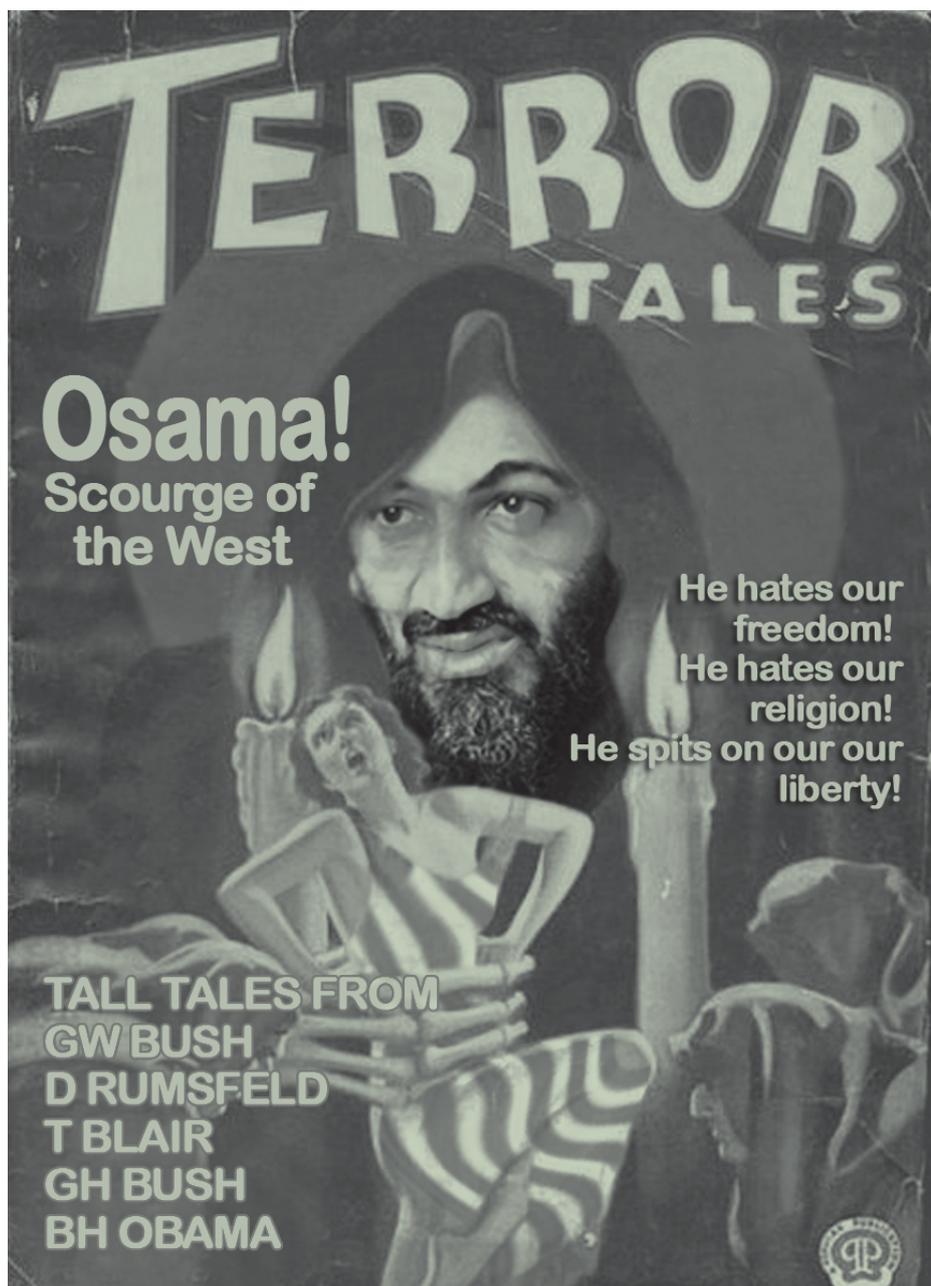
None of this, nor of the other such disasters, seems to have influenced Clegg – nor Alexander and the others – when Cameron offered them the chance of again living the dream denied to their party’s previous leaders. Indeed the early attitude of the likes of Vince Cable and David Laws gave the impression that they were satisfied they had made the right choice, working for policies which they knew would adversely affect the lives of masses of people – workers, children, the elderly and the sick... We know now that situation has changed; there is a dominant Conservative Party (now condemned by Cable as “...ruthless, calculating and thoroughly tribal”) which may calculate on being in power for a period comparable to Thatcher’s. During last year’s general election we were promised, especially by Clegg who was suffering from a kind of hysteria arising from his ecstatic TV ratings, a New Style of Politics. The elections this year exposed that lie but there is a way to go before the end of any politics, old or new, signalling the end of this entire rotten system in which reality is swamped in toxic fantasy.

IVAN

The killing of Bin Laden

Who's terrifying who and why?

What is the War on Terror? Why do governments want us to be afraid?



The execution of Osama Bin Laden, announced on 1 May by President Obama, has been fêted as a great tactical victory by the White House, by Western governments and the world's media. The longed-for news saw a wave of

nationalistic, back-slapping hysteria in the US and the killing has served as a sorely needed propaganda tool to enhance the standing of the US military in the eyes of the domestic public.

Some in the Obama administration

quickly seized on the Pakistan achievement to promote their own sinister agenda, with Americans reliably informed that their doubts on the use of torture were misplaced and that Bin Laden was actually found as a direct result of information gleaned by the CIA's torture of captives

Despite world-wide celebrations and Obama's rise in popularity at home and the propaganda value of the killing, there is no evidence that the death will have any impact on the flagging military and political situation of the US in South Asia, the Middle East and other theatres of high tension.

The death of Bin Laden has been seen as affording the US an escape strategy from Afghanistan, bringing closure to a decade of embarrassment in the country. To be sure, the US attempts to create a pliant puppet regime in Kabul are failing. The Taliban, or indeed, Al Qaeda, are no nearer defeat than ten years ago and still notching up US casualties. Quite significantly, in the latter regard, at Kabul airport on 29 April, nine high-ranking US military officers were assassinated by a "reliable" Afghan fighter pilot. That this attack happened in an ostensibly high security area, implies that no place in Afghanistan is secure from attack, that anyone is vulnerable, and that not even allied Afghan military personnel can be trusted.

With the US tied down in an unpopular war in Afghanistan, domestic woes rising and his political standing falling, it would seem Obama was desperate for a military success story, more so considering 9/11 is now a decade ago and years of rampant military expenditure are factoring high in the current budget deficit.

Terror, what is it?

Undoubtedly, the 'War on Terror' will continue to serve many interests,

with politicians promoting the concept at every opportunity to justify overseas military actions and to keep the public in a state of mild panic. It is thus worth looking at the concept of terrorism itself and to judge the definers by their own definition.

The US Army Manual definition of terrorism is “the calculated use of violence or the threat of violence, to attain goals that are political, religious or ideological in nature, through intimidation, coercion or instilling fear.”

This is quite close to the British government’s definition, which is “the use, or threat, of action which

45 years, terrified us with the threat of the Soviet menace, meanwhile expanding its reach all over the world. When the Kremlin’s empire collapsed, America suddenly found itself deprived of its hegemonic credentials, no longer able to use its anti-communist passport to interfere in global affairs from Cuba to Vladivostok. The end of the cold war meant it was stamped null and void.

It now needed a new propaganda framework through which to assert its authority on the international stage, a new enemy, a new bogeyman to protect us all from – and the first bogeyman who reared his head was Saddam Hussein, who invaded

Kuwait within two years of the Berlin Wall falling, sparking the first Gulf War and the start of the US obsession with Iraq that has lasted 20 years. Saddam would later be joined by Bin Laden in 2001 after 9/11, the events of which all of us are now over-familiar with.

Notably, the language and jargon used to discuss the War on Terror, all its definitions, is chosen by the US political elite. Likewise it is the US that gets to delineate the ideology of the enemy, whether it be fascist or communist or militant Islamic. In the case in question it would have been insensitive in the extreme to declare a war on Islam, so North Korea had to be incorporated into Bush’s ‘Axis of Evil’, lest the entire Islamic world rise up against the USA.

The US has certainly benefited from the War on Terror, extending its reach like no empire in history. It now has in excess of 700 military bases around the world, and these bases can be found in 177 of the world’s 193 UN recognised countries. More likely, it seems the War on Terror has everything to do with full spectrum dominance and the desire of the US capitalist elite to control the world’s mineral wealth, trade routes, foreign markets, areas of influence and to maintain the strategic sites from which all these sources of profit can be defended. Little wonder there are many who claim that if Osama Bin Laden did not exist, it would be necessary to create him to get into Afghanistan.

Then why Afghanistan? The Caspian Basin, which the country borders, contains an estimated \$12 trillion dollars worth of oil. It is not



Above: operation ‘Enduring Freedom’ begins as US troops enter Afghanistan in 2001. Below: ten years later and the end still isn’t in sight

is violent, damaging or disrupting, and is intended to influence the government, or intimidate the public, and is for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological case.”

One aim of The War on Terror is to frighten us – to get us all paranoid about a freedom-loathing bogeyman who is just waiting to come and destroy all we hold sacred – and to get us to fall in line behind the wider objectives of US and British foreign policy, which are in reality the objectives of a small corporate elite who really call the shots in both countries.

George Bush was every bit the terroriser when he introduced the “Shock and Awe” strategy of 2003 and indeed when he announced: “Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists”. Likewise with Tony Blair who announced to a terrified British public that Saddam could reach Britain with his WMDs within 45 minutes – a fact that that later proved to be total fallacy.

It is, perhaps, important to set the war on terror in context. America, for



the case that he US wants this oil for itself, but needs a presence in Afghanistan to be able to control just who does have access to it.

Big lies

There are real contenders against US economic supremacy, namely India, Russia and China, all with a growing and insatiable thirst for oil to lubricate the wheels of their own profit machines. By controlling as much oil as it can, the US gets to stack the odds in its own favour.

But before you can mobilise to take over the world's scarce resources you first need to get your people on your side. You need their consent, their support and their approval of you as the champion of freedom. This is why George Bush could so cleverly tell the American people: "They hate our freedom, our freedom of religion, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with one another," and that "you are either with us or with the

terrorists."

This was not just Orwellian double-speak. This tactic came straight from Nazi Germany and from Joseph Goebbels:

"If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the state can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie ... The truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the state."

Since 11 September, 2001, the governments of George W. Bush and then Barack Obama and Tony Blair told and repeated a "lie big enough" to confirm Joseph Goebbels' statement, and the American and British people have come to believe it. It is the "War on Terror."

Whilst we were informed that the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were in retaliation for 9/11, it is now

clear that the Bush administration had them clearly in mind upon taking office, and set in motion as early as 3 February 2001, some seven months before 9/11 and thus they had nothing to do with terrorism.

The War on Terror has not only validated the US passport – that allows it to play the role of globocop to further the interests of its own capitalist elite, pushing aside anyone who gets in its way – it has also strengthened the hand of the state at home also. For out of the war on terror came the Patriot Act (USA) and the Terrorism Act (Britain) which put civil disobedience on a par with a felony.

Orwell's words come only too readily to mind when contemplating White House pronouncements: "Who controls the present controls the past. Who controls the past controls the future."

JOHN BISSETT

The killing of Bin Laden

Understanding the American Reaction



Obama and others in the 'Situation room' watch the killing of Bin Laden

A large majority of Americans – 87 percent, according to one poll – approves of the killing of Bin Laden. Many were visibly overcome by joy when they heard the news, and the subsequent warning by CIA director Leon Panetta that the operation would actually increase the terrorist threat to the US only slightly damped their spirits.

Within a few days of the operation, video games were on the market offering simulated experiences of killing Osama – or, in one case, his ghost! If you get killed by him first, never mind: you can just start over again.

Sam Sommers, a sociology professor at Tufts University, explained the jubilant reaction as follows: "September 11 shook our belief [that] the world [is] a just and fair place where you get what you deserve. Innocent people died senselessly. Seeing this closing scene, for many people, provides a



US paratroops drop into Panama in the December 1989 invasion – a minor affair as American military interventions go

just ending.” Hence the “sense of relief” expressed by the widow of one 9/11 victim.

What can account for this strange belief that the world is a just and fair place? How is it possible not to know that innocent people die senselessly every day? Perhaps it has something to do with religion, which has more influence over people’s minds in the United States than in most of Western Europe. Perhaps it also reflects the complacent platitudes of “positive thinking”.

Good sense

Besides, was 9/11 senseless? It made good sense to Bin Laden. In his journal, captured by the Navy Seals, he wondered how many Americans it would be necessary to kill to make the United States withdraw its forces from the Moslem world. He pursued a carefully devised strategy – to lure America into a long and exhausting war of attrition that would eventually lead to its economic collapse. It was the same strategy he had used – in alliance with the US – against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. This time too, the strategy so far seems to be working very well.

The worst that can be said of Bin Laden is that he was a ruthless warlord willing to sacrifice innocent people on a large scale to achieve his political goals. Let us grant that this makes him an evil man. But let us be consistent and place this judgment in a broader context. World history is full of such evil men (and a few evil women). They are called “great statesmen”.

And look who’s talking!

Many American presidents, whether Republicans or Democrats, have been no less ruthless. Osama killed some 2,800 Americans on 9/11. Compare this with the 3,500 civilians killed by Bush Senior in the December 1989 invasion of Panama – a minor affair as American military interventions go. Or the 3,800 Afghan civilians killed by American bombing within three months of 9/11.

Or consider the statement by then US Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright (in an interview on 60 Minutes on May 12, 1996) that the deaths of half a million children caused by the US-led embargo on Iraq were “a price worth paying”.

The United States has now avenged 9/11. “Justice has been done,” says Obama. Bin Laden also saw himself as an agent of justice and vengeance (neither of them drawing any distinction between the two). In 2004 he revealed how he first got the idea of destroying the Twin Towers. He was watching the destruction of tower blocks in Beirut on television in 1982, when Israel, backed up by the US Sixth Fleet, was invading Lebanon. Why, he asked himself, should he not “punish the unjust in the same way”?

Clearly, the Towers in New York are not the only twins in this story. It is also a story about twin barbarisms. (Gilbert Achcar elaborates on this thought in his book *The Clash of Barbarisms: The Making of the New World Disorder*, Paradigm Publishers 2006.)

The assumption of benevolence

The Americans who celebrated the death of Bin Laden were not bothered by reflections such as these. But let’s not be too harsh on them. Facts that might inspire critical reflection are never mentioned in the mainstream corporate media aimed at ordinary people. Now and then it is admitted that the United States may sometimes make a mistake, but the assumption of benevolence – the idea that America is inherently a force for good in the world – can never be questioned. No alternative perspective is ever presented. And this “patriotic” outlook is drummed into American hearts and minds from the earliest school years.

And yet it is not just a matter of information and ideas not being available. After all, while by no means a democracy in any real sense, the United States is not a totalitarian state either. Thanks in part to the internet, alternative ideas and sources of information are now easily accessible to those determined to seek them out. But not so very many do seek them out.

Why? One reason is that most people are too preoccupied with earning a living, ensuring their own survival. Social pressures are a very important factor. But perhaps the crucial barrier is within the psyche. If your positive self-image is based on the idea of how marvellous “your country” is, then even if you do encounter discordant information it must be rejected or interpreted as somehow irrelevant. Accepting reality would be too painful, too threatening to the self.

STEFAN (World Socialist Party of US)

A “patriotic” outlook is drummed into American hearts and minds from the earliest school years



The global profit system

*“Do you know the only thing that gives me pleasure? It’s to see my dividends coming in.”
So said John D Rockefeller founder of Standard Oil.*

Rockefeller’s wealth was gained through the exploitation of worker labour power to turn a free resource, oil, into a commodity for sale on the market. That in a nutshell is how he kept those dividend payments rolling in. What applied then just as surely applies now.

Standard Oil’s rapacious business methods laid the foundations for today’s oil conglomerates. Throughout its existence Standard Oil was the target of disgruntled politicians and newspapers. Rockefeller’s PR people and lawyers were as busy then as their modern day counterparts. In 1880 the New York World wrote that it was “the most cruel, impudent, pitiless, and grasping monopoly that ever fastened upon a country” (John D. Rockefeller: Anointed With Oil, p.60). A decade later Rockefeller controlled 88 percent of the United States’ refined oil. In 1911 the Supreme Court found Standard Oil in breach of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. Its trading practices were ruled illegal and it was ordered to be broken up into 34 new

companies. Rockefeller still held a 25 percent stake in Standard Oil. This was transferred proportionately into shares in the new companies. Although Rockefeller’s direct control of the oil market was somewhat diminished, his personal fortune in 1920, which was estimated at \$900,000,000, translated into plenty of influence. And a great deal of personal pleasure.

Another capitalist who was to derive plenty of pleasure from oil was William Knox Darcy. He was the son of an English solicitor who emigrated to Australia where he began to speculate in land. He became a partner in a syndicate in 1883 that uncovered a large deposit of gold at Mt Morgan. Darcy returned to England with a considerable fortune in his knapsack. His thirst for pleasure still unquenched he cast his eye east to Iran.

In 1901 Darcy negotiated a contract that gave him the rights to drill for mineral resources over a significantly large area of Iran. The contract was signed by the landowner, the Shahanshah, king of kings. Darcy handed over £20,000 cash. The rest of the deal involved £20,000 in stock and a 16 percent share in the net profits if any transpired. In 1908 oil on a significant scale was discovered. Darcy never once set foot on the Iranian soil that would give him and a small elite considerable pleasure in the years to come. Out of this deal the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was formed.

In 1935 its name was changed to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC); its new owner was the British government.

At the core of all conflict under capitalism are markets and profits.

Iranian instability haunted the owners of AIOC. That paltry 16 percent share stuck in the throats of Iranians. As was AIOC’s refusal to allow the Iranian government to check their books to see if that legendary British fair play was being practised. In 1951 the pro-AIOC



John D. Rockefeller (left) and his son John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

Prime minister was overthrown. The Iranian parliament nationalised the oil fields. AIOC was ousted from Iran and it squealed its way through boycotts and high courts. In 1953 operation Ajax was initiated. The CIA and British government conspired with the King of Kings and the Iranian military to effect a coup. However AIOC had to forego its earlier monopoly and make do with only a 40 percent share of the spoils. American oil companies received 40 percent and the French 20 percent. The fountain of pleasure was re-activated.

In 1954 AIOC changed its name to the British Petroleum Company. Expansion from their base in the Middle East to Alaska followed in 1959. Adding substantially to the profits and the dividend cheques was their oil strike in the North Sea in 1965. Thatcher sold off the British government's holding in BP, but not their interest in its fervent pursuit of profit. When the Kuwait Investment Authority, essentially the Kuwait government, saw an opportunity to gain control of BP through market manoeuvres, the Thatcher government didn't hesitate to block its attempts, despite the free market rhetoric of its members.

BP continued to grow through the capital generated from its exploitation of natural resources excavated by human labour power. Along the way those profits allowed BP to swallow up several of the offspring of Standard Oil. ExxonMobil and Chevron snapped up the rest of its most profitable siblings, and the trio came to form the backbone of the 'Seven Sisters' who in 1973 controlled 85 percent of the world's oil reserves.

BP nowadays ranks as the fourth largest company in the world measured by its 2009 revenues of \$239 billion. It has acquired 22,400 service stations worldwide, and pumps 3.8 million gallons of oil in to the market place every day. Its profits, and thus its power, are culled from throughout the world. A source of pleasure for a few, but

one of deep discontent to many.

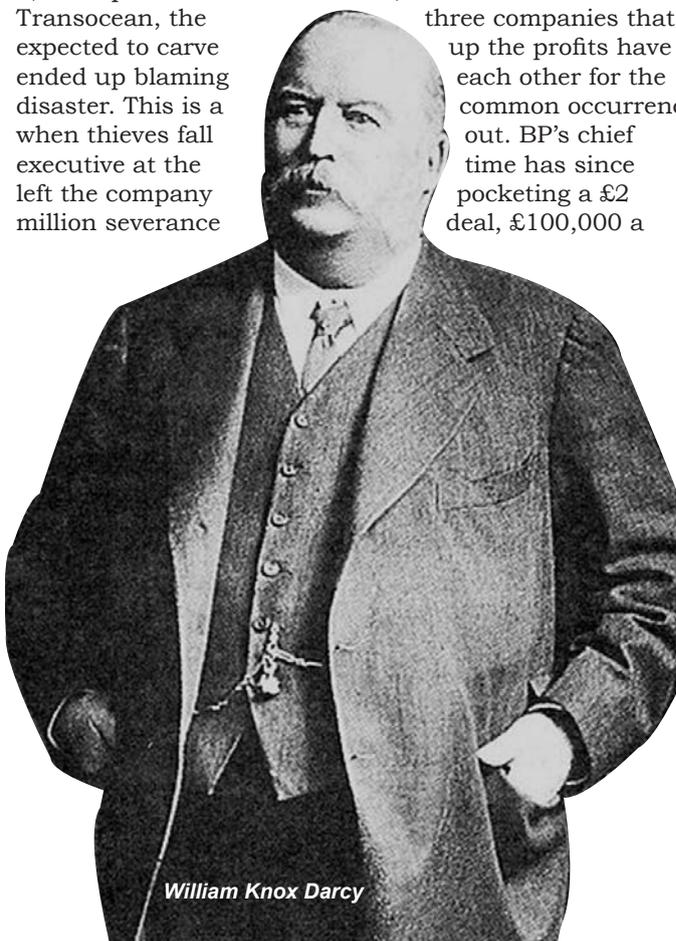
The costs of doing business can often seem strange to the uninitiated. The Guardian (12 April 1976) reported that BP handed over £500,000 to a "slush fund which dispensed money to the ruling Italian political parties in return for favours over oil taxes and prices". BP's own documents showed that this type of payment was "calculated as a percentage of the money the company could expect to make as a result of favourable legislation". Profits are all about maths. Is doing a thing one way more profitable than doing it another? That is the logic of capitalism, and consequently the logic of what follows.

In September 1999 a subsidiary of BP in Alaska paid a fine of \$22 million for the illegal dumping of hazardous wastes from 1993-1995 on the Alaska North Slope. In August 2006 BP were forced to shut down their operations as over one million litres of oil had been spilt over the North Slope. The Guardian (1 July 2007) reported that "a US congressional committee has uncovered evidence of 'draconian' cost cuts at BP", and demanded documents "suggesting that managers considered turning off the flow of anti-corrosion chemicals to save money".

Maintenance and safety cuts were also linked to an explosion at BP's Texas City refinery resulting in 15 deaths and injuries to 180 people. Refineries based in Texas City and Toledo U.S accounted for 97 percent of all flagrant safety violations (829 of 851). The Centre for Public Integrity reported on 16 May last year that "most of BP's citations were classified as 'egregious and wilful' by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and reflect alleged violations of a rule designed to prevent catastrophic events at refineries".

In April 2010 the offshore drilling rig Deepwater Horizon exploded in the Gulf of Mexico killing 11 people and creating an oil slick that covered at least 2,500 square miles.

BP, Halliburton and Transocean, the three companies that expected to carve up the profits have ended up blaming each other for the disaster. This is a common occurrence when thieves fall out. BP's chief executive at the time has since left the company pocketing a £2 million severance deal, £100,000 a



William Knox Darcy

year as a payoff from a Russian joint venture with TNK-BP and a £600,000 per year pension. But the news isn't all good though, along with Lord Browne of Madingley he's been cited in a multi-million dollar lawsuit linked to the bribery of government officials in Kazakhstan.

The Guardian (2 February) reported that BP is under investigation in the US over its "alleged manipulation of the gas market", and "in a separate case in 2006, BP paid \$300m to settle charges that it had manipulated the propane market in the US". Another report in the same issue that would have made Rockefeller proud of one of his heirs is that "the administrator of BP's \$20bn (£12.3bn) Gulf spill compensation fund was accused last night by Mississippi's attorney general, Jim Hood, of sweeping deficiencies and violations of law".

In South America BP have been equally busy pursuing dividend payments. They stood accused in the European Parliament in October 1996 of colluding with the Columbian army in gross human rights violations and of wilful destruction of the environment. Evidence supplied by a report commissioned by Colombia's President Samper's human rights adviser alleged that "BP passed photographs and videos of local protesters to the army, which human rights groups say led to killings, disappearances, torture and beatings" (corporatwatch.org). Likewise, a group of Colombian farmers won a multimillion pound settlement from BP after they were "accused of benefiting from a regime of terror carried out by Colombian government paramilitaries to protect a 450-mile pipeline" (Independent, 22 July 2006).

Africa hasn't escaped BP's grasp either. In Southern Sudan BP have been linked to a civil war that it's alleged has the central goal of depopulating the oil regions and the protection of pipelines. The people of the Niger Delta have been suffering from the oil cartel's calculated

exploitation of the land for the past 40 years. Its 606 oilfields supply 40 percent of all the crude that the US imports. Pollution from oil spills is endemic and dwarfs every other such disaster, as *the Guardian* reports: "more oil is spilled from the Delta's network of terminals, pipes, pumping stations and oil platforms every year than has been lost in the Gulf of Mexico."

Nnimo Bassey, Nigerian head of Friends of the Earth International said "There is an overwhelming sense that the big oil companies act as if they are beyond the law... It is clear that BP has been blocking progressive legislation, both in the US and here. In Nigeria, they have been living above the law. They are now clearly a danger to the planet. The dangers of this happening again and again are high. They must be taken to the international court of justice" (30 May 2010).

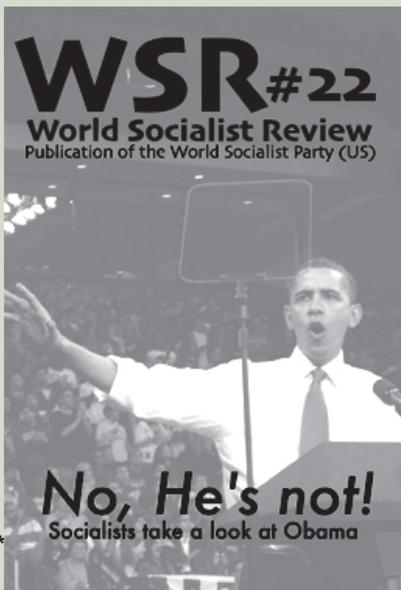
Many people believe that companies like BP are the problem. Well-meaning people like Bassey see court rulings, legislation and even the break-up of companies as a solution. So did well-meaning people during the reign of Standard Oil. Nothing changed then except some names. The problem is the global profit system. The, dog-eat-dog, unquenchable compulsion to acquire earnings and dividends. Pollution, corruption and death are the symptoms of a disease. The disease is capitalism. Only major surgery can cure the disease.

When will the naive finally realise that the problems faced by people and the environment cannot somehow, magically, be solved by methods that have failed abysmally for decades? How long do we, the overwhelming majority, sit on our hands while a tiny minority derive their pleasure at our expense?

ANDY MATTHEWS

WORLD SOCIALIST REVIEW #22

NO, HE'S NOT! SOCIALISTS TAKE A LOOK AT OBAMA



Is Obama a socialist? No, he's not! This book of 112 pages examines Obama's outlook and life story, his packaging as a politician, and his policy in the areas of healthcare reform, the economy, the environment, the space program, and Afghanistan. It places Obama in the context of a largely undemocratic U.S. political system and a wasteful, cruel, and crisis-ridden world economic system.

From the Introduction: "We have nothing against Obama personally. We do not accuse him of going into politics solely in pursuit of fame and fortune. He started out with the best of intentions, hoping that one day he might be able to do something to make the world a better place. Our aim is to show how the capitalist class, who exercise real power in our society, corrupt and co-opt well-intentioned young people like Obama, how capitalism frustrates and corrodes even the noblest aspirations."

Topics include:

*U.S. Midterm Election Results * The Tea Party * Obama: The Brand and the President * The World Outlook of the Young Obama * Health Insurance Reform * Obama and the Environment * The Invisible Primaries * The Electoral College * The Politics of the "Lesser Evil" * Unemployment * Waste and Want * Economic Crises * Afghanistan * Asteroids*
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Class against class

It's exploitation that causes workers' problems

On an ultra-simplistic level we could say that capitalism in the persona of capitalists uses capital (in its basic form, money) to make a profit. By utilising capital in the form of property, equipment, machinery, investment or speculation the capitalist needs to employ members of the working class in order to increase the original capital for his own benefit. This can only be done if the workers agree knowingly or unknowingly to their own exploitation.

Why exploitation? In the monetary world society we live in everyone has a need for money on a regular ongoing basis in order to secure the essentials of life. By accepting employment workers undertake to work (knowingly or unknowingly) part of the time for their own remuneration and part of the time in order to meet the capitalist's need for reinvestment in their business and to augment their accumulation of profit.

There are three elements to the capitalist's expectation in relation to employees. First, workers must be paid sufficient remuneration to keep them returning to work; the terms and conditions of work may change depending on the available source of labour. Second, the capitalist's own ongoing costs must be met – replacement

machinery, upkeep, purchase of materials etc. And third, there must be a sufficient element of profit for the capitalist as his incentive to continue. As a business gets bigger, employing a larger workforce, the accumulated 'extra' time (over and above the length of time required to earn the wages) from this extra workforce gets added to the capitalist's pot, increasing their profit, not the workers' pay packets. When demanding a fair day's work for a fair day's pay who stops to ask about the capitalist's own fair day's work? Capitalism uses capital

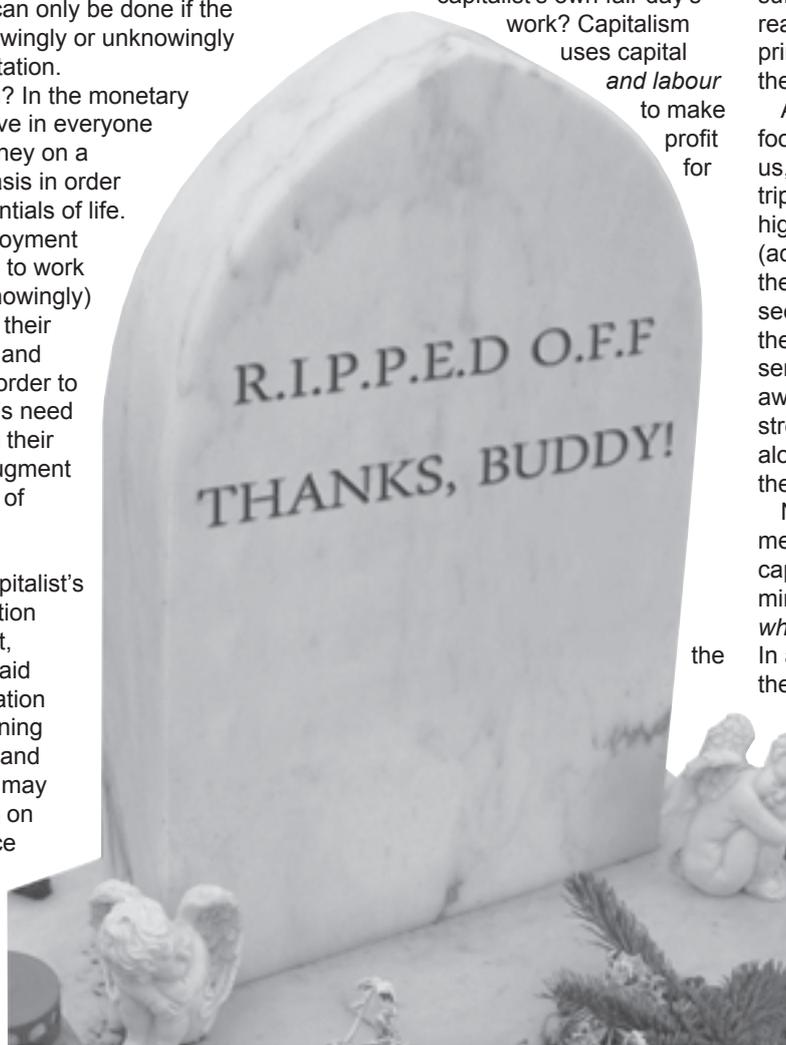
and labour to make profit for

capitalist, to make big money for a few at the expense and from the labour of the majority, i.e. exploitation.

When the recognition hits home that money is *the* recurring impediment, *the* fundamental issue in the daily life of the worker awareness grows of all the many problems it causes. Whatever issue is under consideration – be it getting to and from work, getting married, having children, repair and maintenance of personal property, heating the home sufficiently, having a holiday or a reasonably comfortable retirement – the primary issue is a financial one. Money is the issue.

A season ticket for premier league football is beyond the means of most of us, as is a ticket for the opera, a family trip on an open-top London bus, or even higher education for a growing child, (add your own would-be-nice list). For the worker it's a constant prioritising of seemingly never-ending constraints in the form of utility bills, car payments and servicing, rent or mortgage – all eating away at the possibility of a financially stress-free enjoyable family day out, let alone a financially stress-free month until the next pay day rolls around.

None of the simple pleasures mentioned above are beyond the capitalists' reach however. They, the tiny minority, can have it all. But, actually, *who* is dispensable, *who* indispensable? In a monetary society the worker needs the capitalist and likewise the capitalist needs (some) workers. Notice just how unbalanced this equation is: there are always more looking for work than can find it, whilst those seeking workers have an almost inexhaustible supply. However, in a world of voluntary work and free access (a post-money society) the worker will have no need for the capitalist who will then need to join the rest of us and become



a contributor too to fit into the new, inclusive and cooperative society.

Whether from an individual or community standpoint economic problems greatly impinge on social life. Individuals are severely limited within the system as to the impact they can have on their overall situation. Similarly, communities are limited by their local budgets as to the overall impact they can have on the general quality and quantity of facilities available for their residents. Any so-called political 'solutions' that are offered or imposed to ease social problems are almost invariably economically based (because what can be done without money?) and limited in scope (because of economic limitations) thus not offering genuine, complete, satisfactory solutions at all.

It's a vicious circle of individual or community issues requiring solutions which invariably need economic input. The entanglement of social/political issues with economic concerns keeps us bogged down in an illusory, ostensible, false position, one we are led to believe has no alternative— an apparent but deceptive case. Inequality of access, whether to goods or services, is largely an economic factor alienating sectors of society one from another.

The main factor – exploitation – being the element that needs to be eliminated if we are to win the class war, let's ask 'who needs money most?' The working class can win this fight when they recognise the antagonism between the capitalists' need and their own needs. *Money* is not what we need – it's the things it buys us we need. Capitalists *do* need it – it's the basis of their accumulation. We win the class war when we plan together for a society of voluntary work and common ownership that will overcome the constraints of capitalism and rid ourselves of the divisive class system. It's not a moral issue but a simple material fact: the principles of capitalism and socialism being opposite and antagonistic.

Lord Byron and the Luddites

I recently had the opportunity to witness a fascinating historical re-enactment. It was the open air reading of a speech for a group of students. This reading was a reminder of how little the effects of capitalism, and the crisis that is capitalism, change. Two hundred years ago, in the midst of the trade depression during the European war against Napoleon's France, English weavers rose up in a campaign of machine wrecking that has gone down in history as Luddism. Across Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire and Lancashire, groups of weavers attacked machines held by owners benefiting from the collapsing labour market.

The response of the masters was first to call in the

militia and the army, and ultimately to make the very act of frame wrecking a capital offence. In the midst of this mayhem, we have another recognisable feature: the celebrity campaigner. In this case, it was the first modern celebrity himself, George Gordon, Lord Byron.

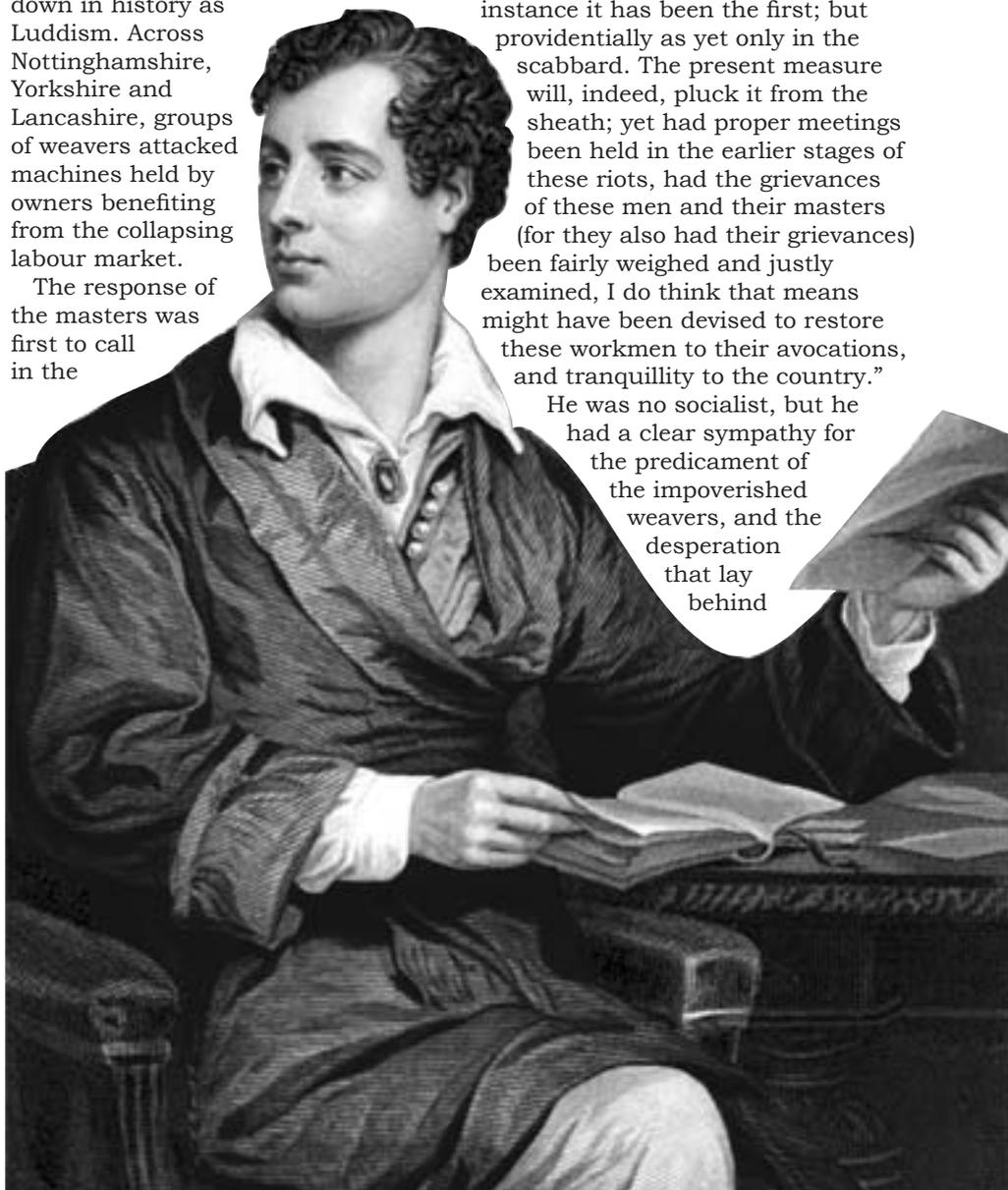
The poet used his position as the inheritor of a peerage to make a maiden speech in the House of Lords against the Frame Breaking Act. Not trusting himself to improvise a speech, he wrote it out beforehand. Although, by accounts, his delivery was poor (much as the modern re-enactment was), it is a clear example of what his hero, the poet, Alexander Pope meant when he wrote:

"True Wit is Nature to Advantage drest,

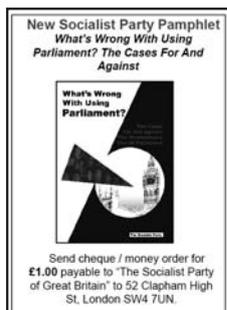
What oft was Thought, but ne'er so well Express"

It was a finely crafted piece of prose. He used his skill with the pen to rally to the defence of those workers. He observed "As the sword is the worst argument that can be used, so should it be the last. In this instance it has been the first; but providentially as yet only in the scabbard. The present measure will, indeed, pluck it from the sheath; yet had proper meetings been held in the earlier stages of these riots, had the grievances of these men and their masters (for they also had their grievances) been fairly weighed and justly examined, I do think that means might have been devised to restore these workmen to their avocations, and tranquillity to the country."

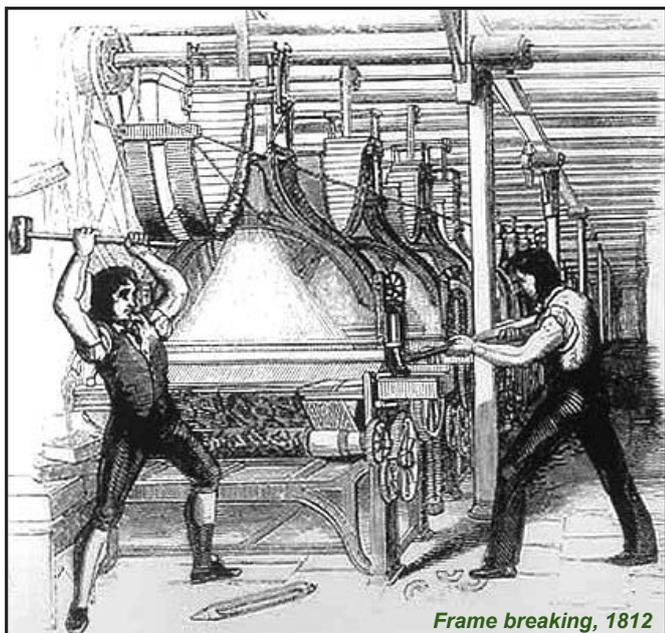
He was no socialist, but he had a clear sympathy for the predicament of the impoverished weavers, and the desperation that lay behind



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Frame breaking, 1812

their actions: “they have arisen from circumstances of the most unparalleled distress: the perseverance of these miserable men in their proceedings, tends to prove that nothing but absolute want could have driven a large, and once honest and industrious, body of the people, into the commission of excesses so hazardous to themselves, their families, and the community”. In fact, a socialist speaker could hardly have put the case more plainly. In countering the outcry against these ‘mobs’ he asked: “Are we aware of our obligations to a mob? It is the mob that labour in the fields and serve in your houses – that man your army and recruit your navy – that have enabled you to defy the world, and can also defy you when neglect and calamity have driven them to despair.”

The weavers, he asserted: “were not ashamed to beg, but there was none to relieve them: their own means of subsistence were cut off, all other employment preoccupied; and their excesses, however to be deplored and condemned, can hardly be subject to surprise”. Nor was this simply the reaction of those frightened by technology but of men “willing to dig, but the spade was in other hands”.

Throughout he deployed his famed wit to skewer the masters and the originators of the law, but it was at the end of his speech he was most scathing:

“[S]uppose one of these men, as I have seen them meagre with famine, sullen with despair, careless of a life which your lordships are perhaps about to value at something less than the price of a stocking-frame; suppose this man surrounded by those children for whom he is unable to procure bread at the hazard of his existence, about to be torn for ever from a family which he lately supported in peaceful industry, and which it is not his fault than he can no longer so support; suppose this man – and there are ten thousand such from whom you may select your victims, – dragged into court to be tried for this new offence, by this new law, – still there are two things wanting to convict and condemn him, and these are, in my opinion, twelve butchers for a jury, and a Jefferies for a judge!” (The full speech can be found online here: <http://tinyurl.com/6kgy6qf>)

A year later, in 1813, such a jury of butchers was sadly found, and 17 men were executed at York. Then as now, the masters had recourse to the bayonet and the noose. Then, as now, this was not forgotten.

PIK SMEET



Who are the wealth producers?

IN AN article in the *Times* (2 May) headlined “This belief in making things is make-believe” and subtitled “It is pure fantasy to argue that the solution to Britain’s economic problems lies in boosting manufacturing”, David Wighton argued:

“The idea of the primacy of manufacturing makes little economic sense. It is the modern equivalent of the 18th-century French physiocrats’ argument that all wealth derived from agriculture and everything else was unproductive. Wealth is created by providing insurance on ships, just as much as by making the vessels.”

The Physiocrats did indeed claim that only agricultural work produced a value, in the form of rent, greater than that of the producers’ subsistence. Marx discussed their views in Part I of *Theories of Surplus Value* where he credited them with transferring “the inquiry into the origin of surplus-value from the sphere of circulation into the sphere of direct production, and thereby laid the foundation for the analysis of capitalist production.”

Their mistake was to conclude that, as the material basis of all wealth came from nature, only the work of those directly interacting with Nature was productive. But manufacturing as well as agriculture transforms materials that originally come from nature – the definition, in fact, of production – and both are capable of producing a surplus (value) over and above the cost of maintaining the producers.

But what about services? Those providing them certainly produce a service but do they also add a value over and above its cost? Marx answered, no. But it was not as simple as that. He accepted that providing these services could bring a profit to a capitalist who invested in them, but the origin of this lay elsewhere, not in surplus value produced by those they employed but in the sector of the economy producing goods for profit. It was the result of a sort of division of labour amongst the capitalist class to ensure that services essential to capital accumulation were carried out as cheaply as possible.

The example Marx gave (in part IV of Volume 3 *Capital*) was merchants. He explained that if there were no merchants specialising in selling goods then the capitalist firms producing them would have to tie up some of their capital to do this themselves instead of investing it in their core business. There was a price to pay. The industrialists sold their commodities to the merchants at below their market price, i. e. not to realise themselves all the surplus value embodied in them so as to allow the merchants a share in it. The same applies to other services provided for profit such as banking and Wighton’s shipping insurance. The capital invested in providing them does return a profit but from realising a part of the surplus value created in material production.

So, while Wighton is wrong to claim that “wealth is created by providing insurance on ships, just as much as by making the vessels”, he is right to argue that it does not necessarily make sense for a capitalist country to concentrate just on manufacturing. Profits can be made by selling financial services to outside capitalists, so providing an income which can be taxed to help defray the costs of maintaining the state. This has in fact been the strategy of successive governments, whether Tory, Labour or ConDem, since the 1980s. But the origin of these profits is not new value added by those working in these services, but surplus value produced by the industrial workers of the world.

The “many people” Wighton criticises for almost seeing financial services as “a great Ponzi scheme in which money generated from making things is passed around with everyone else taking a cut” are not all that far off the mark.

21st Century Chavism

Venezuela: Revolution as Spectacle. Rafael Izcategui, translated by Chaz Bufe, pub. See Sharp Press.



Rafael Uzcategui, editor of *El Libertario*, Venezuela's longest-running anarchist periodical (and on-line at www.nodo50.org/ellibertario), offers a Venezuelan

anarchist's critique of the Bolivarian government of Venezuela and Hugo Chavez in particular. There are many endnotes for those interested in seeking further information or corroboration but most of them are in Spanish although *El Libertario* does have an English language section.

Included is a brief review of the oil industry through the various regimes; an industry the development and management of which resulted in mass migration of populations to oil-producing regions, seeking better employment, depopulating the countryside, turning an agricultural exporting country into a major importing country in a short space of time and followed by all the knock-on social and economic effects. The petroleum industry was originally nationalised in 1976, long before Chavez came to power, and then came a reversal of this policy starting in 1992 which involved employing 'mixed-enterprises', i.e. foreign companies' investments. The mixed-enterprise policy was continued and expanded with transnational companies when Chavez came to power in 1998, the country's economy being highly dependent on oil and gas as the main sources of wealth.

Much of the author's criticism of Chavez is with regard to the many contradictions between his rhetoric and his actions; a president as leader of a vanguard movement cannot equate to socialism; his anti-imperialist rhetoric against the US whilst attempting to build a bloc in the south to counteract it; his top-down decrees for new organisations rather than encouraging real initiatives from the base. According to Izcategui, Chavez is just one more in a string of populist leaders: it is a well-established concept in Latin American countries – the role

of the military strongman, the cult of the macho man, politics as a matter of urgency or emergency – everything starting anew with each new individual in power. The first 'Bolivarian' government, that of the Democratic Action Party between 1945-8, following a military coup which ceded power to civilians, saw a 'new social order' seeking to be inclusive, democratic and not corrupt. This was ended by another military coup. The author contends that the current regime is just one more phase in a kind of circular politics.

In a chapter discussing various social movements he strongly questions Chavez's rhetoric about the people becoming the subject and object of the revolution, for this has to be a question of ownership. Autonomy cannot be imposed from above; people have to want it and work for it. This is a recurring theme, that Chavez is very much about imposing his ideas from the top, ideas which in many areas don't match what social groups are seeking for themselves, and that there is a gulf between words and results, between ideas and realisation. For instance, the communal councils are directly linked to Chavez's executive power, not routed through municipal or parochial councils, and have direct government funding for their projects – a way of garnering and maintaining their support?

There have been many demonstrations and riots incurring various levels of restraint in Venezuela's history often resulting in efforts at redistribution of oil wealth. Some of Izcategui's examples and people's personal testimonies are an effort to show the outside world that nothing much has changed with Chavez, that this still is a nationalist state with a neoliberal capitalist economy that leaves many of the population sidelined. Izcategui selects two self-labelled anarchists for particular criticism because having an international following they should be especially aware of the need for objectivity; Noam Chomsky and Michael Albert. He views them both as too ready to take Chavez and his government spokespersons at face value without checking the voices at the base of the supposed revolution.

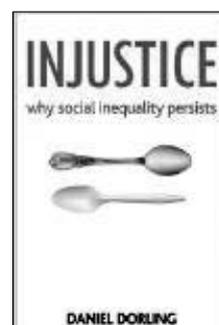
It seems that, in the end, '21st century socialism' comes down to a self-named revolutionary government, manipulating by rhetoric, and an illusion of resistance and social mobilisation, but in reality following a well-trodden path culminating in different forms

of resistance and social struggle which then become criminalised and persecuted. (Statistics provided in the book.) A movement attempting to distance itself from US hegemony it may be; anti-imperialist but not anti-capitalist. If nothing else, this book demonstrates the fundamental requirement that for true socialism to take hold the most important consideration is for the overwhelming majority of the working class to be aware of the need to develop to the full their socialist understanding and consciousness. Socialism is the ongoing task of the majority; it cannot work top down; it cannot be imposed and cannot be legislated for by one or more leaders or vanguard movement, however well-intentioned. If it is populist, charismatic, paternalistic and concentrated in the most subordinate sectors; uses anti-elitist discourse and redistributive methods in a dependent client context with the aim of constructing a base to gain the support of the popular sector – then a socialist revolution it is not. Beware of wearing rose-tinted glasses.

JS

Unfair Shares

Injustice: Why Social Inequality Persists. Daniel Dorling. Polity Press £19.99.



The sub-title is the more important, as this is really about inequality, what it involves and why it continues to exist. On the one hand there is a small group of amazingly

wealthy people, who have acquired their riches through inheritance, profit and interest. These super-rich cluster in enclaves, in particular regions, cities and streets (e.g. near Hyde Park in London). One way in which this elite is maintained is by careful selection of marriage partners: if you're a member of this group and marry someone else from it (it's called homogamy), you and your spouse are likely to remain in that upper part of society.

At the other pole is a group, the worst-off part of the working class, who are effectively destitute. One child in five in London has no annual holiday because their parents cannot afford one. A fifth of the population of Britain find it difficult or very difficult to get by on their incomes. People

with depression or chronic anxiety are found in one-third of British families, as inequality increases and despair grows among the worst-off.

At the heart of this destitution is not primarily joblessness or old age, as was once the case, but debt. In a modern form of indenture, people are forced to borrow, not in order to live in luxury, but in order to simply keep going. The number of people taking out expensive 'payday loans' to get them through to the end of the month more than doubled in 2007-8. In 2005, members of an average household in the US owed 127 percent of their annual income in outstanding debt. A quarter of the 'young elderly' in the US, aged 65-69, have to work in order to get by.

This inequality extends of course to educational provision and the creation of and response to crime. The US now has ten times as many in prison as in 1940, and 70 percent of the two million prisoners are black: 'their biggest mistake is not their crime, but having been born at the wrong time, to the wrong family, in the wrong place, in the wrong country'. The American dream remains an impossible fantasy for nearly everyone.

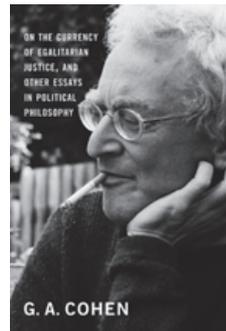
Apparently at least half of the US economy is devoted purely to 'transactional purposes', not designing or making beans but counting them. Dorling is aware that such nonsense as stocktaking and barcode scanning could be dispensed

with 'in a society where consumers and producers work much closer to (and more closely with) each other'. It will take more than that, but in socialism we could get rid not just of credit cards and tills but of the rich and poor too.

PB

What justice?

***On The Currency Of Egalitarian Justice.* G.A. Cohen. Edited by Michael Otsuka. Princeton University Press, 2011**



Contrary to popular myth, Marx and Engels did not frame their arguments for socialism in terms of material equality. In fact they rejected demands for levelling down as 'crude

communism'. As the political philosopher Allen Wood has pointed out, they did not criticise capitalism because poverty is unevenly distributed, but because there is poverty where there need be none, and that there is a privileged class which benefits from a system which subjects the majority to an artificial and unnecessary poverty. In his

Critique of the Gotha Programme (1875), Marx argued that socialism or communism (they mean the same thing) would be based on from each according to ability, to each according to need. This is not an egalitarian slogan. Rather, it asks for people to be considered individually, each with a different set of needs and abilities. Nor would socialist society have to be underpinned by some conception of 'distributive justice'. From each according to ability, to each according to need is a practical arrangement for meeting self-defined needs.

This book is a collection of essays by the academic political philosopher G.A. Cohen, who died in 2009. The 'currency' in the title is a reference to the principles used by political philosophers in the academic debate about 'egalitarian justice', though in one essay Cohen does acknowledge that those who have more currency (meaning more money) are freer than those who have less of it. This may seem blindingly obvious but it is often denied in academia. Cohen has built a reputation on work allegedly inspired by Marx's writings, but here again he misleads. This is confirmed in the essay 'Back to Socialist Basics' in which he demonstrates no understanding of socialist basics. Cohen claims that he is setting out the principles for 'egalitarian justice' – as if they existed in a timeless social and economic vacuum. But the mechanisms for bringing about



Celebritherapy

WHEN REALITY TV is used as "a radical solution to one of Britain's most stubborn social problems", the hyperbole almost drowns out the sighs of desperation. Home Is Where

The Heart Is (ITV1) follows four homeless people as they move in with some minor celebrities for a fortnight. And the desperation comes less from the homeless people involved than the celebrities trying to increase their exposure.

The programme reveals some simplistic attitudes towards homelessness, even among the more well-meaning celebs. One prominent belief is that the most important thing missing from the lives of homeless people is a job. So chef Aldo Zilly and presenter Aneka Rice arrange for their lodgers to get some work experience. Aneka's lodger, Bridget, describes herself as a "tired, washed-up, drained girl" after spending her childhood caring for other family members. But even when it seems that what she needs is a rest and someone to listen to her, she stoically goes to her new work placement.

Less well-meaning among the celebs is Alex James, who actually says "don't send me a mental" and is disappointed when his lodger, Danny, doesn't recognise him. He used to be in Britpop band Blur. Alex sets Danny to work as a farm

labourer and calls him "a disgrace to homeless people" when he struggles to adjust to the heavy regime. Alex's attitude is to ignore the reasons behind Danny's homelessness and encourage Danny to do the same. As a result, Danny's mental health deteriorates and Alex loudly accuses the programme-makers of contriving the situation for the sake of good telly.

Far more touching are the scenes with Jim, who moves in with interior designers Colin McAllister and Justin Ryan. Jim is used to sleeping rough, and when faced with a four-poster bed, feels more comfortable bedding down on the carpet. After their shock that Jim needs alcohol in order to function, Colin and Justin realise that what he also needs are some happy memories. Taken for a helicopter ride and asked where he would like to fly, Jim jokingly replies "the off licence".

Whether Home Is Where The Heart Is really benefits those involved remains to be seen. The ethos behind the project seems to be that when existing support services fail, turn to television. In that way, the programme shares an aim with the repellent The Jeremy Kyle Show. Why not look for the fundamental causes of homelessness instead? Like many people, television tends to ignore the homeless. So, the programme may at least do us a service by highlighting the stories behind those most victimised by capitalist society. That, and showing us what a tosser Alex James is.

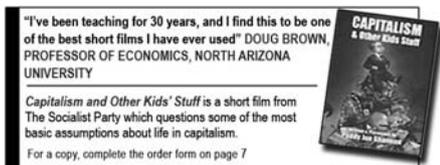
Mike Foster

the desired changes – Cohen argues for a ‘fair’ redistribution of money via taxation – crucially depend upon capitalism’s ability to actually deliver an egalitarian society. Since he does not show that capitalism can do that there is no reason to take his philosophising seriously.

According to political philosophy justice prevails when people get what they deserve, though there are widely differing interpretations of its ethical implications. For socialists, as for Marx, the concepts of justice and fairness are not so much wrong or false as not relevant for our purposes. They misrepresent the exploitative social relations of capitalism and are inappropriate to the struggle for socialism. Socialists operate within a different frame of reference, using different principles which transcend present-day society. Socialism will undoubtedly be a more materially equal society, but that is not the objective. Common ownership of the means of life will be a social relationship of equality between all people. This establishes a classless society. That is the socialist objective and not a ‘fairer’ capitalism which was Cohen’s real aim.

LEW

Books received: Paperback edition of *The Enigma of Capital* by David Harvey (reviewed in the June 2010 Socialist Standard).



Meetings

Clapham

Sunday **12 June** 4 - 7pm
MONARCHY OR REPUBLIC:

CAPITALISM RULES

Speaker: Adam Buick.

Sunday **26 June** 4 - 7pm

THE STATE OF PALESTINE

Speaker: Gwynn Thomas

Discussion and refreshments.

Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN.

Chiswick

Tuesday **21 June** 8pm

Let's make everything Free!

Short film followed by discussion

Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall,

Heathfield Terrace, W4 4JN

East Anglia

Saturday **25 June** 2 - 5pm

WHAT IS CAPITALISM?

Speaker: Darren Poynton.

Quebec Tavern, 93-97 Quebec Road, Norwich, NR1 4HY

(The meeting takes place in a side room separate to the bar.)

All welcome.

Manchester

Monday **27 June** 8.30pm

IS IT OK TO BE PATRIOTIC AGAIN?

Unicorn, Church Street, City Centre, M4 1PW

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site:

<http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

Fircroft College, Birmingham

Friday **22** - Sunday **24 July** 2011



Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals, Friday evening to Sunday afternoon): £130. Concessionary rate: £80. Non-residential cost (including all meals): £50.

To book a place, send a cheque for £10 (payable to The Socialist Party of Great Britain) to flat 2, 24 Tedstone Road, Quinton, Birmingham, B32 2PD. Or, use the paypal facility at www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/donate.html E-mail spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk with any enquiries.

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Declaration of Principles

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

Object

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

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways,

etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

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

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

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the

last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

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

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

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

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



Short Changed

THE LAWS of football don't say much about what players can or must wear. Shirt and shorts, no jewellery (on safety grounds), no undershirts that contain advertising (though of course in the professional game the shirts themselves have the sponsor's name or logo prominently displayed). But in some sports the players' clothing is a controversial issue – the clothing of women players, we mean.

It was recently decreed that women in badminton tournaments above a certain level must wear skirts, supposedly 'to ensure attractive presentation of badminton', which presumably involves making the players look more comely and so enticing more spectators and TV coverage. The ruling means skirts as opposed to shorts, though in fact the new regulations do allow skirts over shorts or tracksuit bottoms, so it's not clear how effective they will really be.

Naturally there have been objections, some on religious grounds. Others are not against shorts, just against making them compulsory. It's probably no great surprise to learn that the whole idea came from a sports marketing firm.

The sport with the most controversial clothing regulations has to be beach volleyball (pictured below). In 1999 it was



decided that both men and women had to wear swimsuits, with women players usually wearing skimpy bikinis. In Olympic events women's bikini briefs have a maximum side width of 7 centimetres and must be 'a close fit'. What next? That the players have to be blonde with a bust over a certain size?

In cricket, the Indian Premier League has been featuring cheerleaders in short skirts and with provocative routines. One team recently tried to replace these with traditional dancers wearing saris, but many supporters thought the sari was 'not sexy enough'.

Sadly the sexism of those who run these sports is often reflected in the attitudes of the paying public.

PB

Socialist Standard June 2011



Man in Space

RUSSIA'S DARING young man did all the right things, at the right time.

Sent looping around the Earth, he sang a patriotic song: ("The motherland hears, the motherland sees, the motherland knows..."). On the rostrum beside Mr. Khrushchev, he was the star turn at this year's Moscow May Day parade.

Gagarin's exploit, Commander Shepard's flight, and the arrival of the Russian Venus rocket shot, have put space-ships right back in the news. Such things are interesting, not to say exciting – but have they been worth anything?

We all know that Russia and the United States are

feverishly applying the knowledge which their space probes give them to the production of more accurate missiles. Some of these were paraded before Gagarin in the Red Square on May Day.

Without a doubt, the quest for more accurate and more powerful weapons is the main incentive in the space programmes of the great powers.

Incidentally, they may also gain knowledge which has little or no military value. But there is no guarantee that even this will not one day be misused.

There is one thing the space shots have to teach everybody. Capitalist society is bound to distort human knowledge for inhuman ends. Scientific investigation can only come into its own when this world is sanely organised.

("News in Review", *Socialist Standard*, June 1961)



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Voice from the Back

Big Bucks And Big Bangs

The *Times* publishes a science magazine called *Eureka* which featured a debate on the issue of "Does military funding compromise science?" Arguing the case for the affirmative was Harry Kroto, winner of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry, 1996, who revealed some devastating facts about the extent of the stockpiling of nuclear weapons. "In my Science and Society lectures, I implore future physicists not to make "better" atomic bombs. There are already more than 20,000, enough to destroy the human race many times over. I implore future chemists not to make "better" napalm, and show them the iconic image of the burning Vietnamese girl that shames chemistry. I implore future engineers not to make "better" landmines, and show pictures of African children playing football on crutches because they have lost a leg in a blast" (*Sunday Times*, 19 April). Harry, we agree with you very much but, unfortunately it is not up to scientists, who are in present day society sponsored by big business, to change the world - it is up to us the working class.

the capitalist class. Here is a class that has never worked, has no intention of ever working – in some cases for several generations – and whose benefits are somewhat greater than the £94 a week doled out to the working class as sickness benefit. Some of them are depicted in the national press coming out of expensive night clubs stoned out of their minds, but this is reported as the high jinks of the playboys and playgirls. It is all good fun, but it is doubtful if £94 would buy a round of drinks for them and yet that is supposed to be sufficient to keep a chronically ill worker for a whole week.

The Wasteful Society

Socialists often highlight the wastefulness of capitalist society. The waste of human lives with the premature deaths of millions of people from the lack

only one night there". Really, one night? "Really, he always stays on his yacht." So, why have a seven-bedroom pad with extensive staff quarters? "It's for overflow guests. There's not always enough room on the boat so they stay at the house." Of course (*Sunday Times*, 8 May).

Fine Words And Harsh Reality

Politicians are wonderful at coining words at election times but a little less wonderful on delivering on electoral promises. Mr Cameron has promised us all a wonderful future in his "Big Society", but we should be aware of the outcome of Mrs Thatcher's promised "Property-owning democracy". "The number of homes repossessed in Britain increased by 15 per cent in the first quarter of the year as unemployment and the cost of living continued to rise. The Council of Mortgage Lenders said that 9,000

homes were repossessed in the first three months of this year compared with 7,000 in the final quarter of last year" (*Times*, 13 May). Rising unemployment and homelessness – a strange sort of property-owning democracy.

The Class Division

It was the sort of news item that would have appealed to "Disgusted, Tunbridge Wells" or some such *Daily Mail* reader. "Too fat, too drunk, or just too lazy to work – but not to claim benefit. More than 80,000 people are too fat or too dependent on alcohol or drugs to work, according to official figures released today. The first breakdown of medical assessment for more than two million people on long-term sickness benefit shows that 42,360 of claimants are alcoholics while more than 37,000 are drug abusers. A further 1,830 are too obese to hold down a job" (*Times*, 21 April). No mention is made of the rest of the 2 million that are on long-term sickness benefit, but even more strikingly no mention is made of



Vincent Tchenguiz's villa in St Tropez

of clean water. The waste of human usefulness with millions forced into unemployment. The waste of the world's natural resources in the mad scramble for profits. The plight of millions of homeless and the inadequately housed should be contrasted with this piece of wastefulness by a member of the useless capitalist class. The property dealer Vincent Tchenguiz has recently put his £25m villa in St Tropez up for sale, and according to one friend . "Vincent bought the villa five years ago but he's spent

Progressing Backwards

One of the illusions much favoured by politicians is that inequalities are gradually disappearing thanks to their wonderful efforts, but the reality is somewhat different.

"After a jarring leap upwards during the industrial collapse of the 1980s, the gap between rich and poor has, with brief interruptions, been trending higher. By the tail-end of Labour's time in office, the Gini coefficient, a measure of inequality, was at its highest since comparable figures began in 1961. ... Britain still ranks just after the United States among the leading Western economies in terms of the gulf between rich and poor" (*Times*, 2 May).

FREE LUNCH

