

socialist standard



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May 2009
Vol. 105 No. 1257
£1.50

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

4 June 2009

European Elections

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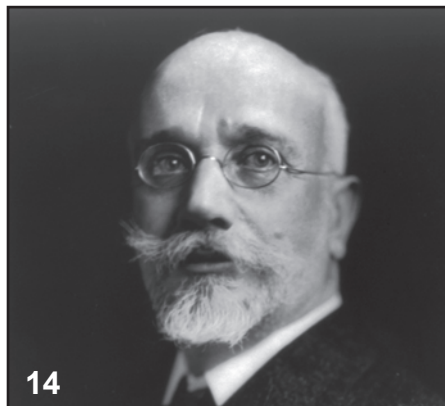
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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 9 May** at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.
tel: 020 7622 3811
e-mail: spgb@worldsocialism.org

Introducing The Socialist Party

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

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

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

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

Editorial

Toxic products

Negotiations are heating up between our rulers. With an economy cooling and a planet warming, there would appear much to talk about. In the short-term there is an economic system needing urgent shoring up: the confidence of workers in the system is disappearing as quickly as the confidence of bankers, employers and shareholders that they can turn a profit.

But in the longer-term it would appear that global warming is likely to present an even greater challenge to individual states to start serious discussions with each other. Every inch of the planet's surface has been mapped and claimed by one bunch of gangsters or another. The atmosphere and the air we breathe however is uncontrollable and has therefore historically been the global sewer into which capitalist economies have spewed their so-called "externalities" (those things not traditionally accounted for by the market). The CO₂ disappears into thin air: out-of-sight and conveniently off the balance sheet.

Capitalism appears to be having serious difficulty in identifying and quantifying its own (so-called "toxic") internal liabilities and risks. What hope can we have that this system will ever really be able to deal properly with the overlooked externalities – including a genuinely "toxic" by-product of economic activity, in the form of CO₂ emissions.

From Beijing to Bonn, and Moscow to Mumbai, the battle lines are already being drawn up as negotiations tighten over the sort of global regulatory regimes required to address both the credit

crunch and the CO₂ crunch.

Despite their apparent collective willingness (in the form of countless speeches and statements) to address both the weakening economy and rising CO₂ emissions, it is clear that there are other forces at work, acting to slow and stall this process. Every state has a "special interest" in protecting or advancing the interests of the various sectors of its own capitalist class. That, after all, is pretty much the job of the state.

Members and sympathisers of the World Socialist Movement can be found in many countries around the world. Where we can, we organise politically to put the case for socialism in front of the workers of the world. The arguments put by a world socialist from the US or the UK is the same as that put by a world socialist from India or Ghana. We have no regional interests, and only one "special interest" – "the emancipation of the global working-class".

Our case is consistent not just for the last 100 years, but also across continents, cultures and languages. From farmers in India to IT workers in China, from the unemployed of Europe to the overworked of the US, the experience of workers across the globe can differ greatly. But in some crucial respects the same story is repeated, with differing degrees only of exploitation, alienation, poverty, insecurity and stress. Investigate our case. Test it against your own experience. If it chimes with how you're thinking, then join us and hasten the day when humanity finally grows up and takes responsibility for its planet.



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Socialism on drugs

When young people ask if there would be drugs in socialism, they don't have in mind things like Seroxat and Prozac, they mean Skunk and Poppers. We can't say these things would be 'legal' or 'illegal', because the status of 'law' in a cooperative stateless community remains to be debated. What we can say is, if people need a drug and there is no good, scientific reason for not manufacturing it, it will no doubt be produced.

Capitalism has a funny attitude to drugs, both the legal, medical kind and the illegal, recreational kind. Legal drugs with important medicinal properties are often not produced because there is no profit in doing so, often because the patents on them have expired and lie in the public domain. This is the problem facing the new 'Polypill', a cocktail of five very cheap drugs which evidence suggests may halve the rate of strokes and heart attacks in middle-aged people (*'The polypill: Medicine's magic bullet'*, *Independent*, 31 March). It works, but it won't be produced because it doesn't make money. Much the same can be said of many other cheap, unexploitable drugs which would save millions of lives in developing countries yet can't turn enough bucks for the big boys. Instead the drug companies concentrate on research into diseases of rich, white westerners, such as obesity and skin cancer.

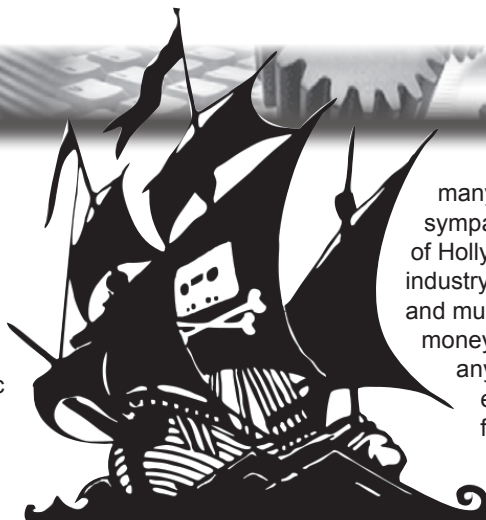
Where there's a wallet, there's a way, but even if you accept capitalism's own profit-oriented logic, its attitude to illegal recreational drugs still fails to make any kind of sense. From Al Capone to Afghanistan, the history of drug prohibition by capitalism continues to represent one of the most bizarrely stupid aspects of a social system never notable for its good judgment. The lesson of America's prohibition period should have taught the world that if you banned coffee today, you would create a coffee mafia tomorrow, in the process creating an unnecessary and, from the ruling class point of view, expensive 'war on coffee' simply to deprive people of something harmless that they like. We would also see a crime problem at every scale from coffee barons and their private armies to burglaries and back-alley shootings over a jar of Maxwell House in Manchester.

Many of the arguments against illicit drugs are bogus, unscientific and politically oriented. In particular, the idea that legalisation would create a massive social problem of a drug-crazed free-for-all is not borne out by the experience of Holland, or more recently of Portugal, which decriminalised illicit drugs in 2001. There, it turns out, drug usage and associated behavioural pathologies are among the lowest in all the EU countries, especially when compared to those countries with very restrictive drug laws (*Cato Institute White Paper*, 2 April).

While the drugs 'problem' is not a make or break issue for socialists, it does illustrate how capitalism tends to operate in defiance of any logic, even its own. Even leaving aside more pressing issues like poverty, war or climate change, it ought to be obvious from this that it is simply not clever to leave major decisions about production and supply in the hands of an unelected and uncontrollable minority. The capitalist ruling class are making the whole planet ill, and there's no magic pill for that.

Arthouse socialism

One accessibility issue about which there would be no question whatever in socialism is that of copyright, so the young Swedes recently convicted of copyright infringement over their Pirate Bay file-sharing site would have no case to answer in a society of common ownership (*'Court jails Pirate Bay founders'*, BBC Online, 17 April). Their defence, that their web server did not contain illicit material, was always a long shot. True, they weren't handling 'stolen' goods themselves, but the court took the view that they were doing the equivalent of standing outside a house full of silverware and directing passers-by towards the open windows.



The Pirate Bay

Sinking ship?

from ever being born in the first place, as well as narrowing the full spectrum of human creativity to a thin channel of bland commercial profitability. Who can say how many Mozarts, Mendels or Modiglianis the world has killed or incapacitated through poverty, wars or sheer overwork?

The Swedish defendants are probably too busy organising their appeal to note an amusing story in the British papers which shows that even the police don't take music copyright seriously. The Wiltshire police have just had a £32,000 bill from the Performing Rights Society for the playing of music in Wiltshire nicks (*'Music bill forces police off beat'*, BBC Online, 17 April). Now the boys in blue are banned from their boogie boxes. Presumably they'll just have to use their whistles.

No-spam socialism

Trivial point maybe, but socialism wouldn't see much in the way of spam, the background white noise of online capitalism, since commercial advertising of products wouldn't exist, nor any dodgy Nigerian money scams. So most emails would presumably be legitimate, apart possibly from those tedious 'Hey, this is hilarious, send it on!' posts which in any case only prove that workers under capitalism will resort to any tactic to waste their bosses' time at work. The environmental significance of this irritating feature of cyber-capitalism has now been highlighted by a new report which for the first time relates spam to carbon emissions. Every year, says the report, 62 trillion spam messages are sent globally, representing 33 billion kilowatt hours of energy and 17 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions (*BBC Online*, 16 April). When a spam site was recently closed, the resulting 70 percent drop in global spam was equivalent to taking 2.2 million cars off the road, according to the antivirus company McAfee. Next day, of course, another site was up and running instead. On with the show.



Dirty work

Dear Editors

Re March 2009 *Socialist Standard* article 'The real dirty work'. A very good article but the phrase 'Since there will be no employment or jobs in socialism, needs in my view some qualification.

I know we've used examples of dirty work to include removing refuse, working in sewers etc., but I remember a Party speaker who included such things as surgeons poking about inside human bodies in the course of their work.

We may or may not agree whether this or other examples constitute dirty work but what is certain is that a socialist society could not rely on such work being undertaken on a 'rota basis' or by a 'call for volunteers'. There would have to be organisation of socialists (can't call them 'workers' in socialism presumably) for production and distribution of the necessities of life.

Would we like a situation where one day someone says 'I think I'll volunteer to be a brain surgeon, or shift a few bin-bags today - I just feel like it.' Of course no-one in their right mind would go along with such an idea.

Going back to the words 'employment' and 'jobs', both in capitalism refer mainly to paid work, but of course they both can and will mean what my Thesaurus includes - job, chores, work, duty, service, occupation, function, undertaking, assignment, engage in, devote oneself to' - need I say more?

P. HART (by e-mail)



The latest edition of *Imagine*, the Socialist Party of Canada's journal, is out now. Cheque or money order for £1 (including postage) to The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

The Crisis: Don't Read About It!

The *Sun* newspaper should be no more abhorrent to socialists than any other capitalist propaganda rag. In a spirit of intellectual equanimity I occasionally take the wretched organ along with more sober rags of the ruling elite in order to gainsay and refute the views of supporters of the profit system.

Now, as the world capitalist system moves inexorably towards another catastrophic slump it behoves the class traitor scribblers of the "popular press" to divert our attention from the problems facing us as a consequence of capitalism's irresolvable internal contradictions.

But don't worry - the *Sun* has a "Happy Page":

"The pound crumbles, the economy tumbles and Gordon Brown finally rumbles that we are heading for the big recession.

So to take your mind off the sad economic tidings there are plenty of cheery stories scattered throughout *The Sun*.

And for uninterrupted fun turn to Page 20 our new Happy Page.

If you have any stories or photos that will raise British spirits why not send them to us and do your bit in the War against Gloom effort."

As the "Real Economy" goes into recession and people lose their jobs, homes and belief in the future of their communities we are exhorted by the *Sun* to turn to page 20 and have a chortle as workers' lives under capitalism crumble around our ears.

Socialists have long understood the function of the reactionary media in the intellectual conditioning of capitalist society. Workers are bombarded by propaganda on a myriad of fronts. In the last 30 years the *Sun* has cornered the market in combining "politics", gambling and tits with criminal and celebrity witch hunts.

Whilst the world working class is entering a period in which there will be a sustained, angry and possibly violent attack upon our meagre living standards and individual rights by the ruling class, we must challenge the "official" media at every turn, the more apparently "learned" daily journals such as the *Guardian*, *Independent* or *Telegraph* as well as the *Sun*.

At this time the fanciful notion that "taxpayers money" is being used to stave off capitalist crisis is being promulgated by the mainstream media. Whilst, in

reality the capitalist class is using State funds generated on the backs of the labour of workers to prop up the profit system and to provide them with a surplus. The capitalist media are also wrestling all their capacity to prepare us for yet another period of belt-tightening.

The reasons for the failings of capitalism, and the potential to resolve the problems caused to people under the grip of the system are often very near to the grasp of workers' thinking, both individually and collectively. My trajectory towards socialist consciousness began as a very young man witnessing the "shaking out" of staff at R.M. Douglas Construction Ltd of Birmingham in 1992. I saw proud middle-aged, "company" men, some with over 25 years service, cry openly as they were told they were surplus to requirements for the firm.

So, as the reality of capitalist recession imposes itself once more on the already beleaguered working class the last thing we need to do is to read "Happy News" on Page 20 of *The Sun* newspaper.

Andy P. Davies

WSM FORUM

- Want to talk about what you've just read?
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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

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see page 16 for more details



Global warming: is it (or will it soon be) too late?

On 28 February, a sizeable chunk (400 sq. km.) of the Antarctic ice sheet toppled into the sea. This was just the latest sign that the planet is heating up more rapidly than the quasi-official forecasts of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have led us to expect.

Why does reality outpace prediction?

For one thing, scientists are trained to be cautious. Most are reluctant to “speculate” – meaning to think a possibility through to its logical end result. They are especially reticent when addressing a broad public. Those who occupy positions in or close to government are under pressure to avoid “alarmism” and be “politically realistic.” To preserve a modicum of influence on the ruling class they must maintain an impression of respectable complacency.

It is, of course, extremely difficult to form an adequate understanding of such a complex interactive system as the global climate. Scientists rely on computerised forecasting models to simulate such systems. But such models can only incorporate factors that are already well understood and not subject to excessive uncertainty. There is an inevitable lag, often a lengthy one, between the discovery of a new danger or feedback mechanism and its adequate representation in the models.

Thus, the usual prediction for rise in sea level by 2100 is a little under one meter. We can cope with that, surely! But the only factor that it takes into account is thermal expansion, which is fairly easy to calculate. The big rise that will inundate coastal cities and vast lowland areas is that which will follow collapse of the Arctic and Antarctic ice sheets, but no one knows when it will occur.

Standard mathematical models are designed to analyse continuous, relatively gradual change. The greatest dangers, however, are posed by abrupt changes that give further sudden impetus to climate change. The collapse of ice sheets is one example. Another likely near-term event of this kind is a conflagration, sparked by increasingly hot and dry summertime conditions, that destroys much or even most of the remaining Amazonian rainforest, turning an important carbon sink into yet another carbon emitter.

Probably less imminent but even more terrifying is the prospect of the release into the atmosphere of massive amounts of methane as a result of the breakdown of frozen gas-ice compounds in the permafrost as it melts and on the ocean floor as it warms up. Methane is by far the most powerful of the greenhouse gases. It is also poisonous to life, at least as we know it.

These dangers explain why some scientists fear that global warming may reach a “tipping point” beyond which it will become irreversible – that is, beyond all hope of effective human counteraction. Within a few generations, “runaway” climate change would then generate extreme

conditions that human beings will be unable to withstand.

This fear is fuelled by our knowledge of the geological record, which contains abundant evidence of past climatic disasters in which numerous species became extinct. It seems that when the biosphere of our planet is jolted out of its not very stable equilibrium – whether by collision with a meteorite or asteroid, by a supervolcanic eruption or by the insanity of capitalist production and consumption – it is susceptible to catastrophic climatic upheaval.

Environmentalists often warn that unless adequate action to arrest global warming is taken within a clearly specified and relatively short period it will be “too late.” Some socialists say the same thing, with the important proviso that “adequate action” must mean, above all, the establishment of world socialism. The urgency of the warning, it is hoped, will rouse people from lethargy to frenetic activism, though I suspect it is more likely to reduce them to despair.

These warnings have been repeated for quite a few years now, so it is natural that they should escalate. First, the time horizon shortens – from 15 – 20 years to ten or even five. Then the idea surfaces that time must surely have run out by now. Is it not already too late?

In my opinion, the current state of scientific knowledge does not permit us to make categorical declarations of this sort. We cannot exclude the *possibility* that it will soon be, or already is, too late. Capitalism may have set in motion processes – perhaps processes that we do not yet even clearly perceive, let alone understand – on which no human ingenuity will have a significant effect. But nor can we exclude the possibility that it is *not* too late, that even 30, 40 or 50 years from now it will not be too late.

Discussions of runaway climate change rarely take into proper consideration the potential of cosmic engineering projects such as giant space mirrors to divert the sun’s rays. Although these projects may entail risks of their own, the longer the transition to world socialism is delayed the more urgently the space agency of socialist society is likely to pursue them.

For all the uncertainties, we can be certain regarding some vital points.

- * If we do have a chance of survival, it is contingent on the establishment of world socialism. If capitalism continues indefinitely, then sooner or later we are doomed.

- * The sooner we establish socialism the better. But better late than never.

- * The climatic and environmental threat to human survival will come to occupy central place among the concerns that inspire people to work for socialism, overshadowing all else.







TRUST ME, I'M A DOCTOR!

"Dr. Hershel Samuels, an orthopedic surgeon, put his hand on the worker's back. "Mild spasm bilaterally," he said softly. He pressed his fingers gingerly against the side of the man's neck. "The left cervical is tender," he said, "even to light palpation." The worker, a driver for a plumbing company, told the doctor he had fallen, banging up his back, shoulder and ribs. He was seeking expanded workers' compensation benefits because he no longer felt he could do his job. Dr. Samuels, an independent medical examiner in the state workers' compensation system, seemed to agree. As he moved about a scuffed Brooklyn office last April, he called out test results indicative of an injured man. His words were captured on videotape. Yet the report Dr. Samuels later submitted to the New York State Workers' Compensation Board cleared the driver for work and told a far different story: no back spasms, no tender neck. In fact, no recent injury at all. "If you did a truly pure report," he said later in an interview, "you'd be out on your ears and the insurers wouldn't pay for it. You have to give them what they want, or you're in Florida. That's the game, baby." (*New York Times*, 31 March)

FRED AND FORLORN

"Oxfam is warning that the economic downturn is creating more poverty in the UK, making life tougher for the fifth of the population already struggling to get by. Kathleen Carter lives in poverty. At her home in Stockton-on-Tees, she cares full-time for her disabled son and husband. Her life is a constant round of cleaning, cooking, preparing medication and shopping on a very tight budget. The only income is from her pension and a small amount of benefits. She says: "It can be very soul-destroying. I've got to think of everything I buy, life is a real struggle because all the time you are thinking about what you are spending." Mrs Carter is one of the so-called Freds. It is a term Oxfam has created standing for Forgotten, Ripped-off, Excluded and Debt-ridden." (*BBC News*, 8 April)

OF ALL THE SLUMS IN ALL THE WORLD...

"This seaside city is known as a rich stockpile of art deco architecture, the hub of Morocco's economic growth and the setting of an all-time classic movie starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman.

But Casablanca is also the capital of a bleaker aspect of modern Morocco - sprawling slums, where huge families are packed into shanties with tin roofs rusted by the ocean winds, and goats and donkeys munch stray garbage.

"It's as if we're eating straight from the gutter," said Mina Abujaman, 48, describing the squalor.

"We spend half our time cleaning up," said the mother of seven and grandmother of two, pointing at the children playing in the mud while women carry water back from the communal fountain - all amid whiffs of sewage.

It's not surprising, of course, that things do not go according to plan in a crowded Arab city where illusion is part of the atmosphere. Tourists' snapshots of busy alleyways miss the squalor behind the walls, and the famous 1942 movie "Casablanca" was not filmed here at all, but mostly at studios in Burbank, Calif., with the misty farewell of hero and heroine shot nearby at Van Nuys airport." (www.wtop.com)

Contact Details

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

Central London branch. 2nd Weds. 6.30pm. 2nd Wednesday 6.30pm. Coffee Republic, 7-12 City Road, EC1 (nearest Tube and rail stations Old Street and Moorgate).

Enfield and Haringey branch.

Thurs 21st May. 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18. Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL. email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk

South London branch.

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

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

Pimlico. C. Trinder, 24 Greenwood Ct, 155 Cambridge Street, SW1 4VQ. Tel: 020 7834 8186

MIDLANDS

West Midlands branch. Meets every two months on a Sunday afternoon (see meetings page for details). Tel: Tony Gluck 01242 235615

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Bolton. Tel: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589

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

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

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

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Glasgow branch. 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Richard Donnelly, 112 Napiershall Street, Glasgow G20 6HT. Tel: 0141 5794109. E-mail: richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com

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West Lothian. 2nd and 4th Weds in month, 7.30-9.30. Lanthorn Community Centre, Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge, Livingston. Corres: Matt Culbert, 53 Falcon Brae, Ladywell, Livingston, West Lothian, EH5 6UW. Tel: 01506 462359 E-mail: matt@wsmweb.fsnet.co.uk

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

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The theology of interest

Sharia-compliant Islamic banking is apparently expanding with even non-Muslims switching to Islamic banks, reports the *Times* (12 March). According to the article's author, Alex Wade, "under Sharia law, the charging or paying of interest is prohibited". But, since banks do business by borrowing money at one rate of interest and re-lending it a higher rate, how can a bank which does not pay or charge interest exist?

This is to underestimate the subtlety of Islamic theologians, following in the footsteps of their end-of-Middle Ages Catholic and Protestant counterparts. In the Middle Ages the dogma of the Catholic Church banned usury, defined as charging money for a loan. Well, but not quite:

"No man, again, may charge money for a loan. He may, of course, take the profits of partnership, provided that he takes the partner's risks. He may buy a rent-charge; for the fruits of the earth are produced by nature, not wrung from men. He may demand compensation - *interesse* - if he is not repaid the principal at the time stipulated. He may ask payments corresponding to any loss he incurs or forgoes. He may purchase an annuity, for the payment is contingent and speculative, not certain" (RH Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, ch 1(ii)).

What was banned, then, was only the *certainty* of being paid a pre-fixed sum of money for the loan. As Tawney pointed out, the very word "interest" derives from one of the ways of getting round the ban on usury.

Islam, too, allows partnerships as well as a number of other arrangements which allow the payment of a pre-fixed sum of money for advancing money. Wade's article mentions: *salaam* ("sale contract with deferred delivery"), *arbourm* ("sale contract with a non-refundable deposit") and *murabaha* ("deferred sale financing").

So, while Islamic banks do not borrow money on the money market, they can still make what are in effect loans which bring in money for them. In any event, Islam is not opposed to profits and profit-making since these are regarded as non-certain rewards for advancing money.

In the end the Catholic church was obliged to face reality and, to try to keep the poor from being exploited by usurers, from the middle of the 15th century itself set up bodies to lend money to the poor. These were called *monts-de-piété* (literally "mounts of piety"), which is still the French word for pawnbroker, though on the Continent these are state-run bodies. They did not spread to England as Protestantism, which triumphed here in the 16th century, had no qualms about lending at interest. As a result pawnbroking has always been a private business here.

And these days in fact a profitable business which, along with cheapo shops like Aldi and Lidl, is doing well in the current depression. The leading pawnbroker firm in Britain is H&T, whose shares are quoted on the Stock Exchange. It has 105 stores and made £10 million profits in 2008 compared with £7.1 million in 2007. It charges 8 percent interest per month.

Wade doesn't say if there are any Islamic pawnbrokers, but it shouldn't be difficult to find some imam or mullah to justify this as a form of "deferred sale financing".

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The cult of Irish Republicanism

The Real IRA and the Continuity IRA represent nothing but the pale ghosts of yesterday.

For over a hundred years now Ireland, and particularly Northern Ireland since it came into existence in 1921, has been politically structured by what Sean O'Casey called, in one of his memorable plays, *The Shadow of the Gunman*. The gunman, and more recently in deference to the times, his female equivalent, has been legal and illegal, protestant and catholic, brave and cowardly but at all times and in all guises, a dangerous irrelevancy as far as the working class is concerned.

Ruling classes everywhere mythologise the politics of their regime in order to conceal the fact that their wealth and opulent lifestyles are based on the poverty and degradation of their subject classes. In Ireland that process has been further mystified and obfuscated by years of colonisation and the deliberate action of Britain, the colonial master, of introducing religious sectarianism into Ireland's toxic tribal mix at the beginning of the 17th century.

That evil, the curse of inter-religious conflict, was part of Elizabethan England's strategy for a final solution to the problem of Gaelic resistance to English rule in Ireland which was most formidable in the province of Ulster. In 1603 the native Gaelic people were driven from their lands; their lands were confiscated by the Crown and gifted in large tracts to undertakers favoured by the English Court. In turn the beneficiaries of this act of imperial theft introduced tenants from Scotland and northern England and it was no accident that these were largely protestant.

The plantation of Ulster was simply part of the process whereby ruling classes further their interests and build empires. The incoming 'planters' were not the villains in the piece; rather were they innocent instruments of a power-hungry imperialism; poor peasant farmers following a promise of a better

existence - in fact many would have been the descendants of earlier 'Scotti' emigrants who left Ireland in search of a better life in Scotland. History should have absorbed the conflicts created by the plantation of Ulster but, history is largely fashioned by economics, and a radical dichotomy in the land tenure between the province of Ulster, the area planted, and the rest of Ireland was to foster bitter new conflicts between opposing forms of

no rights either in law or in custom attending the lot of the tenant. He was a tenant-at-will, the will of his landlord; without any security of tenure, 'fairness' of rent or right to any compensation for any improvement to his holding or his habitation. Indeed

nationalism, each concealed in a quasi-religious political doctrine; bitter, nauseous and wholly irrelevant to the interests of the working class on the island of Ireland.

Karl Marx might well have been thinking of Ireland when he said:

"Men make their own history but they do not do it as they please; they do not do it under circumstances chosen by themselves but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." (*18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*)

In pre-capitalist society the means of life was the land. It was the means of production and just as in capitalism now, where social class is determined by whether one is a working functionary within those means or an owner of those means, so in feudal Ireland where one stood in relation to the ownership and control of the land determined their social status.

Even for feudalism, Irish land law was brutally harsh with virtually

one visiting English agronomist is reputed to have said, not as an insult to Irish peasants but in criticism of their conditions of tenure where improvement carried the penalty of higher rent or even eviction, that it was an encouragement to the peasant to learn to live like a pig.

Because they were vital instruments in the strategy of conquest the Ulster planters could reject the absolute servitude of the native peasant in the country and, accordingly, their landlords had to grant them what later became known in Ireland as The Three F's: Fixity of tenure, Fixity of rent and Freedom of sale of what was effectively their leaseholds. In Ulster this practice became known as 'Ulster Custom'. It created circumstances in which a surplus over immediate need could be made and where leaseholds were sold and could be aggregated making smallholdings into farms



and peasants into small farmers. It extended the use of money within the community thus establishing an essential element in the development of trade: a purchasing power.

By the time of the Industrial Revolution Ulster had its nascent capitalist class and it developed apace with the development of capitalism in Britain, a development enhanced by the general level of literacy, a burgeoning commercial trade and a not insignificant number of immigrant entrepreneurs. During the mid-19th century, referred to by the economist Hobsbawm as *The Age of Capital*, Ulster underwent rapid development in shipbuilding, heavy and light engineering, as well as textiles and rope-making. In fact Ulster industry became an integral part of British capitalism; dependant for energy and raw materials on Britain and its Empire and vitally beholden to the then-prevailing system of Empire Preference for its market.

Ironically, it was in this climate of bourgeois prosperity in Ulster that Republican ideas began to emerge and the idea of backing those ideas with the threat and the reality of armed force. The idea of republican violence did not come from the dispossessed or the rebellious catholics but from elements within the protestant middle-class who argued that the government - which they generally referred to as the Crown - was supporting discriminatory measures against Irish trade.

Typical of those articulating this opinion was the Belfast industrialist, J Alexander Hamilton who told an audience of his class peers in the Belfast Linen Hall on the 14th May 1784:

"It cannot be said that the government truly represents our interests in matters of trade or industry nor can we hold faith with the Crown to allow it that right. Our limping independence is on the sufferance of the Crown who again can be influenced by powerful English interests in trade and industry to restrict us and hamper the further development of our trade and industry... What they had the right to give they had the right to take and it is our sacred duty to remove from the crown that right and build our own constitutional structures, our own freedom and the absolute right to plan for the advancement of our own trade and commerce. It is a lesson that has been learnt in America and one that

we in this country will have to learn even if it means the broadening of outlook in matters of political concern at home."

That was the voice that spoke incipient republican rebellion, echoed by Henry Joy McCracken and the northern leaders of The United Irishmen. They were protestants, articulating the problems of Ulster capitalism and allying the rebellious interests of their class, with clarions of patriotism. Their republicanism came from the French Revolution and the American War of Independence via the pages of Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* and encapsulated in the vision of Wolfe Tone.

Four years later in 1798 Irish Republicanism staged an abortive rebellion in the name of "Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter". In Ulster

on the abundance of cereal crop and livestock that was being shipped out to foreign tables. Early victims of the brutal capitalist doctrine of Laissez-faire.

Within a decade the population of Ireland had been reduced by some two million to an estimated six million. The land was still haemorrhaging its people to England, Australia and, especially, to the United States where Irish conspiracy, rooted in the Clan na Gael was fostering the Fenian movement for republican insurrection in Ireland. The Fenian Brotherhood was closer to the common people preaching a class gospel and angering the Church which caused Archbishop Moriarty, with questionable theological soundness, to speculate that Hell

"The idea of republican violence did not come from the dispossessed or the rebellious catholics but from elements within the protestant middle-class"

the enemy was the forces of the Crown; in the rest of Ireland, apart from a failed incursion by French forces in the west of Ireland, the rebellion was largely restricted to the county of Wexford where the United Men were largely Catholics, their leader a catholic priest and their primary enemy protestants - inevitably their rack-renting landlords.

While capitalism was developing in Ulster in the rest of the country outbreaks of violence were common. The landlord and the Crown were the enemies of the downtrodden, brutally impoverished serf-like Irish peasant; it was a political struggle that was allied to patriotism only insofar as the Crown was identified with the landlord and the reality of agrarian poverty. The heady days of European revolution in the mid-19th century was reflected in Ireland more in the literature of protest than armed conflict. There was little violence; the patriots of the Young Ireland movement spoke the hurt and anger of a people in despair; people whose staple diet, the potato had for a second year turned to foul putrefaction in the fields; people burying their dead because they could not afford to live



The Fenian Brotherhood in the USA

was not hot enough nor eternity long enough to punish them.

The vagaries of world capitalism was having a drastic effect on food prices which were falling rapidly and gravely effecting the income of the Irish peasantry more and more of whom were falling into rent arrears. Between 1872 and 1885 well over 200,000 tenants were evicted and at one protest meeting in response to mass eviction notices served by the landlord, a catholic priest called Geoffrey Burke who had inherited an estate from his brother, a speech by

Tom Brennan, a prominent Fenian, demonstrates how far ahead in its thinking the Fenian movement, now in decay, was over the purely nationalist thinking of the Irish Parliamentary Party and its political heirs Sinn Féin. Brennan said:

“You may get a Federal Parliament, perhaps the Repeal of the Union, nay more, you may establish an Irish Republic, but as longed as tillers of the soil are forced to support a useless and indolent aristocracy, your Federal Parliament would be a bauble and your Irish Republic a fraud,” (quoted in *The Land League Crisis*, N D Palmer. Yale Historical Publications).

Fenian activity was poorly organised and badly coordinated but it left its martyrs to fester in the fecund soil of bitter discontent and, in the incarnation of the Irish Republican Brotherhood it was to light the fuse of Irish Rebellion in 1916 and the subsequent Anglo-Irish War out of which modern Ireland emerged. It is impossible in a short article to knit all the threads of festering revolt that were converging on a political denouement in Ireland: Michael Davitt’s courageous Land League and the attempts to unify the struggle against Landlordism with the struggle of an emerging proletariat played a vital role that ultimately found a measure of success in a series of Land Purchase Acts between 1885 and 1903. These Acts made interest-bearing loans of public money available to buy out their holdings. The landlords made token protest but in most cases were glad to salvage a final settlement from their ill-gotten plunder.

The story of the part played by the terrible potato famine of 1845/50 in helping to create a southern, largely catholic, middle class, has still to be written but it was a factor among many others in the emerging of a politically-articulate, fledgling bourgeoisie. More importantly for the future of Ireland the political interest of that class was in direct conflict with those of its class brethren in Ulster. Charles Stewart Parnell the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party enunciated the political requirements of nascent southern capitalism in a major speech at Arklow on the 20th August 1885; in precise terms Parnell made clear the economic motive for an Irish government: to protect a weak Irish capitalism confronted by the competition of English capitalism.

Subsequently a more bellicose Sinn Féin said the same thing:

“If an Irish manufacturer cannot produce an article as cheaply as an English or other foreign capitalist, only because his foreign competitor has larger resources at his disposal, then it is the first duty of the Irish nation to accord protection to that manufacturer.” (*Sinn Féin Policy*, 1907 Edition)

“The IRA was an army of workers fighting for the clearly-defined interests of their bosses.”



That was the political policy which underpinned the Easter Rising of 1916 and the subsequent IRA guerrilla struggle to ‘free’ Ireland. The IRA was an army of workers fighting for the clearly-defined interests of their bosses. Ironically, as we have shown earlier, the protection they wanted to achieve for southern capitalists would have been ruinous for northern capitalists. There was no basis for unity.

Since the partition of Ireland in 1921, Sinn Féin and the IRA have undergone many vicissitudes but,

effectively, after partition and the defeat of the IRA in the ensuing civil war they had become a cult, a representative of “the dead generations”. In 1962, after an abortive ‘Border Campaign’ that had become its period of attrition a short time after it began in 1956, the IRA confessed its lack of support, accused northern nationalists of selling their heritage for a mess of pottage - British ‘welfare’ capitalism - and established constitutional Republican Clubs to pursue social issues. The absurdly sectarian Unionist government - always conscious of the benefits of an IRA threat at election times - immediately banned the Clubs and left the framework for thirty-odd years of sectarian violence.

Does the resuscitated IRA that resurfaced in 1970 and after decades of struggle won a share in the political administration of the entity it set out to banish, disprove our contention that the concept of armed IRA struggle had become a futile cult following their political and military defeat by southern government forces in 1922?

The answer to that question is twofold. Firstly, their very presence in the current northern administration is not a victory; on the contrary, it is an acknowledged recognition of the failure of armed violence to unite a people. Secondly, the IRA of the 1950’s that accepted its political rejection by the people, like earlier incarnations of that organisation, was a purely political movement whereas that of the 1970’s was built around a catholic population under attack. The followers of the republican cult might well have wished it otherwise, but the muscle of the movement that emerged out of the early stages of the recent troubles was catholic and sectarian. Today the question is changed, changed dramatically, and mutations of the Provisionals, like the Real IRA and the Continuity IRA represent nothing but the pale ghosts of yesterday. They are a curse on the body politic and the only progressive act they can commit is to disappear.

David Lloyd George and Adolf Hitler, meeting at Obersalzberg, 1936



Greatness – perceived and real

The “Great” are only great because ruling-class historians tell us they are.

Great men and disproportionately fewer great women are defined and refined for us by those whom we deem to be worthy of lording it over us every four or five years. They stand upon manifestos that promise much but deliver little. What they do deliver, but never talk about beforehand, is war or conflict, reduced public services, cronyism, personal enrichment, self aggrandisement *and* the ability to write or rewrite history. “He who controls the present controls the past. He who controls the past controls the future!” as Orwell memorably wrote.

So, the history books of our nation-states are filled with tales of derring-do by champions of our establishment class; pages are given over to the wisdom and fortitude during times of conflict of our political leaders. Pages are dedicated to politicians and generals who, by and large, seldom or never come within range of an armed enemy. In contrast, “the poor, bloody infantry” get a line or two when mention of casualties is glossed over. Churchill stayed in London during the blitz, a political decision, to boost morale in the civil population but was in a hole so deep under the Admiralty as to warrant honorary membership of the National Union of Mineworkers, a group he had once turned armed troops upon for daring to defy the Establishment. Yet he, along with others like him, are perceived by many to be great.

Lloyd George

David Lloyd George – the “Welsh Wizard”, so named for his fine oratory and political acumen, but despised by political friend and foe alike for his deceit and cunning – became Prime Minister in 1916 having schemed the downfall of his then Liberal Party leader and Prime Minister Lord Asquith.

At the conclusion of The Great War, in opposition to former allies the US, France and Italy, he set about the punishment of what he referred to as the “deplorable Turks” by the dismemberment of Turkey and what remained of the former Ottoman Empire whilst at the same time serving Britain’s imperial aims in the region. Part of his strategy was to encourage then Greek Prime Minister, Venizelos, whom Lloyd George considered “the greatest statesman Greece had thrown up since Pericles”, to attack mainland Turkey and establish a Greater Hellene Empire. In the event his strategy failed; thousands died needlessly on both sides of the conflict, animosity simmers between Greece and Turkey to this day and with the exchange of populations in 1926 formerly mixed and peaceful communities were torn apart, friends were made into strangers and enemies.

Within days of the signing in 1922 of the articles of agreement between Turkey and the British, French and Italians for full withdrawal of troops (the French and Italians were long-gone and the Greeks were defeated), Lloyd George resigned, forced out by colleagues who “[could] not afford to keep him anymore. He is too expensive.” The legacy of David Lloyd George is one of death and destruction, of double-dealing and strategic failure. And yet the casual reader of history would see him writ large as a statesman and master politician. There is page after page in the “official” history books and biographies and even a parody of a repetitious song.

Granny Ayse

Compare this with the story of Ayse (pronounced. Aysher) of Kaya village near Fethiye in SW Turkey. (I am indebted to long-term resident of Kaya, John Laughland for much of the following information contained in his moving tribute-cum-obituary) She died on 20th March 2009, in Izmir, aged around 104, although records and registrations in those days were not punctiliously kept. As she grew older she became known as



Aysenine "Granny Ayse" and she was greatly loved by those who knew her. All of her life was spent in the Kaya valley until about five years ago when infirmity dictated that she move from her tumbledown house to the care of her family in Izmir. When she married she moved from one area of this small valley to another and knew little of the world outside. Hers was the life of a village smallholder, working to provide for her family and herself. Some would say she led an unremarkable life of little note or consequence and yet her face has featured in a book that records "Fethiye Faces and Places" by Turkish photographer Faruk Akbas, poems have been inspired by her words and two renowned authors, Jeremy Seal (in *Santa; A Life*) and Louis de Bernieres (in *Birds Without Wings*) have written about her and her life and you might ask why. (de Bernieres is presently work-

ing on a screenplay for "*Birds Without Wings*")

Ayse lived through and dealt with the consequences of David Lloyd George's arrogance and perfidy; she was about seventeen years old when the exchange of populations took place. When asked of her memory of those awful times, when friends and neighbours were torn apart, she responded "The cats were crying." There were some 500 houses in what is now known as Kaya village, formerly Levissi, which remain empty to this

day, and it's probable that hundreds of cats in need of food were left behind. Ayse kept in trust the wedding chest of her Greek childhood friend Maria in the belief that one day they would be reunited and it could be returned. Her integrity, honesty and trust, her faith in her fellow human beings are in direct contrast to the murderous contempt for the lives of others that is the legacy of Lloyd George.

Those who knew Granny Ayse remember her golden personality and sparkling wit that made her a pleasure to be around. Popular history through photos, poems, books and films will record her real greatness as a starring member of the human race; someone who contributed to the well of human kindness and left the world a better place for having lived. David Lloyd George on the other hand is remembered as a cunning bombast with the blood of thousands on his hands, a failure who contributed nothing of value. He may feature in the "official" histories bathing in perceived greatness but Ayse lives on in the hearts and memories of so many because she contributed so much and represented the true nature of humanity.

Newspeak

Seldom do "histories" reflect reality; in the US there lives a species known as Political Historian whose job it is to address the problems that actual recorded facts cause to the established ruling elite. No doubt they thrive in most other nation states in one guise or another drip-feeding us and our kids via schools and the media with their perceived version of reality. NEWSPEAK is alive and well all over the world. As memories of recent events fade the Political Historians will wave their wands and Bush and Blair et al will transmogrify into great leaders who saved civilisation yet again from the barbarians. Records go missing, new facts are added and repeated over and over in the spirit of Dr Goebbels and the Ministry of Truth.

As socialists we understand only too well the power of oft repeated misinformation in the minds of many people; when people understand the real nature of our philosophy as opposed to their perceived notions drip-fed to them via the establishment then the system will come crashing. Our task is to keep our own candle burning and to "make socialists" whenever and wherever we can. The values of Ayse of Kaya sustained her as she waited for the return of her friend; the values and integrity of our World Socialist Movement sustain each of us as we battle the legacy of David Lloyd George, the Establishment and the spin of the Political Historians.

ALAN FENN



The Greek Prime Minister, Venizelos, c.1920

It's election time again

The Socialist Party will be standing in the elections to the European Parliament on 4 June. These elections will be held under a system of proportional representation and the whole of Greater London will be a single constituency. We will be presenting a full list of 8 candidates. There are over 5 million electors in London. Which will be the largest number of workers up to now who will be faced with possibility of voting for world socialism. Below is the socialist manifesto on which our candidates will be standing.

Every few years groups of professional politicians compete for your vote to win themselves a comfortable position, this time in the European Parliament. All of the other parties and candidates offer only minor changes to the present system. That is why whichever candidate or party wins there is no significant change to the way things are. Promises are made and broken, targets are set and not reached, statistics are selected and spun.

All politicians assume that capitalism is the only game in town, although they may criticise features of its unacceptable face, such as greedy bankers, or the worst of its excesses, such as unwinnable wars. They defend a society in which we, the majority of the population, must sell our capacity to work to the tiny handful who own most of the wealth. They defend a society in which jobs are offered only if there is a profit to be made.

Real socialism

The Socialist Party urges a truly democratic society in which people take all the decisions that affect them. This means a society without rich and poor, without owners and workers, without governments and governed, a society without leaders and led.

In such a society people would cooperate to use all the world's natural and industrial resources in their own interests. They would free production from the artificial restraint of profit and establish a system of society in which each person has free access to the benefits of civilisation. Socialist society would consequently mean the end of buying, selling and exchange, an end

to borders and frontiers, an end to organised violence and coercion, waste, want and war.

What you can do

You can vote for candidates who will work within the capitalist system and help keep it going. Or you can use your vote to show you want to overturn it and end the problems it causes once and for all.

When enough of us join together, determined to end inequality and deprivation, we can transform elections into a means of doing away with a society of minority rule in favour of a society of real democracy and social equality.

If you agree with the idea of a society of common and democratic ownership where no one is left behind and things are produced because they are needed, and not to make a profit for some capitalist corporation, and are prepared to join with us to achieve this then vote for the SOCIALIST PARTY list.

The election will of course be taken place outside London too, in fact in most of Europe. To take account of this, our manifesto will be translated into German, French, Spanish, Italian and Swedish and distributed by socialists there as well as being published on the website of the World Socialist Movement at www.worldsocialism.org. In the rest of Britain, and in Ireland, the following leaflet will be distributed.

Flying pigs and the Euro elections

You might have heard of the Euro elections, the biggest in history, 500 million people, 27 countries, June 4th? You're supposed to choose which of your local crème-de-la-crème get to go on

free holidays to Brussels and Strasbourg, and the powers that be are a bit worried that you won't take it seriously enough to bother voting. Shame on you!

Just to show how desperately important all this is, here's a few ways in which the European Parliament has recently changed your life enormously:

- working time directives limiting your weekly hours to 48 (but don't worry, the UK government opted out of that one pretty smartly).

- all-inclusive air-fare prices (for those of you frequently travelling to Brussels and Strasbourg...).

- REACH directive on industrial chemical use.

- roaming mobile phone directives (for those of you frequently travelling to Brussels and Strasbourg...).

Alright, not very Earth-shaking, admittedly. If you're struggling to make ends meet on benefits, or facing redundancy or any of the hundred problems workers are always having, these are probably not the issues that will drag you out to the polling booth.

The fact is, the whole Euro show is not really designed to do anything for YOU, it's just designed to stop the big Ruling Piggies from going to war with each other, like they did in the two World Wars. Though it's a good idea to avoid wars, since it's always workers who end up suffering, it's really the expense that bothers them, not your welfare. If they make the Euro-trough big enough, goes the thinking, they can all shove in their snouts without getting in each other's way. It's all about the money, surprise surprise. While money and capitalism exist, it always will be.

You might think, especially with this

economic depression, that capitalism does nothing but make a slave out of you, and that it's only the rich that benefit. If your local candidates are not saying this, why bother voting for them? Well, better to make a statement than stay silent. All you have to do is write something rude across your ballot paper, or if you prefer, 'Abolish money and capitalism' or 'World Socialism, common ownership and democratic control', if it'll fit. A vote's always worth using, even when there's nobody worth voting for.

And when you've done that, go and find some like-minded people at www.worldsocialism.org.

MEETINGS

Speakers Corner, Marble arch, Hyde Park. Every Sunday from 10am. Speakers:

Danny Lambert, Bill Martin, Adam Buick.

Sunday 17 May, 6pm

YOUR CHANCE TO VOTE FOR WORLD SOCIALISM

Speakers: Danny Lambert, Tristan Miller

Socialist Party Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 (nearest tube: Clapham North).

Tuesday 19 May, 8pm

YOUR CHANCE TO VOTE FOR WORLD SOCIALISM

Speakers: Simon Wigley, Adam Buick

Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W3 (nearest tube: Chiswick Park).

Saturday 30 May, from 10 am onwards

OPEN DAY AND BOOK SALE

A chance to meet socialists and discuss socialist ideas and to see how we are organised and what we do.

At 52 Clapham High Street, SW4.

Summer School 2009 Revolution

The Socialist Party of Great Britain advocates a democratic, classless society without money, leaders and private ownership of the means of production. To reach this new society, nothing short of a complete change to our social institutions is needed: a revolution. However, the SPGB doesn't aim to lead us there – a socialist revolution could only happen if the vast majority wants it and works towards it.

But what is a revolution? An event? A process? A mindset? Have there ever been any revolutions which have close similarities to what a socialist revolution could be? How does the SPGB's view of revolution differ from that of other organisations? Has the current state of society pushed us further towards or away from revolution?

This year's Summer School weekend of talks and discussion will tackle the theme of revolution – a central aspect of socialist theory which also remains elusive.

Our venue, Harborne Hall conference and training centre, is within easy reach of Birmingham city centre, the M5 and the M42. Full directions will be sent with each booking.

Residential attendance (£140) includes accommodation and all meals Friday evening until Sunday afternoon. Non-residential attendance (£55) includes lunch on Saturday and Sunday. Half-price rates are available to concessions.

To confirm your booking, send a cheque for £10 (made out to the Socialist Party of Great Britain), with your contact details and whether you are booking residential or non-residential attendance, to flat 2, 24 Tedstone Road, Quinton, Birmingham, B32 2PD. Enquiries to Mike at spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk



Capitalism, but not as they know it

Eric Hobsbawm and Amartya Sen have both written interesting stuff. Hobsbawm on the history of capitalism in Britain and Sen on how famines are not caused by a shortage of food but by the collapse of some people's legal entitlement to it. But their comments on the current crisis are confused.

In an article in the *New York Review of Books* (www.nybooks.com/articles/22490), reprinted in the *Guardian* (14 March), entitled "Capitalism Beyond the Crisis", Sen questions "whether capitalism is a term that is of particular use today", arguing:

"It seems to be generally assumed that relying on markets for economic transactions is a necessary condition for an economy to be identified as capitalist. In a similar way, dependence on the profit motive and on individual rewards based on private ownership are seen as archetypal features of capitalism. However, if these are necessary requirements, are the economic systems we currently have, for example, in Europe and America, genuinely capitalist?"

Citing increased state funding over the years of the armed forces, the police, health and education as examples of non-market, non-profit economic activities, he concludes: "the idea of capitalism did in fact have an important role historically, but by now that usefulness may well be fairly exhausted".

The market and profits certainly are central to capitalism, and state spending certainly has increased compared with some past periods, but is state spending really non-capitalist or is it not rather part of the necessary overheads of running capitalism? Capitalism and the state have always co-existed. In fact the state helped capitalism come into existence and expand and is needed to maintain it today. State spending on armed and police forces is patently aimed at serving capitalist interests at home and abroad. State spending on education and health is essentially aimed at providing employers with a fit and trained workforce and so too is pro-capitalist.

Hobsbawm also thinks we should be looking towards a society that is neither capitalist nor socialist, as in the title – "Socialism has failed. Now capitalism is bankrupt. So what comes next?" – of a recent article of his in the *Guardian* (10 April) brings out. But his definition of capitalism is as wrong as his definition of socialism. He contrasts "the centrally state-planned economics of the Soviet type and the totally unrestricted and uncontrolled free-market capitalist economy".

Arguments can go on about whether Russia was some form of capitalism or some new exploitative class society, but it was clearly not a classless society based on the common ownership and democratic control of productive resources with production directly to meet human needs and not for sale on a market, i.e. not socialism.

The case for saying that it was still a form of capitalism – best described as state capitalism – is that wealth there still took the form of "an immense accumulation of commodities" as articles for sale, produced by a class of people obliged to sell their working skills for a wage or a salary on whose unpaid labour a privileged class lived.

As an historian of capitalism Hobsbawm must know that, if defined as a "totally unrestricted and uncontrolled free-market" economy, "capitalism" has never existed because there never has been a time when market forces alone have exclusively determined how an economy has worked. States have always intervened to try to distort the market in favour of particular capitalist groups as well as to engage in the activities Sen mentions.

As class ownership, production for sale with a view to a profit, wage labour and surplus value still exist – as they patently do, whatever the degree of state activity – "capitalism" is the best term for describing the existing economic and social system.



Why are high house prices and high profits considered good news?

Whose news?

We are all used to hearing from the TV or radio that what we are about to experience is the 'news'. Proceeded by a little tune supposed to promote gravitas and/or imply the very latest fast technological process of newsgathering we are presented with a sober middle-class gent or couple sporting sensible hair, grey suits and dazzling white smiles. A stranger to our culture may be very surprised that whichever channel is chosen the content of the news is almost identical. Indeed the choice of headlines is nearly always the same; a little odd considering that in this country we have over 100 digital channels! What can be the reason for such a strange phenomena? Could it be that there is total unanimity concerning what is important in human behaviour (this would be the only example of such total agreement within our species) or is there some agenda shared by those who own and operate our media?

It would be fair to say that the mainstream media in this country (TV, radio and newspapers) are owned by a tiny minority. Socialists have always maintained that the media's obsessions reflect those of the ruling class who own them. The fact that high house prices and high profits are considered good news when it is the majority who are exploited even more as a result gives you an idea of the values shared by the owners of the media. The main disagreements (at least within the newspapers) concern the different commercial interests within the owning class – the dreary and unending European Union debate being an obvious example.

Another element that is thought to contribute to the 'news' is topicality – the story should reflect a perspective on a contemporary value or popular obsession. For our general readers it is obviously important that our analysis should begin with a reflection on contemporary events. However part of that analysis for us is a proof of the illusion of novelty/topicality of events within the anachronistic culture of capitalism.

A friend of mine has recently given up his subscription to a newspaper on the grounds that it merely repeats the same old propaganda values whatever the story. This is the essence of 'the news' in today's media. It seeks only to find different stories to 'prove' its own value system. The 'credit crunch' is either the result of greedy bankers or lack of government supervision of the financial services. It could never be a proof of the instability and irrational nature of capitalism itself.

There arises an inevitable contradiction within journalism between the observation of change and its

reporting when restricted by the use of reactionary values and language. It is the nature of language to struggle to find new concepts and

metaphors to describe the changing world we live in. When change is accelerated during a revolutionary period this tension can create linguistic confusion and creativity (Christopher Hill's book *The World Turned Upside Down* illustrates this wonderfully using examples from the English Revolution).

It is important to emphasise that propaganda is not always consciously produced by a conspiracy of journalists and press barons. I remember Michael Parkinson saying that he never experienced owner/editorial interference during his journalistic career. This, of course, merely emphasises the care taken to employ only political 'fellow travellers' rather than proof of the non-propagandist nature of the media. Within the commercial media the usual worker and owner tension can destroy real journalism under the profit and propaganda imperatives of our authoritarian culture.

What is really corrosive to good journalism is to be completely unaware of the political bias that is inherent in any interpretation of events (the news). Of course this is to give the benefit of the doubt to journalists and not to accuse them of downright lies. My father once found himself, in his role as a union shop steward, in the centre of a local news story. After an interview he gave to a journalist he was outraged by what was subsequently printed. This was, in part, testament to his political naivety but it also emphasises that what is printed must fit within the propaganda value of 'the story' even if this necessitates downright lies.

What would qualify as news for a future socialist media? Of course when we are in a position to produce stories for the mass media the world will begin to be a very different place. Reporting will surely emphasise the relationship between the rising political awareness of the population and the activities this provokes. Presumably what remains of the present media will portray the changing political landscape as a disaster for the world and everyone in it. A socialist media will initially have to counter this increasingly hysterical propaganda. Then the production of a forum for debate will become ever more important as the need for information to make democratic decisions becomes vital.

As the need to counter reactionary propaganda recedes then the media will transform itself into a vehicle of information and entertainment. Because the need for 'escapist' entertainment will also recede I suspect a different, possibly more 'mature' kind of fiction will replace it. I hope to live to see a world where fictional characters deal with important political dilemmas rather than personal and romantic ones. And what of sports? I hear the reader say fearfully. Perhaps, at last, competition between those who wish to compete will be confined to the sports arena where they belong. By this time your writer will be enjoying a cricket game in Jamaica in his role as your Caribbean sports reporter (editors permitting).

WEZ

How I got to be a socialist

"I could hardly fail to notice that all was not well with the world of the mid-seventies".

All of a sudden, it hits you. Overnight you go from saying "Yes, it all sounds very nice, but we're all too greedy. What would happen if everybody wanted three televisions?" to realizing that there's just no other way to sort out the world's problems.

I don't know how common it is to catch socialism from your father but that's what happened in my case.

When younger my father had been a member of the British Communist Party. Generally, he seems to have kept his political activities low-key (the only controversy I know about is when, shortly after he had married a catholic girl from Italy, the local priest apparently created a bit of a fuss when, on a house visit, he found a CP newspaper lying around).

But he evidently became disillusioned with the CP. Certainly while I was growing up I only remember him voting Labour. Then, in the 70s, he started buying the *Socialist Standard* and joined the Socialist Party not long after. He got a few other people interested and soon they had formed the West Yorkshire branch. I was back home temporarily after studying and working in London and he used to keep the latest *Socialist Standard* in prominent view somewhere around the house. I later discovered that this had been with the express intention of getting me interested. I did read it at times but I thought it was all rubbish. What particularly annoyed me was his parting shots at the end of seemingly every news bulletin, "It wouldn't be like that if we had socialism".

I wasn't remotely interested in politics. In the late sixties, as a student, I had totally failed to understand what all the unrest was about. I couldn't see that the students had the answer to anything. During the recession of the early seventies, some of my friends talked about an impending apocalypse – things were going to get much worse – so, I thought, if we're all going to die then fine. I'll take some tins of food and hide somewhere.

But I could hardly fail to notice that all was not well with the world of the mid-seventies. And what with hearing my father talking to his socialist friends, and running out of answers to the things they said to



Socialists: SPGB's first conference, 1905

me, and surreptitiously reading more and more of the *Standard*, suddenly socialism all started to make sense and I was hooked.

This happened the same year I started to work for a large multinational company. Before, I would have dreaded the thought of this. I had read a book by Marcuse about technology and society, which contributed to my growing dread of the modern world, but socialism provided me with the perfect context for it all, a way of seeing through the madness. I now knew what these large organizations were about and they no longer scared me.

I joined the Socialist Party and started going to branch meetings; far from being a publication of the lunatic fringe, the *Socialist Standard* became my monthly dose of sanity.

I stayed with the same company, in IT, for 28 years, doing a more or less 9 to 5 job, and every few years surviving the inevitable re-organisation and accompanying job cuts. By the time I finished, the structure of the IT department was back more or less to what it had been like when I started, only with about a quarter of the people. I think it would all have been too horrifying without the large pinch of salt that my membership of the socialist movement provided. I actually enjoyed the job most of the time – but it was always with the constant thinking against the grain, the

knowledge that the world could be so much better, that socialism provides.

Why don't more people become socialists?

Unfortunately, thoughts of building a world that is radically different don't feature much on people's agenda. Capitalism always throws other imperatives at them and there's always another day to get through. I think I was lucky in that at the time I started to think about socialism, I was "between jobs", single and without any particular commitments. And for all that they may bewail their lot and want to see something done about the injustices in the world, people feel uncomfortable if anything threatens to disrupt their everyday routines and thought processes. It's easier to complain than to be constructive. It's also quite a jolt to be told that we can scrap money, employment and governments. People think they are going to "lose all they've worked for", to go back to a more primitive, barter-like existence. And unless world leaders and celebrities get behind some cause or other, it's not regarded as important.

But once you see that socialism is the only sensible way forward, no other view of the world makes sense. For all that socialists might despair from time to time of ever getting there – just ask – what's the alternative?

ROD SHAW

Crassness

An educational dialogue explaining the workings of modern capitalism and rebellion, based on genuine events.

Scene: An alternative bar in North London. Cool movie posters plaster the walls. Electronic music pumps out unusually quiet from speakers – it is a week day evening.

Enter Pik Smeet, wearing broad brimmed hat, trying to look like a Puritan. He approaches the bar, buys a bottle of cider, and sits at his chair of many years usage. After him, come two middle-aged male punks, spikey haired, leather-clad with tattoos and chains strewn around their bodies – back from smoking outside. They sit around the corner of the bar from Comrade Smeet.

Punk 1: ...So, my boss says, when you've got all the money in, that's it, you can go home.

Punk 2: Gah! Like I need another reason to hate you – easy street.

Punk 1: Yeah, I hate me too.

We own market places all over London. Go round, collect the cash, nice little job.

Punk 2: Bet you get a stack of griping from all the stallholders.

Punk 1: That's why I don't hang around after I've picked up the rent.

Punk 2: Too right. You have many places?

Punk 1: Yeah, Camden, Oxford Street, Piccadilly Circus. All over the joint. Going to be more now, we've just bought out a former Woolworths store, now they've collapsed.

Punk 2: Oh, really, what you going to do with that?

Punk 1: Well, unless a big firm comes along and makes us an offer, we're gonna turn it into small units.

You make more money breaking big stores up into units, see. Could get you a place if you fancy one.

Punk 2: Well, I'm only interested as a customer.

Punk 1: Ah, well, then, you'll like our night clubs. They're good money too – we have a chain of clubs, you know the ones, one near Farringdon.

Punk 2: Oh, them – the strip places?

Punk 1: Well, call them night clubs, but, basically, well, they're brothels. Then, that's where the money is.

Punk 2: Yeah – you should try working in making porn films, I make good money shooting them.

Punk 1: Well, I used to, but I got out because the money isn't there any more. And, y'know, that's why you do it, I mean, it's fun, you get to travel the world, but the bottom line is the money. If you're not making any, there's no point doing it.

Punk 2: You reckon?

Punk 1: Yeah. You see, America – yer biggest market, y'know, they won't allow you to import films any more. And you can't get a visa to enter the states and shoot the films. That's it, no point being in the game any more.

Punk 2: Well, I still make good money – hand over fist – I think you should have stuck with it, mate, it's a good

game – so long as it's not the only thing you can do.

Punk 1: That reminds me – one girl, we were driving her round London, showing her some sites, got to Trafalgar square, I said "And that's Nelson's column" she said to me "Who?" I mean, totally dumb – nothing else she could do than be in the business.

Punk 2: Was she English?

Punk 1: Perfectly, girl next door. The quality product, not one of your Eastern European girls.

Punk

2: Ooh, the very thing. Mind you, when

I was living above the brothel your English birds would last until lunchtime, and when there wasn't plenty of food forthcoming, they'd be off out the door. Least the eastern birds have to hang around.

Punk 1: On our shoots we'd have about four hundred quid a week to just send out to Sainsbury's for food. We were a big crew, so, you know, we'd all need feeding.

Twelve hours a day we were doing – a laugh. I know, half hour bursts of work, but we were there for the whole long day. Great fun.

Punk 2: Have you tried flogging your stuff over the internet?

Punk 1: That's just it – who wants to pay forty quid for hardcore pornography when you can download stacks of it for virtually nothing.

Punk 2: Well, you get to control your own business, from beginning to end – production and distribution – everything except the credit card payments – you need someone else to do that –

Punk 1: Usually from Russia.

Punk 2: You have to be careful with them, but, yes, the Russians can help you with the financial side of things.

Punk 1: Y' See, I mean, the technology is out there, anyone can make porn – and it's the home-made look, with the girl next door, that really draws in the punters.

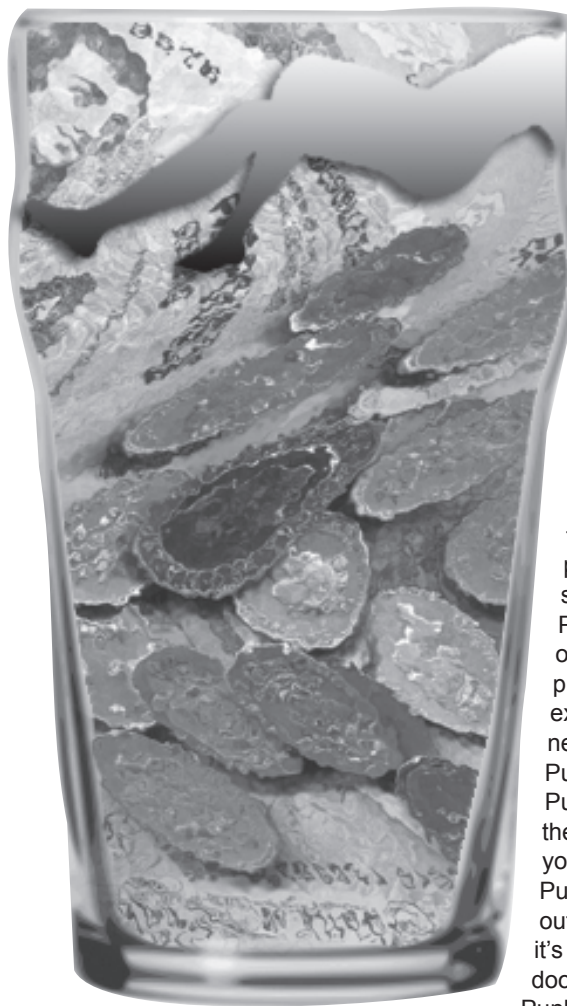
Punk 2: That's what we're good at doing – your punters want realistic-looking sex, and

we do home-made look quite well. It's a skill to achieve that look. That's what we bring – technology is cheapening the production process, but we still add value through our skills.

Punk 1: Well, the value we add gets less all the time, I reckon I'm better off collecting the rent. Right, next fag.

Punk 1 stands up, on his shirt is sewn a badge with a picture of Karl Marx, over his heart. He pulls on his studded leather jacket, and goes out for a smoke.

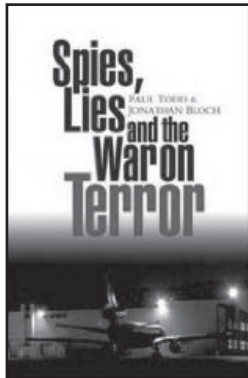
Smeet (to himself): Well, that's punk for you, rebellion within capitalism – non-conformity can be highly profitable. Reckon I'll go home and write all this down – a little morality play full of symbolic resonances and the like.



Watching over us

Spies, Lies and the War on Terror.

By Paul Todd, Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald: Zed Books £14.99.



The 'Cold War' has been replaced by the 'War on Terror' as a means of defending the interests of Western capitalism. The identification of a new enemy has paralleled an enormous increase in

the amount of snooping that goes on, with governments spying ever more closely on their own citizens. These are the kinds of developments chronicled in this volume.

For the United States in particular, the gathering of intelligence has come to serve the purpose of pre-emptive war, aimed at stopping any perceived threat to the power of the capitalist class before it can be put into action. This may involve 'creative destruction' in the Middle East (a term coined by an American neo-con, not by the authors). The idea of a US military presence in the Middle East became a long-term goal, eventually realised in Iraq. In fact, intelligence is sometimes massaged (as with Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons of mass destruction) or deliberately ignored. Consequently much US policy backfires, as when Iran has benefited from the elimination of regional rivals (the Taliban in Afghanistan, and Saddam).

At the same time, and as state and corporate intelligence functions increasingly merge, domestic spying is becoming more and more pervasive. The National Security Agency in the US, for instance, has been monitoring all phone calls made to overseas, and the president has powers to authorise surveillance without a warrant. Sometimes the information recorded is laughable, with Quaker meetings logged as 'suspicious incidents', but the spread of government intrusion into people's lives is no laughing matter.

Similar developments have been taking place in the UK, with increased powers for the police and much so-called anti-terrorist legislation. There have been arrests of people (as in a supposed bomb plot

in Manchester in 2004 and one in East London in 2006), accompanied by lurid press speculation and much disinformation from police sources; in neither case was any evidence found, and the arrested were released without charge. Lengthy detention was introduced for those who had not done anything, just supposedly threatened to undertake some action designed to advance a political cause.

The War on Terror, then, not only results in killings on a massive scale in Iraq, Afghanistan and so on, in the interests of Western, specifically American, power. It also leads to the creation and expansion of databases containing enormous amounts of information on people, information that we cannot access, let alone challenge, even if we know it's there. This book gives a detailed and frightening account of how and why this is happening.

PB

History matters

Why History Matters by John Tosh, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008



At the completion of the invasion of Iraq in July 2003, British Prime Minister Tony Blair gave a speech to the US Congress in which he declared:

"There has never been a time ... when, except in the most general sense, a study of history provides so little instruction for our present day" (Quoted by Tosh, p.5). Gordon Brown, with a Ph.D in history and current Prime Minister, supported that invasion.

Blair was probably speaking out of ignorance rather than deceit, for that was not the first time British military forces had invaded Iraq. In 1914 Britain acted alone in invading Iraq (then called Mesopotamia) to drive out the Ottoman Turks. Britain then administered Iraq as a Mandate of the League of Nations until 1934, and remained in a position of informal influence until the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown in 1958. Strategic interests were the initial motivation for the invasion,

but important oil reserves were known to exist. As Marian Kent's study of this period shows, "by 1920 Mesopotamian oil ... had come to occupy a major place in British military and diplomatic concerns in the Middle East" (*Oil and Empire: British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil, 1900-1920*, 1976. Quoted by Tosh, p.2). History matters.

Politicians are often ill-informed, but Alan Greenspan, the long-time head of the US central bank, admitted that the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq was really aimed at protecting Middle East oil reserves. "I thought the issue of weapons of mass destruction as the excuse was utterly beside the point", he said (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,2170602,00.html>). How are we to explain these events? What processes are involved and what is a proper historical perspective? For John Tosh, a professional historian, "public history" matters because it can provide the basis for informed and critical understanding of the present. But there is no place for causation in this understanding of history: the invasions of Iraq in 1914 and 2003 were wars for oil, as Tosh would probably agree, but for him the causes were unique and all we can learn from history is their similarities and differences: there is no underlying structural cause. This is an unconvincing and inadequate theory of history given the regular occurrence of wars and other social problems thrown up by capitalism. History matters more than that.

Socialists have a materialist conception of history in which we view the past in the context of the development of the forces of production (productive technology) and relations of production (economic classes), and analyse social development to better understand the present and possible futures. The state and its machinery of government have historically favoured the interests of the economically dominant class - presently the capitalist class. It is in their interests that wars have been prosecuted in Iraq for oil, or for their strategic interests as in Afghanistan. This follows a regular pattern in capitalism, and using a materialist historical perspective we can see the capitalist process at work and predict that as long as we have capitalism we will have wars. We cannot predict where and when, but they will happen: the forces and classes driving history will always make them likely, and since the end of the Second World War there has always

been a war being fought somewhere in the world. An understanding of the materialist conception of history would provide a rational motivation for revolutionary political action by us, the subordinate class in society, to end capitalism as the cause of war in the modern world. History matters because your life may depend on it.

LEW

Too late?

Too Little, Too Late. The Politics of Climate Change. By Colin Challen. Picnic. 2009. £9.99.



It's not going to happen. CO₂ emissions are not going to peak by 2015 which, according to some scientists, will mean that the average world temperature

will rise by more than 2°C by the end of the century. *Will rise?* Actually, what the scientists say is that, according to the assumptions of their computer models, there is a high probability that this will happen. It is not a definite prediction. It is only amateur environmentalist campaigners who say that it will happen and that the end of the world is just about nigh.

The fact is that we don't really know. We don't know how realistic the scientists' models really are and we don't know what other, relevant events might happen between now and 2100, including what people and governments might do. To influence governments to do something is of course why campaigners sometimes exaggerate the dangers. They may well sincerely believe their own exaggerations.

If you really believe that civilization will collapse in 2100 as a consequence of the effects of global warming, then it's logical for you to see this as the only issue worth campaigning on. You will be led, like James Lovelock, author of the Gaia hypothesis, to embrace nuclear power despite its dangers as the main alternative source to burning fossil fuels for generating electricity. Or, like the author of this book, Colin Challen, Labour MP for Morley and Rothwell and chairman of the All Party Climate Change group,

to envisage a coalition government and a committee presided over by the monarch – King Charles III? – to deal with the issue. You will certainly tell us – as we were told by CND in the 1960s – that we can't wait for socialism as this won't come in time, so that we should suspend campaigning for socialism in favour of campaigning on the single issue of climate change.

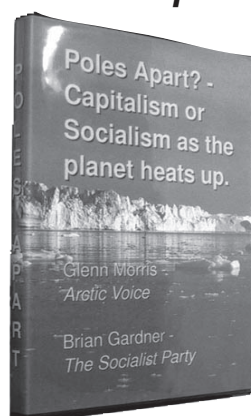
But this is to assume that this could be avoided without getting rid of capitalism. Challen himself provides grounds for seriously doubting this: that, in intergovernmental negotiations, "trade always trumps conservation" (p. 71) and that competition impedes agreement ("Nobody wants to see their economy damaged by another's which itself does not face the extra costs of reducing greenhouse gas emissions", p. 93).

Which is why he himself is rather pessimistic about the prospects of CO₂ emissions peaking by 2015. But even on the worst scenario – rising sea levels, displacement of populations, shifts in the balance of geopolitics – only socialism would provide the framework for dealing with the problems.

ALB

NEW DVD

Poles Apart? Capitalism or Socialism as the planet heats up



with contributions from Glenn Morris, Arctic Voice, and Brian Gardner, The Socialist Party.

Recorded digitally at Conway Hall, London, 2008.

£5.00 per copy + £1.25 P & P. Send to the Audio-Visual Department, c/o Head Office and allow up to 21 days for dispatch.

Meetings

Capitalism in Crisis: A May Day School for Socialism

Saturday 2 May 10.30am till 6.00pm
The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street SW4 7UN Tube: Clapham North

IS THE PROFIT SYSTEM WORKING?

1. Capitalism & Economics - Brian Gardner (Glasgow Socialist Party)
 2. Capitalism, Resources and the Environment - Gwynn Thomas (South London Socialist Party)
 3. Capitalism & Society - Simon Wigley
- Food and Refreshments will be available.
The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street SW4 Tube: Clapham North.

Details of London European Election campaign meetings can be found on page 16.

East Anglia

Sunday 3 May, 12 noon to 4pm
BRANCH MEETING
Reindeer Pub, 10 Dereham Road.
Norwich NR2 4RY

Saturday 30 May, 2 - 5pm
"What are the similarities and differences between the Socialist Party and Anarchist positions?"
Public Debate between the Anarchist Federation and the Socialist Party:
Room 1.33 Union House University of East Anglia.

Glasgow

Day School, Saturday 9 May 1pm to 5pm
FAT CAT BANKERS LINE UP FOR HANDOUTS
FAT CHANCE FOR WORKERS
1 pm The Year of Economic Crisis (Brian Gardner)
2.15 The Environment in Meltdown (John Cumming)
3.45 Can Socialism Solve the Problems? (Paul Bennett)
Community Central Halls, 304 Marhill Road (5 minutes from St. George's Cross underground station).

Edinburgh

Wednesday 27, May, 7.30 pm
Free Access Now - Is it possible?
Venue: ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh.

SOCIALISM OR YOUR MONEY BACK

The capitalist century, by a socialist journal. A running commentary of one hundred years of history - as it happened.

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Lothians Discussion Group

(under the auspices of the Socialist Party's Edinburgh Branch)
Venue: ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh
Every 4th Wednesday of the Month
Time: 7.30pm-9.00pm
Contact:
Fraser Anderson: Fraser@prolerat.org
Jimmy Moir: jimmy@prolerat.org

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New Pamphlet

*An Inconvenient Question:
Socialism and the Environment*



see order form on page 9 for details

Socialist Standard

Bound volumes (2005-2007) for £25 plus postage, each, order from HO, cheques payable to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain"

Turmoil in Tibet



THE REBELLION in Tibet, its draconian suppression, and the escape of the Dalai Lama, have exploded like a star-shell to illuminate a world in the Iron Curtain's dark shadow. Events in Tibet have been compared with the recent suppression in Hungary and while there is a resemblance, both revolts and the backgrounds have been reported everywhere befogged with misunderstanding or misrepresentation by people who do not seem to have a clue as to what the factors are that make society tick.(...)

Most of the 4,500,000 Tibetans actually live within the confines of China in the areas bordering on Tibet. Only about 1,000,000 live in Tibet proper, under political allegiance to Lhasa. Their social classification is roughly: 50,000 nobles and merchants, 150,000 monks, 800,000 serfs. About one-seventh of the population is in the monasteries—more than one man in four. Those who

are not in the church have mostly swallowed the religious bait, hook, line and sinker, and live in subjection to the nobles. They live, imprisoned by the ties of these religious convictions. (...)

The trouble in Tibet is a revolt of the feudal rulers against the imposed rule of State-Capitalist China—these are the transgressors in Tibet. Whichever side wins, the underprivileged on either side will still continue to be exploited, even though serfs become wage-slaves. Tibet compares with Hungary in that, once again, it is a quarrel between ruling-cliques and is not worth the shedding of one drop of workers' blood on either side.

(From article by F. Offord, *Socialist Standard*, May 1959)

Declaration of Principles

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

Object

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

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

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

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

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

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

4.That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom,

the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

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

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

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

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



Bloggers at loggerheads

Advice for anyone who assess themselves as alluringly qualified to rescue the world from a deadly combination of economic disintegration and ecological catastrophe: pay heed to the example of Gordon Brown. Divesting himself of his rumoured persona of brooding neurosis occasionally relieved in volcanic tirades, the Prime Minister genially hosted the recent London G20 conference, promoted as a mechanism to flush out and eliminate every threat to the world's harmony and health. As the assembled world leaders, deaf to the clamouring protesters outside – and to the thwack of police batons on their bodies – steamrolled on, smilingly massaging each others' shoulders and self-esteem, Brown blossomed like an unusually poisonous nightshade. Around the world which the conference was supposed to have as its concern, banks and industries were choking almost to death and millions of workers were being ejected into poverty deep enough to be immediately life-threatening; meanwhile Brown went about the business of bolstering his appeal to remain as the occupant of Number Ten, strutting his fantastic stuff as the new Saviour of the World. Whether this act was effective to the extent of being sufficiently deceptive to the British electorate will be clear come the next election.

But meanwhile...

We were told that G20 would be a seminal gathering, in the sense that its terms of reference were to design a cleaner, safer world in control of its economy and its environment. As a side line its timing was clearly fortunate for Gordon Brown but his luck is not in for whatever euphoria G20 may have encouraged among Labour supporters it would have been immediately damaged by the emergence of real politics as represented by the murky strategies of governmental "advisers" Damian McBride and Derek Draper. These two set out to damage the Tory leadership through publicising some salacious allegations about them and their families. This is known as "briefing" against – another example of New Labour's distortion of the lexicon, which defines briefing as a process of summarising a clutch of complex facts into an easily assimilated and presentable form. Far from embarrassing the Tories this provoked a mass panic among the Labour benches, as one minister after another rushed to assure us that they had also been victims of such smears which, as every right-thinking person knows, should have no place in politics: "vile, horrible and despicable" raged Ed Balls – who once worked closely with McBride when they were at the Treasury with Brown as Chancellor – "we all need to work to raise standards and to stamp this out". This may have been unwelcome to McBride, who has been paid a lot of money over almost ten years to do just this kind of "work".

Draper

A similar confusion may be affecting Draper, who was abandoned to his fate by the very people in the Labour Party who until recently might have been seen as his stalwart

friends. A "special adviser" to Peter Mandelson in the early days of the Blair government, Draper's naiveté and self-regard were to cost him dear when, in 2001, he boasted to an undercover reporter that, as an intimate of the "17 people who mattered" in the government he could be trusted to arrange rewarding meetings with them. This episode revealed him to be vulnerable as well as unusually conceited; a nervous breakdown preceded him fleeing to America to train as a psychotherapist. He came back here in 2004 to set up in what is described as a "successful" psychotherapy practice (it is to be hoped that that is the opinion of his patients and not just another example of his tendency for over-positive self-assessment). Impressed, and perhaps not a little envious, of the progress up the greasy pole of some of the people – like David Miliband and Liam Byrne – he had once been on a level with, he scraped his way back into Labour politics. An invitation to lunch at Chequers last November must have convinced him that he was on his way back and earlier this year he set up the web site LabourList, with plans to open another, to be called Red Rag, to compete with the scandal aimed at Labour leaders by the Tory blog ConservativeHome. This progress – if that is what it was – came to an abrupt halt with the exposure of the e-mails between Draper and McBride.

Anger

The distasteful episode has raised a lot of anger among grass roots Labour supporters, some of whom responded to Draper's apology on LabourList: "What you have done is outrageous and disgusting, and no apology is enough" and another "You complete half-wits. Yet another weekend spent with one's head in one's hands every time the news comes on". But such people are of too humble a standing to be treated with anything other than contempt by the likes of Draper and McBride, who were more readily impressed when they were disowned by the party leaders insisting that LabourList had nothing to do with the party and that Draper was used as only a part-time volunteer – and then by Gordon Brown raging that "When I saw this first I was horrified. I was shocked and I was very angry indeed. The person who was responsible went immediately".

Such emergencies need to be understood. Those who have been immunised by experience against the conceits and fantasies of political leaders recognise that the rulers of class society can have no effect on the system which, they deceive themselves, is open to their manipulation. That is the only useful assessment of their behaviour and of their relationship with us.

IVAN



Draper, McBride & Brown



A Defender Of Capitalism

It is well known that journalists defending capitalism often make a fool of themselves. It is even better known that *Daily Mail* journalists are particularly foolish in that regard. Here is one – Andrew Alexander proving that point. “We are witnessing the death of capitalism, according to various excitable commentators, some alarmed and some drooling at the prospect. Neither need get worked up. Capitalism will survive. And it will do so because it is natural – not, as some claim, an alien system imposed on gullible people” (*Daily Mail*, 11 March). Alexander then goes on to use the hoary, old fairy tale about a shipwrecked crew on a tropical island exchanging coconuts for fish and claims this would lead to the invention of money. It is a view that completely ignores the real history of humankind. The first period of human history had no concept of private property and the invention of money is a very late development in that history. There is plenty of evidence that society has developed through various stages of primitive communism, chattel slavery, feudalism and then capitalism. Far from being “natural” capitalism is just another stage in private property society. Mr Alexander is correct in one respect though. People who imagine that the latest slump in capitalism means its termination are completely wrong. Capitalism by its very nature has slumps and booms. Its abolition will only come about with the conscious political action of the working class.

The “Lazy Man” Myth

One of the objections that socialists get when advocating a new society of common ownership and production solely for use, is that it would be impossible because of the “lazy man” who wouldn’t work. These opponents overlook the fact that socialism could only come

about when a majority were in favour of working to the best of their ability and taking according to their needs. Far from the working class being innately lazy, even inside the cut-throat system that is capitalism there are many examples of people working in a co-operative fashion. Inside families many parents sacrifice themselves for the benefit of their children, many people volunteer to do unpaid work to help the needy and the sick. Perhaps one of the best examples of selfless endeavour on behalf of others is that of lifeboat volunteers who risk their lives to help others without pay. Another opposition to a socialist society that is often aired is that is impossible because



of the existence of the “greedy man”. If the working class were really greedy they would dump a society that today leaves them in poverty while rewarding the capitalist class with immense wealth.

The Recovery Myth

“The world economy is set to shrink by between 0.5% and 1.0% in 2009, the first global contraction in 60 years. In its gloomiest forecast yet, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) says that developed countries will suffer a ‘deep recession’. The global economic body says ‘the prolonged financial crisis has battered global economic activity beyond what was previously anticipated’” (*BBC News*, 19 March). To illustrate than none of

the experts have a clue this is the same IMF that was predicting just two months earlier that world output would increase by 0.5 percent! In fact capitalism is an economic system that is based on slumps and booms and no amount of political “spin” can govern its unpredictability.

The Music Jungle

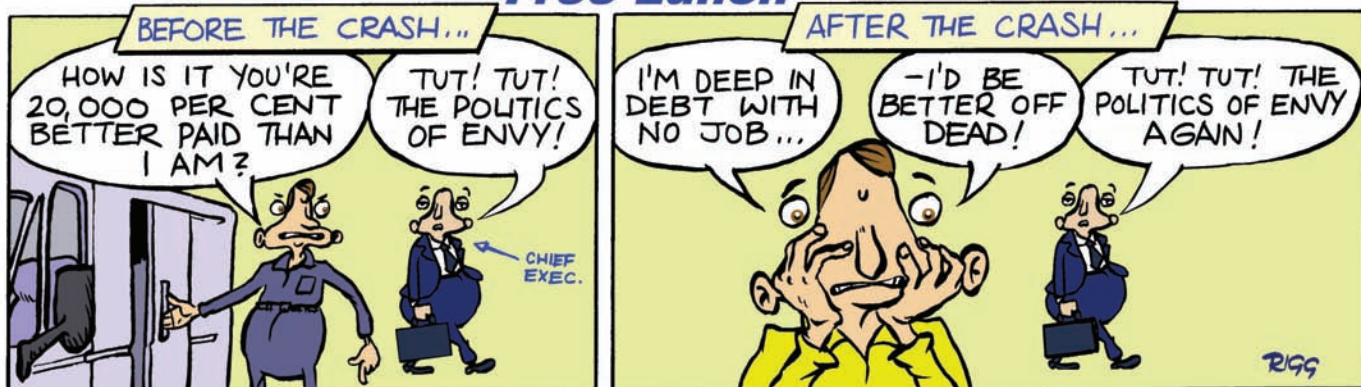
Everything inside capitalist society is driven by the profit motive. So it comes as no great surprise to hear that the popular-music industry is a victim of the rapacious demands of the commodity-producing society. Here is the highly successful pop song-writer and singer, formerly of the Eurhythmics, Annie Lennox on the dog-eat-dog nature of the business. “The music industry is a bloody nightmare. The egos, the slightly criminal elements, the betrayers, the ones who want to screw you.” (*Observer*, 29 March)

World Poverty

Most people are aware of the awful poverty that exists in parts of Asia and India but capitalism is a world system with world-wide social problems. “Volunteers from one of the world’s most impoverished countries are to travel to Scotland to help people in communities

blighted by drink and violence. The aid workers from Pakistan have been warned that they will see shocking poverty when they arrive next month in the east end of Glasgow to work in some of Britain’s most run-down housing schemes.... In Pakistan, a third of the 170m population lives below the poverty line – defined as earning less than \$2 (£1.36) a day. However, the average life expectancy for men is 62, compared with 54 in parts of Glasgow” (*Sunday Times*, 12 April). No doubt many of these doomed men will be singing on a Saturday night “*Glasgow Belongs To Me*”. In reality though, Glasgow – like ever city on Earth – belongs to the capitalist.

Free Lunch



ISSN 0037 8259

Produced and published by the Socialist Party of Great Britain, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN