

socialist standard

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



BOEING

**Putting Profits
Before Safety**



also:
Winnipeg General Strike
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Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party advocates a society where production is freed from the artificial constraints of profit and organised for the benefit of all on the basis of material abundance. It does not have policies to ameliorate aspects of the existing social system. It is opposed to all war.

The *Socialist Standard* is the combative monthly journal of the Socialist Party, published without interruption since 1904. In the 1930s the *Socialist Standard* explained why capitalism would not collapse of its own accord, in response to widespread claims to the contrary, and continues to hold this view in face of the notion's recent popularity. Beveridge's welfare measures of the 1940s were viewed as a reorganisation of poverty and a necessary 'expense' of production, and Keynesian policies designed to overcome slumps an illusion. Today, the journal exposes as false the view that banks create money out of thin air, and explains

why actions to prevent the depredation of the natural world can have limited effect and run counter to the nature of capitalism itself.

Gradualist reformers like the Labour Party believed that capitalism could be



transformed through a series of social measures, but have merely become routine managers of the system. The Bolsheviks had to be content with developing Russian capitalism under a one-party dictatorship. Both failures have given socialism a quite different -- and

unattractive -- meaning: state ownership and control. As the *Socialist Standard* pointed out before both courses were followed, the results would more properly be called state capitalism.

The Socialist Party and the World Socialist Movement affirm that capitalism is incapable of meaningful change in the interests of the majority; that the basis of exploitation is the wages/money system. The *Socialist Standard* is proud to have kept alive the original idea of what socialism is -- a classless, stateless, wageless, moneyless society or, defined positively, a democracy in which free and equal men and women co-operate to produce the things they need to live and enjoy life, to which they have free access in accordance with the principle 'from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs'

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Editorial

There is only one world

We live on a planet that is capable of providing all its inhabitants with the food, housing, health care, education and the other amenities of life that they need. But this does not happen. Instead, there are no end of problems.

No end of problems

One problem, that affects everyone, is the threat of global warming caused by the reckless burning of fossil fuels. It's not the only environmental one. There's also the pollution of the seas by plastic waste. Then there's world poverty and malnutrition while the super-rich get even richer to the extent that Oxfam has estimated that just eight men own as much as half the world.

And wars. The world's most powerful states compete to control access to raw materials and routes to get them out, in which might is right. As yet there have only been proxy wars fought by local puppets, as in the Yemen, in which the local population suffers terribly. The powerful states waste the world's resources to equip themselves with the most deadly weapons of mass destruction they can afford.

Capitalism has failed

The economic system that exists all over the world today is capitalism where productive resources are owned and control by a few rich individuals, corporations states and whose rules of operation are 'no profit, no production' and 'can't pay, can't have'. It is this system of production for profits that is the root cause of the world's problems as it imposes that making profits has to take priority over meeting people's needs and protecting the planet.

It is clear that there can be no national solutions to these problems. Those who are saying that things will get better if Britain leaves the EU are deluding themselves while those who want Britain to remain in the EU fail to see that, as one of the big blocs competing for markets and raw materials, it is part of the problem, not the solution.

The way out

The only way-out is global. It's the world's natural and industrial resources becoming the common heritage of all humanity so that they can be used to directly meet

the needs of the world's population on the basis of 'from each according to ability, to each according to need'. Free of ownership by the few and the rule of 'no profit, no production', this is the only framework within which problems such as global warming, growing inequality and wars can be tackled for good.

This is what we are standing for in these elections. If you agree you can show this by voting for our list. If you want to know more about our aims just fill in and send us the reply coupon below.



The Socialist Party is standing in the South East Region in the elections to the European Parliament. This covers the counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex and Kent. Offers of help and further information: spgb@worldsocialism.org.

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PATHFINDERS

'THE POLITICS that's needed to prevent the climate catastrophe—it doesn't exist today. We need to change the system, as if we were in crisis, as if there were a war going on'. Teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg, who shot to global prominence in 2018 by missing school days to go on strike alone outside the Swedish parliament in Stockholm, is disarmingly frank about herself and the task as she sees it:

'I have Asperger's syndrome, and to me, almost everything is black or white. I think in many ways that we autistic are the normal ones and the rest of the people are pretty strange. They keep saying that climate change is an existential threat and the most important issue of all. And yet they just carry on like before. If the emissions have to stop then we must stop the emissions. To me, that is black or white. There are no grey areas when it comes to survival. Either we go on as a civilization or we don't. We have to change.'

It's no longer a matter of worry or concern. Now there's desperation in the air. Following Greta Thunberg's initiative, schoolchildren around the world are going on strike. She was invited to speak to the World Economic Forum at Davos, where she gave them short shrift: 'Some people, some companies, some decision makers in particular have known exactly what priceless values they have been sacrificing to continue making unimaginable amounts of money. I think many of you here today belong to that group of people' (Wikipedia).

Many politicians, eager to retain their eco-credentials while also neutralising a disruptive influence, have showered hypocritical praise on her, even nominating her for the Nobel Peace Prize, but it hasn't melted much ice. The girl who's been compared to Joan of Arc and Pippi Longstocking has made it plain that tokenism isn't enough, she wants direct action: 'So everyone out there, it is now time for civil disobedience, it is time to rebel.'

Thinking along similar lines, a new non-violent direct action movement, Extinction Rebellion, has formed in the past twelve months, making Chartist-like demands for immediate government action including a Citizens' Assembly to oversee climate action 'as part of creating a democracy fit for purpose'. In London this past month demonstrators have been gluing themselves to trucks and trains and bringing traffic in the city to a standstill in action reminiscent of Reclaim the Streets back in the 1980s. The movement is supported by hundreds of



academics through open letters which state among other things that 'Our government is complicit in ignoring the precautionary principle, and in failing to acknowledge that infinite economic growth on a planet with finite resources is non-viable [...] The "social contract" has been broken, and it is therefore not only our right, but our moral duty to bypass the government's inaction and flagrant dereliction of duty, and to rebel to defend life itself' (Wikipedia).

If that wasn't clear enough, a second open letter in December last year was even more direct: 'Political leaders worldwide are failing to address the environmental crisis. If global corporate capitalism continues to drive the international economy, global catastrophe is inevitable.'

Strong stuff. Their solution? 'We further call on concerned global citizens to rise up and... do whatever's necessary non-violently, to persuade politicians and business leaders to relinquish their complacency and denial. Their "business as usual" is no longer an option. Global citizens will no longer put up with this failure of our planetary duty. Every one of us, especially in the materially privileged world, must commit to accepting the need to live more lightly, consume far less, and to not only uphold human rights but also our stewardship responsibilities to the planet.'

Now David Attenborough, to many people the ultimate authority on life on Earth, has produced a new BBC documentary warning of biblical End Times: 'If we have not taken dramatic action within the next decade, we could face irreversible damage to the natural world and the collapse of our societies' (*Climate Change – The Facts*, BBC One, 18 April).

Drastic as this sounds, it's not even the worst forecast out there. A 2018 paper by a University of Cumbria academic is so damning that it has reputedly resulted in people seeking therapy (www.lifeworth.com/deeppadaptation.pdf). Arguing that it is now simply too late to consider how to limit global warming, Professor Jem Bendell instead promotes the idea of 'deep adaptation' in the face of 'imminent near-term social collapse'. That's starvation, violence, permanent water and

power outages, riots, and all coming to streets near you within the next ten years, he says.

The evidence for global warming is so well known that it is not worth repeating. Even the most die-hard denialist has to face the fact that the twenty warmest years on record have been in the last 22 years. Professor Bendell's evidence for imminent social collapse rests largely on two factors. One is Arctic ice melt and the loss of the 'mirror effect', where heat is mirrored back into space. The loss of this effect is expected to add the equivalent of an additional 25 percent of all global warming over the last 40 years. The second factor is more speculative: submarine methane hydrates, gigantic deposits of frozen methane on the ocean floors, could be released into the atmosphere by oceanic warming causing general social collapse and possibly a wholesale extinction event from which humans would not be excluded. 'If all the methane gets out', said an International Energy Agency spokesman in 2014, 'we're looking at a Mad Max movie' (see this column, July 2017).

Socialists, if we were numerous enough and had a sufficient media profile, would be getting out in front of this debate and telling Greta Thunberg and Extinction Rebellion in no uncertain terms to stop putting any faith whatsoever in governments and business leaders, because these people aren't the solution to the problem, they *are* the problem. It's no good talking about 'global corporate capitalism' as if there was some other form of 'clean' capitalism we could adopt instead. A system predicated on private ownership and the accumulation of profit simply cannot be made to work in the interests either of the majority of people within it, or of the planet itself. It might seem self-evident to activists that we are all in the same boat, environmentally speaking, but the biggest environmental mistake of all is the one they are themselves making, which is that the rich 1 percent who ultimately control what happens on Planet Earth can be cajoled, persuaded or reasoned with if it means them giving up their power and ownership. Like a lot of latter-day Neros, they will keep their wealth and privilege at all costs, even if means watching the Earth burn.

Greta, and Extinction Rebellion, if you're reading this, now is not the time for rebellion, it's the time for global revolution. We need to stop making helpless appeals to princes, and start taking over their palaces.

PJS

LETTERS

Do 'we' trade?

Dear Editors

I can't see what's so bad about a No Deal and the UK making its own trade deals with whoever it wants under WTO rules (Cooking the Books, April *Socialist Standard*). A focus on domestic production would be healthy. Why should we desire the import of products we can produce in the UK anyway? Cheapness has always been a Trojan Horse. It may be advantageous in the short-term to import cheap meat or cheap milk, for example, but in the long-term we will pay through the teeth for these items. If the UK loses its farming industry or its farming industry is drastically shrunk by cheap imports and we lose our ability to meet the UK demand for farming produce and we then become dependent on the importation of farming produce, we will see that produce spiral upwards in price. We only need to import what we can't produce in the UK. So maybe we need to trade less with the world and promote domestic production. However, the profit imperative in the economy disallows for this focus on domestic production. If only we could analyse the nature of global economics as we have with Brexit then we might realise there are better alternatives to globalisation and the insane pursuit of profit rather than production for human need.

Louis Shawcross, Hillsborough, Northern Ireland.

Reply:

Who do you mean by 'we'? You write as if everyone living in Britain is part of a community sharing a common interest. It's not just you of course. This is how most people at the moment see things, referring to Britain as 'we'. 'We export this', 'We import that'. 'We spend too much on defence', 'We let in too many immigrants' and such like are frequently heard in political conversation. But we, the many, the majority class of wage and salary workers, don't do any of these things. It's 'they', the few, who own and control productive resources, who do. Everywhere, and not just in Britain, society is divided into this few and the rest of us whose interests are antagonistic to each other. It's them and us, and them versus us and vice versa. There is no common 'we'.

So, it wouldn't be us, the many, who would be trading on WTO terms. We are not part of the EU customs union or its single market. They are, and they've got into a huge mess since a referendum vote to leave the EU as their political representatives in parliament can't agree on what this means.

The leading advocates of 'leaving on WTO terms' wouldn't agree with the trading arrangements you are proposing that Britain outside the EU should adopt. They are 'free traders' who want more not less globalisation. The more dogmatic of them want to remove all tariffs on imported goods, i.e. abolish all protection for home industries including agriculture, even though this is not practical politics. But what you propose isn't either, precisely because, as you hint at, this would be incompatible with what was most profitable for British capitalism as a whole. It would divert investment away from industries that could make higher profits from producing goods for export. It would raise the cost of living for workers and so mean that employers would have to pay higher wages, so undermining the competitiveness of both exports and home-produced goods.

There are no national solutions to the problems capitalism causes as capitalism is a single world-wide system. No one country can cut itself off from this or escape from the pressures of the world market. People may think up ideal trade policies and governments may try to implement them but capitalism has its own relentless logic of 'profits first, otherwise economic downturn' to which governments must ultimately submit.

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION



WTO HQ Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Theresa

Well, it's all over bar the shouting! Except it's not over and there seems to be even more shouting than usual. The Brexit circus bumbles along, aided and abetted by the media which hyperventilates over every twist and turn; including wheeling out obscure academics to paw over esoteric constitutional conundrums in a pathetic attempt to inject some *Guardian*-like discourse into the idiocy and thus further bamboozle the public. Do we even have a constitution?

I see that Boris chappy has re-entered the fray with a preposterous proposal that he will vote for your deal provided you resign; that is, your dead-as-a-Dodo-deal, which he has previously said is: 'worse than no-deal, worse than staying in the EU and threatens the integrity of the UK.' I think Boris needs to refresh his understanding of the meaning of integrity. When I heard about his offer I thought: there is no way in which Theresa is going to capitulate to such an insulting proposition. But then I heard that you have accepted it. You have even been wooing those your party has been denouncing as an 'anti-Semite, terrorist apologist and all round Putin puppet', Corbyn. Ah well, I suppose it's no time for false pride or principles when political careers are at stake.

I've been rather flippant about Brexit up to now, but I'd like to acknowledge a substantial benefit of the Brexit process. The decision of the UK to leave the EU represents a momentous turning point in the fortunes of our country; where Great Britain can once more stand as a proud sovereign nation, ready to take its place in the world. 'Rule Britannia! Britannia rules the waves!' Sorry, I got a bit carried away there for a moment. No, it is not this jingoistic twaddle that I have in mind as the Brexit dividend.

I don't know whether you have read that little book by William Morris, *News from Nowhere*. It's a romantic portrayal of a socialist world. In this idyllic future society the parliament buildings have been turned into a giant dung heap – the cynic would claim they have always had this characteristic. William Morris wrote his fable over a hundred years ago but, had he been around in these more cosmopolitan times, he would have portrayed the steaming bloated edifice of the European Union HQ in Brussels in similar terms. If there were any starry-eyed individuals who imagined that, by voting for Brexit, they would rid themselves of the shackles of a feckless European plutocratic elite, in order to take back control at Westminster, it must be crystal clear to them now that they were merely voting to swap one dung heap for another. The working class needs to focus on ridding itself of the shackles of capitalism rather than taking sides in this bun-fight between different imperialist factions.

In the enormous dung-producing enterprise of Brexit you, Theresa, have been wielding the biggest shovel. In so doing you have helped to realise William Morris's ambitious vision of a world beyond capitalism.

Sincerely, Tim Hart



Reform or Revolution?

'Capitalism Needs Reform, not Revolution. Dealing with the trouble spots will work better than starting over' was the headline of an article by Noah Smith in the US financial magazine *Bloomberg* on 29 March.

'When', Smith began, 'even leading economists are questioning the very idea of capitalism, you know the system is in trouble.' One of those he named was Raghuram Rajan, a former governor of India's central bank and now professor at a Chicago business school. Interviewed on BBC Radio 4 (12 March) Rajan opined: 'I think capitalism is under threat because it's stopped providing for the many, and when that happens, the many revolt against capitalism.'

Smith went on to set out the classic case for mending rather than ending capitalism:

'For much of the 20th century, the big idea was to construct an alternative system - socialism, communism or anarchism - from the ground up. But that approach largely failed, for any number of reasons. Economic systems are complex constructs that evolve over time - even a very smart group of people

is going to make huge mistakes if they try to engineer something totally different. And the implementation of radical social change is never easy - revolutions tend to be violent and chaotic, and the people who wind up in power are often those who are most concerned with preserving their dominance rather than providing for the material welfare of the people they rule over. Instead, it seems overwhelmingly likely that the most successful approach will be to modify the current system - to reform rather than revolt.'

This conclusion begs the question by assuming that capitalism can be modified to work in the interest of the many. All the evidence is that it can't be. As an economic system capitalism is based on pursuing profits, a pursuit which has to take priority over providing for people's needs. This explains the 'trouble spots' of global warming, unaffordable housing and high education and child care costs that Smith singles out as requiring reforms to capitalism.

Since capitalism is the cause of these and many other problems it is ultimately futile to try to deal with them while leaving capitalism intact. That's just trying to alleviate symptoms while leaving the cause unchanged. To overcome them requires replacing a system geared to profit-making and the accumulation of capital by one geared to meeting

people's needs. This is only possible on the basis of the common ownership and democratic control of productive resources; a revolution in the basis of society, to remove their cause,

Bringing about socialism is not a question of 'a very smart group of people' trying 'to engineer something totally different'. The revolution from capitalism to socialism is not a 'revolt' in which such a minority seizes power. That doesn't work, as Smith rightly pointed out. Socialism cannot be imposed from above. It can only be established by a majority who want and understand it and are organised and act to bring it about.

Nor does it involve 'starting over' and reconstructing society from scratch. Capitalism has already built up the technical and administrative structure that makes socialism possible. The socialist revolution consists in a change in social relations regarding the control and use of this structure; it becomes commonly owned and democratically controlled. With this revolutionary change in basis of society, production can be geared to directly meeting people's needs and the problems generated by capitalism solved once and for all. Otherwise they continue, however much reformists try to reform capitalism.

WOOD FOR THE TREES

SOCIALISTS ARE amused at the establishment's latest discovery: something called 'fake news'. Information and its interpretation has, until the advent of the internet, traditionally been the preserve of the ruling class. Ownership of information (the media) is seen as a vital component for preserving the wealth and power of the 1 percent. Besides the handful of private owners (Murdoch etc.) their representatives in various governments have sought to monopolise the access to information. Socialists have, therefore, dismissed most of it as bourgeois propaganda and have always sought to render it transparent in terms of the agenda that defines its content (fake news). Can we ever disentangle the relationship between the events and their (political) interpretation? Of course raw data is useless without interpretation as can be seen from the information overload that is the World Wide Web. Let us engage in a thought experiment and examine what news might look like in a socialist society.

As a species we are always curious about the activities of our fellow beings and there's no reason to believe that this will fundamentally change in socialism. In terms of global news there would still have to be a decision about the importance of any event. Those with journalistic responsibility (due to their talent in that area) will make this decision. Sometimes it will be obvious that an event has to be covered (a natural disaster or major technical failure etc.) otherwise an editorial judgment will be made. Upon the convergence of journalists at the required scene footage, interviews and interpretation would follow – just as it does today but with one significant difference: no political agenda. There would be no need to discover 'scapegoats' so as to deflect responsibility from one class to another, no need to feed the prejudice of the ideologies of racism, sexism, xenophobia, conspiracy or envy and above all there will be no need to protect the interest of privileged minorities – in other words it would not resemble, in any significant way, the 'news' we suffer today. In the absence of the political agenda outlined above what would be the nature of the interpretation of events in socialism?

Without the tensions inherent within



class society the interpretation of events (the news) would assume that the mistakes ('bad news') are due to system malfunctions, human error, unforeseen natural formations or human scientific and/or technological hubris; the good news would, therefore, celebrate achievement in the absence of these qualities. Unlike today no default human malevolence would be assumed although the possible activity of psychologically disturbed individuals would not be entirely discounted.

Another important contrast to today's newscasts would be the use of the historical perspective to explain the context of any event. History is humankind's primary teacher. If we have failed to learn through the experience of the past then this will be highlighted. Socialist consciousness will allow journalists to access the dialectical processes inherent within any system and this will, hopefully, reveal the internal faults (or strengths) that have led to a 'newsworthy' event. From this the reader may assume, as we do, that this news of the future will be primarily 'good news' - something which is, with good reason, almost entirely absent in the contemporary media. Given our cynical cultural context many will roll their eyes at the perceived naivety and idealism of the above account of such a journalistic future unaware that this is a response conditioned by today's media which seeks to explain events in terms of an innate and unchanging malevolent 'human nature' rather than by reference to the underlying tensions within capitalism.

Ironically one of the most infamous

examples of fake news in recent times came from the heart of the establishment in the shape of the scandal of the 'weapons of mass destruction'. In an attempt to justify the invasion of Iraq (for its oil) the Tony Blair government built a fantasy upon very flimsy and scant 'intelligence' that we were all in immediate danger from a weapons technology developed by a madman called Saddam Hussein. The British establishment chose to accept this as a show of loyalty to the flag bearer of international capitalist ideology (the USA) with the added incentive of a share of the liberated oil revenue.

However this was such an extreme example of fake news that even the BBC exposed it as such only to have the journalist concerned martyred alongside his boss Greg Dyke for their pains. After the deaths of thousands of innocent Iraqis those who sought to expose the lies of the Labour government were justified and the reputation of both the Labour Party and the BBC should never be allowed to recover from such invidious and servile behaviour.

If the antithesis of fake news is real news how do we access it in a world of propaganda? Is there some source of raw data that exists apart from its interpretation? Given the impossibility of such an unpolluted reservoir of facts perhaps the duality of fake and real is unhelpful in this respect. We may replace it with the human traits of integrity and mendacity. In a society where the news is, like everything else, a commodity which is bought and sold the inability to understand the world in any other terms is intellectually and morally corrosive and inevitably leads to a level of mendacity. When the level of spin reaches such a lofty peak of contradiction then it usually becomes a matter of integrity and courage for those in a position to potentially become a whistle blower. That such individuals continue to exist inspires us all when our turn comes to articulate our defiance toward the manipulated consensus with the subsequent possibility of the loss of our job or even the love and respect of those whom we hold close.

WEZ



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MATERIAL WORLD

COLLATERAL DAMAGE IN FLINT

THE WHEELS of justice turn slowly, and the effects of lead poisoning are also slow and pernicious.

The city of Flint’s water crisis began in April 2014. In a cost-saving measure to save around \$5m the state-appointed city

had already been done. Many people became sick. Potentially thousands of children were exposed to hazardous levels of lead. The full extent of the damage is still unclear and isn’t likely to be known for some time.

What does lead do to the human body? Infants and small children can suffer brain and nervous system damage, weakened immune systems and general physical collapse that can lead to death. Pregnant women have a higher risk of stillbirth or miscarriage. A raft of studies has pretty much concluded that lead can cause cancer. It causes cardiovascular diseases and kidney damage which, like cancer, can also kill. Five parts of lead per billion are a concern. 5,000 parts per billion is considered toxic waste. From April 2014 until October 2015 the people of Flint were drinking water with up to 13,000 parts per billion of lead in it.

Michigan’s Department of Environmental Quality officials urged people worried about lead in Flint’s drinking water to ‘relax,’ saying that there was

no ‘broad problem’ with contamination. They described the whistleblower EPA official, Miguel Del Toral, whose draft report initially alerted lead-poisoned Flint residents to their great danger, as a ‘rogue employee.’ They also attacked the work of Virginia Tech expert Marc Edwards and his team of graduate students, which revealed that some Flint tap water measured nearly 2.5 times more lead contamination than the EPA’s hazardous waste designation level. They cast doubts upon Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, director of the pediatric

residency program at Flint’s Hurley Hospital whose research showed that after the switch to untreated Flint River drinking water, blood lead levels in children doubled, or even tripled. Residents were left to drink poisoned water for months despite warnings from experts.

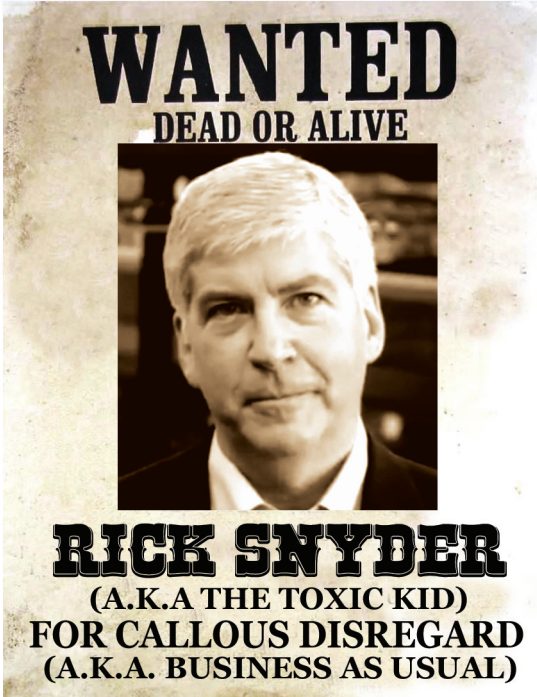
Edwards explained, ‘In Flint the agencies paid to protect these people weren’t solving the problem. They were the problem’.

There are presently court cases against former and current state government officials. On 1 April, US District Court Judge Judith Levy declared that former Governor Rick Snyder can be sued by residents in Flint. Levy wrote in her ruling:

‘Plaintiffs plausibly state that the Governor acted indifferently to the risk of harm they faced, demonstrating a callous disregard for their right to bodily integrity. This indifference manifested itself in two ways. Initially, the Governor was indifferent because instead of mitigating the risk of harm caused by the contaminated water, he covered it up. In private, he worried about the need to return Flint to DWSD water and the political implications of the crisis. But in public, he denied all knowledge, despite being aware of the developing crisis... As a result, plaintiffs were lured into a false sense of security. They could have taken protective measures, if only they had known what the Governor knew. Instead, the Governor misled them into assuming that nothing was wrong. Governor Snyder’s administration even encouraged them to continue to drink and bathe in the water.’

People in Flint and their children were merely collateral damage in a larger war. Which war? The class war of the capitalists against everybody else.

ALJO



manager changed the city’s water source from treated Detroit Water and Sewerage Department water, sourced from Lake Huron and the Detroit River, to water from the Flint River. General Motors used the river as its private dumping ground for decades; it is highly polluted and highly acidic.

Typically, water in mass systems at the city and wider level is treated with corrosion inhibitors, chemical compounds which reduce the likelihood of pipes corroding. Officials failed to apply corrosion inhibitors to the Flint River water, in defiance of federal law, causing lead from ageing pipes to leach into the water supply. Michigan state officials insisted that the water was safe, ignoring calls for the water supply to be switched back to the Detroit system on the grounds that switching back would be too expensive. It wasn’t until September 2015 that a report revealed that 40 percent of Flint homes had dangerously elevated lead levels, and declared Flint water unfit to drink. Eventually in October 2015 the state finally agreed to switch Flint back to the Lake Huron supply, but the damage



The Flint River

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Capitalism's supporters are always telling us that competition brings out the best in human beings. It is supposed to encourage efficiency and creativity and promote innovation. We are also informed that capitalism's drive for profit creates high quality goods that most people desire at a competitive price. However, as we have shown time and time again, the reality is rather different, and as in the two recent air crashes, the consequences can be fatal.

On 10 March, an Ethiopians Airline flight bound for Nairobi from Addis Ababa crashed shortly after take-off, killing all 157 on board. This was eerily similar to the Lion Air crash that took place five months earlier in Indonesia where 189 passengers lost their lives. In both cases the pilots were unable to prevent their planes from taking a steep nosedive and both planes were of the new Boeing 737 Max 8 design. Preliminary investigations in the Ethiopian Airlines crash absolved the pilots of any blame.

Competitive pressures

Around ten years ago, Airbus developed a new range of aircraft with enhanced fuel efficiency and lower operating costs. They were able to pick up a lot of orders from airlines keen to lower their running costs. Boeing feared that they might lose out on market share to their European rival and were spurred to action when American Airlines, a longstanding customer of Boeing, purchased a large consignment of the new Airbus model. Boeing set to work to design an aircraft to compete with Airbus.

For a plane to fly successfully without stalling, that is avoiding a situation in which the angle of the plane points so far upwards it stops flying and is at risk of falling and crashing, the weight and power of the engines needs to be in balance with the wings, the cargo areas and other component parts of the plane. Therefore, if you are going to build a plane with heavier, more fuel-efficient engines you normally need to design an entirely new aircraft. Indeed, Boeing did investigate this option, but they ruled this out as it was deemed to be too expensive and just as importantly the development timescale of up to ten years was considered to be too long, as Boeing needed to deliver the new planes more quickly in order to maintain its share price. So they made the fateful decision to fit the new heavier engines onto the existing 737 design. The 737 Max 8 aircraft was introduced in 2017. The aerodynamics of the new plane were altered with the heavier engines, in certain flying conditions, potentially forcing the plane to thrust upwards raising the likelihood of stalling. To counteract this, Boeing installed anti-stalling software, known as the 'Manoeuvring Characteristics Augmentation System'

(MCAS). When the angle of the plane is too high, sensors on the nose would transmit signals to MCAS, which would then force the nose down. An advantage from the point of view of the manufacturer and the airlines was that this automated software obviated the need to retrain the pilots, thus saving Boeing and the airlines money.

This set-up depends on the software working correctly at all times. However, it is now generally believed that in both flights incorrect signals were being transmitted from the sensors to MCAS indicating that the angle of the plane was too high when in fact it was flying normally, thus forcing it to point downwards. The only thing that the pilots knew about MCAS is that they could deactivate it and use manual controls. Unfortunately, as the sensors continued to supply incorrect signals, MCAS was reactivated after a few minutes, forcing the planes to nosedive until they crashed. Two safety measures, a so-called 'angle of attack indicator' and a 'disagree light' indicator which warn that the sensors are malfunctioning, were not installed on the planes as Boeing sold them as optional extras. Evidently, neither Lion Air nor Ethiopian Airlines had decided to purchase them.

Largely due to budget cuts over the last ten years, the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) has found itself short of the qualified staff that is required to oversee the airworthiness of new aircraft and have effectively delegated regulation to airlines and manufacturers. One thousand Boeing employees had been seconded to the FAA.

In the wake of the crashes, the US flight attendants' trade unions called for the 737 Max 8 planes to be grounded and pledged that they would support any member who refused to fly in them. Airlines around the world grounded their 737 Max 8 planes. The FAA in the United States reluctantly agreed to ground the planes a few days after the crash in Ethiopia. Boeing shares plummeted and their image has been tarnished. They are facing expensive lawsuits from victims' families. They are desperate to restore their reputation and get their 737 Max 8 planes flying again, and are working on a fix for their MCAS software and have pledged an improved safety manual and training for pilots.

Some do see that the market has played a role in these tragedies, but do not arrive at the conclusion that capitalism should be abolished. They argue that corporate power should be reined in with tougher regulations. Will Hutton, in an article published in the *Observer* (7 April), says 'The Boeing scandal is an indictment of Trump's corporate America', citing 'America First nationalism, indulgent free market economics, Republican libertarianism and a political system in hock to corporate lobbying' as the villains. It is true that

Trump's government pursues a free market capitalist agenda which is hostile to regulation, and Trump is in favour of privatising the FAA. He has representatives from the major banks and corporations in his government. Indeed, former Boeing executive Patrick Shanahan is Trump's acting secretary of defence and it is alleged that he has tried to enhance Boeing's contracts with the government. Boeing has spent billions on lobbyists to obtain lucrative defence contracts and has given donations to both Republican and Democrat lawmakers.

When a government is said to embrace free market ideology, what this really means is that it is committed to pursuing the interests of its capitalist class ruthlessly without the impediments of workers' rights, human safety and human welfare. This is not just the case with Trump, but also with Republican and Democrat presidents before him. Indeed it is the function of governments within capitalist society to defend and promote the profits of their capitalist class. Over recent years, governments have come under global competitive pressures to cut their costs and therefore implement more 'free market' policies of deregulation.

Cheating the regulations

Then there are manufacturers who try to cheat the regulations. In September 2015, the US Environment Protection Agency discovered that Volkswagen installed software in the engines of their diesel cars that was able to detect when they were being tested and give out false emission readings to enable them to pass emission tests. These cars would be pumping out more pollution into the



atmosphere compromising people's health. As with Boeing, Volkswagen shares fell and its reputation was badly damaged.

In the era before Trump and 'indulgent free market economics', some companies would dangerously cut corners to maintain their market share. One notable case in the 1970s was the Ford Pinto car, in which the fuel tank was placed dangerously in the rear. This meant that if another car hit

it from behind, the tank was in danger of exploding. In fact this happened in one instance and the driver was killed. An investigation by the victim's lawyers found that Ford cynically calculated that it would be more cost effective to pay out



damages than remedy the design flaw. Ford was forced to pay out substantial damages.

The ex-Militant Tendency Trotskyists claim, in an article, 'Corporate capitalism jeopardises air safety' (*Socialist*, 3 April) that 'public ownership of the aviation industry under democratic workers' control and management' is the solution. However, companies under public or state ownership also have to compete in markets and keep their costs down. In 1966, disaster befell a small Welsh mining village called Aberfan when a colliery spoil tip collapsed and engulfed the village, including schools, killing 116 children and 28 adults. A period of heavy rain led to a build-up of water within the tip which caused it to slide downhill as a slurry. The National Coal Board, a state-owned company, decided it was cheaper to dump the colliery waste on the mountain slope above the

town. In 1987, a fire ravaged Kings Cross station killing 31 people. A shortage of staff and lack of maintenance due to budget cutbacks resulted in more people losing their lives. More recently there has been the tragedy of the Grenfell fire where the local council had the block of flats covered with cheaper but highly flammable cladding.

Not only does capitalism exploit us, it is gambling with our lives. State ownership, tighter regulations and software fixes cannot change this. We need to stop being chips on capitalism's roulette table and organise to get rid of this pernicious economic system once and for all.

OLIVER BOND



I am, you are, we are. In fact the masses of the great majority of the global population are of the working class. Together we deliver everything that we need to survive, to live, to dream about even. We depend on each other often without realising it. Who likes a beer at the end of a day's work? How often do we pause to consider from where and how did it come to be in front of us? The preparation of the soil, the sowing, planting, reaping and picking of the hops and the barley, the choice of water and the skill of how to combine these ingredients to satisfy us with a decent pint – and consider the making of the barrels, the storage and transport to the bars where the beer pipes and taps all need taking care of before we, as end users, can satisfy our thirst.

Consider your own work, or that of any other individual: however you arrive at your workplace, how many other workers were involved to enable you to get there? By car? It may seem that if the car is yours then you don't need anyone else until it's time for a service or routine fill up, but what about the design, the mining of the raw materials and all the individuals required for making the car? It's possible that dozens, if not hundreds, of individual workers from different parts of the world had a role in producing the car that you call your own. The same holds for public transport with the addition of all the staff required for driving, ticketing, servicing, cleaning, refuelling and timetabling. So many fundamental functions performed throughout our daily lives without a thought for the integral part played by so many others, most of whom we've never met.

I well remember the sixties in industrial South Yorkshire working for 2s 6d an hour in a toy shop during the Christmas break from University. It seemed grossly unfair to me that a 'regular' girl eighteen months younger than me earned less for doing the same job. Then there was the factory work during the longer summer break. Sorting peanuts from a fast-moving belt for two hour stretches followed by weighing two ounces of said peanuts onto a fast moving vertical machine, assembling cardboard boxes, filling boxes and so on, all for two-hour stretches. Hand up to visit the lav and don't stay too long or you'd be in trouble. Here the women were also working for peanuts, but it was this or something similar they had to look forward to. I considered myself lucky as I planned 'a better job' later. Then I recall the brass foundry where muscles were greatly strengthened hurling the huge water valves we assembled onto the ground. On the opposite side of the aisle were the skilled men, toolmakers and the like and walking up and down all day were the men, usually immigrants on the lowest pay scale, pushing and loading trolleys non-stop day after day.

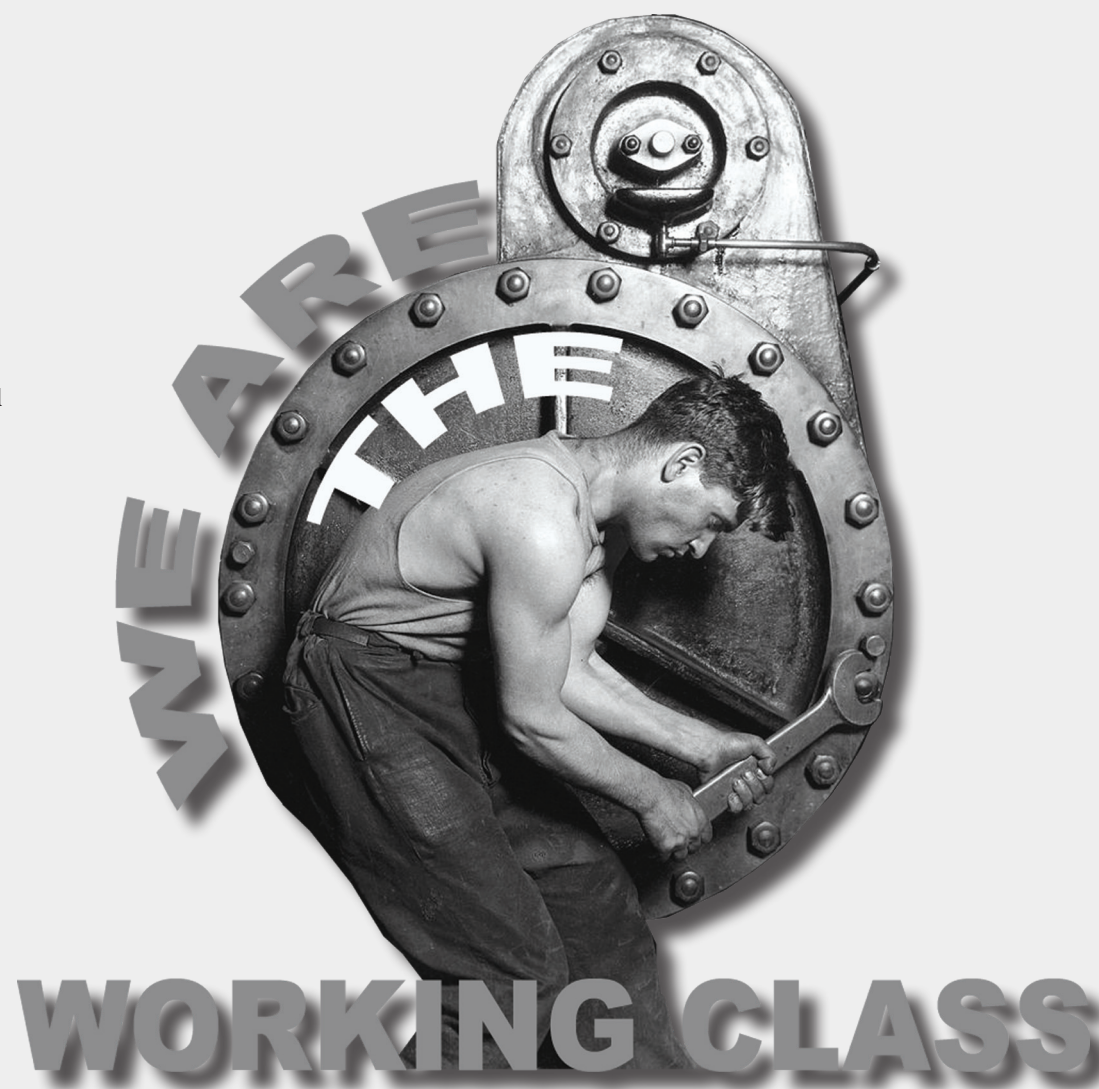
These were my introductions to working life after growing up hearing the stories of my father and grandfather as blast furnacemen, my five uncles, brothers who all started as coal miners, and our neighbours who were all engaged one way or another in the industrial sector, whether as labourers, skilled workers, office staff or management. If the women worked outside the drudgery of their own homes at that time the work was mostly shop work, hairdressing or cleaning. They worked at what they could find to improve standards at home or to help pay for a summer holiday as a family in a caravan by the seaside for a week or two.

Fifty years later

Fast forward fifty years or so and things have changed a great deal in some ways from those times but definitely not necessarily for the better. South Yorkshire now seems bereft of industry and manufacturing. There are plenty of call centres and warehousing it seems and all the towns have some kind of shopping mall, but production seems very limited – similar to what has and is happening in many parts of the developed world.

Now bigger profit is much easier to achieve a long way from home. Developed countries long ago began looting and plundering the 'undeveloped' parts of the world for their own advantage and it seems that they are now reaching the top of their curve as they cause more and more misery to the millions of working-class people of the wider world. Companies open mega factories of clothing, electronics, computer, mobile phone or other assembly or manufacturing plants, and huge corporations make deals with foreign governments which involve emptying great swathes of land of people, working class people who, up till that time worked the land for themselves and their local communities. What we are witnessing here is on a scale our predecessors could only dream about. My point here is that we, the working class of developed countries, in large numbers, do not seem to be aware of what is being done by our own countries' controllers to bring untold harm, deprivation, starvation and death to the working class population of a large part of the world, supposedly to provide us with our needs and wants.

Socialism is a universal concept. You, me, we – we're dependent on one another, all of us. We absolutely cannot do without each other and this message has to be driven home until it is understood by more and more of our fellow workers. It doesn't matter what your take home pay is, whether you get it weekly or monthly, it's nothing to do with the size of your house, the make of your car, whether you receive some form of benefit, whether you can afford a holiday or not. Skilled or unskilled, male or female, indoors or out, working from home or travelling abroad, fulfilling work or crap job – if you can't continue paying your debts or feed yourself and your family



without that wage coming in then you are undoubtedly of the working class – welcome! Academic, blast furnaceman, chemist, doctor or dry cleaner, librarian, miner, nurse, window cleaner, youth worker, zoo keeper... Fill in the gaps, there's unlimited scope.

Another question we could ask each other and ourselves is about how many individuals we know who are not working class. I mean *know* personally. The likelihood of bumping into one of the capitalist

class on the way to work or at the pub or restaurant we choose, at the gym or football match, at the hairdressers or the supermarket. Yes, we know of them by name or reputation but do we ever get a chance to put our views and questions to them? The people we see every day are, whether they know it or not, working class. We have more in common with them than not and we have to get used to it. Globally and locally we need each other and if we are going to reach the goal of socialism we need to engage at every opportunity.

As for the better job idea I had five decades ago, and this is relevant, well, of course, it didn't turn out as expected. I involved myself with various occupations to put off the day when I would ultimately begin work as a teacher – but fast forward again to the decision to retire early when my long-term partner was medically discharged from work. This decision was first and foremost related to income and mortgage. As Socialist Party members domiciled overseas we are economic migrants. We can't afford to live in the country of our birth – yes, this is thought to only be happening the other way round, with much noise and opposition to 'these foreigners' taking our jobs in the UK and other European countries.

And so much of this misplaced noise comes from large sectors of the working class themselves who fail to understand that the cause of the problem is not the 'foreign' working class at all but the real cause, the real enemy is the capitalist system with its focus purely on profit and absolutely no regard for negative effects on workers wherever in the world they live.

Now, living in a 'foreign' land for more than twenty years life

seems to revolve around tea. Our neighbours recognise us for who we are and we them. A rural area with mostly small farm plots where life is generally hard. Called into the tea house as we pass by, conversation soon turns to the economy. Stories are legion – the high price of tractor fuel, the rock bottom price for lemons this year, the cost of buying in straw and extra silage for the cows, the increasing price of general, necessary foodstuffs not grown by themselves, another hike in the cost of electricity. As we finish our second or third glass of tea and prepare to leave there's always someone at the table ready to tell us, 'that's capitalism you know!'

Our world is a very big place. Our world is also a very small place. Understanding 'the other' is a vital cog in the wheel of bringing us all closer together, to recognise the absolute need of the workers of our world to achieve our common aims together. Different languages, different colour skin, different cultures, an amazing tapestry of humanity of which we are all a part.

JANET SURMAN



100 YEARS AGO: THE WINNIPEG GENERAL STRIKE

'The Winnipeg Strike will go down in history as a magnificent example of working-class solidarity and courage' (Bill Pritchard).

In February 1919, Seattle workers engaged in the general strike tactic, with 30,000 workers in 130 unions walking out for 5 days in sympathy with 38,000 shipyard workers. The city's mayor, Ole Hanson, described the strike as an 'attempted revolution'. A few months after, on 15 May, the Winnipeg general strike took place. It ended on 26 June. As in Seattle, the authorities declared that the Winnipeg general strike the first stage of a revolutionary conspiracy. For six weeks Winnipeg was the scene of a dramatic general strike when, having to endure unemployment, high prices and poor working conditions, workers from both the private and public sectors joined forces. The *New York Times* headline was 'Bolshevism invades Canada'. The strikers, however, as in Seattle, sought only the right to collective bargaining and a wage increase. The evidence is overwhelming that the intent was not political revolution, and the great majority of Canadian workers, including most workers in Winnipeg, were not socialists. For most men and women, the Winnipeg General Strike arose from economic inequality that had become too impossible to ignore. Hugh Amos Robson wrote in his 1919 Royal Commission report on the causes of the strike. 'There has been... an increasing display of carefree, idle luxury and extravagance on one hand, while on the other is intensified deprivation.'

Not a revolution

The immediate reasons for the building trades and metal workers going on strike were for better wages and working conditions, for recognition of their unions and for the principle of collective bargaining. What took place in the city was a historic labour protest and one of the biggest social resistance movements Canada has ever seen. On 1 May, after months of negotiations, building workers went on strike. On 2 May, metalworkers went on strike when the employers refused to negotiate with the union, refusing even to recognise the Metal Trades Council as a legitimate union. On 6 May both unions met with leaders of the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council who agreed to poll its other member unions on the idea of forcing the issues with a general strike. A week later, the final tally was 8,667 for and 645 against. On 15 May workers all over the city walked off their jobs. The women who worked the city's telephones walked off their shift; nobody came to replace them. Within hours, almost 30,000 workers had joined the strike. It was almost the entire workforce of the city.



Delegates elected from each of the unions formed a Central Strike Committee to coordinate on behalf of the workers so as to make sure essential services still operated in the city, such as the initiative to issue licences in order to authorise milk and bread delivery. The real lesson learned was how the workers conducted themselves during the strike. The strike demonstrated that the workers were fully capable of organising the community, and performing the jobs done for the smooth running of society.

But there were elements within the Winnipeg working class that were not sympathetic to the strike. De-mobbed servicemen returned to find many jobs filled by immigrant workers and some expressed a hostility against the presence of these people. Most veterans decided to support the strike, notably the Great War Veterans Association. On 1 June 10,000 veterans marched in solidarity with the strike and they regularly held open-air meetings. However, others formed the Loyalists Veterans' Association encouraged by the establishment of the Manitoba's Alien Investigation Board that allowed for immediate deportation of any immigrant deemed to be disloyal or seditious, legislation directly targeted at the immigrant participants in the strike.

There are those who claim that the Winnipeg strike was a revolution that failed as the press and authorities alleged at the time. Yet it was a strike by trade unions for very modest demands who fully understood that any attempt at insurrection would have resulted in failure and bloodshed. Socialism was not on the agenda. No bank closed its doors, and commerce and business carried on practically as normal. The workers were orderly and peaceful, avoiding any excuse which would provoke military force. Essential services were maintained. But the reaction from the employers, city council and the federal government was extreme with the federal government arming a bosses' militia after the police voiced support for the strikers. The Citizens Committee of 1000, made up of vigilantes of businessmen and politicians, was organised to oppose the strike. It ignored the strikers' demands and with the assistance of local press accused the strikers of 'Bolshevism,' of being 'enemy aliens' and of undermining 'British values'. As the Citizens' Committee was made up of members of the city's elite, its motivations for breaking the strike aren't difficult to see: the strike posed a threat to their businesses, and by defeating the strikers, they would continue to make their profits.

The authorities' reaction

Federal Minister of Justice Arthur Meighen and Labour Minister Gideon Robertson met with the Citizens Committee which described the situation as a revolution and not a strike, convincing the Federal government that Winnipeg was in a state of rebellion. The ministers refused to meet or negotiate with the Strike Committee. Federal government employees, provincial government employees, and municipal workers were ordered back to work. An amendment to the Immigration Act was rushed through Parliament to allow the deportation of foreign-born strikers and the definition of sedition in the Criminal Code was expanded. The city council outlawed the regular demonstration marches.

Winnipeg's city police had formed their own union in July 1918 and they officially joined the strike but were advised by the Strike Committee to keep reporting for duty to avoid the

city from being placed under martial law. On 19 May Mayor Charles Gray instructed the policemen to sign a pledge not to participate in a sympathy strike. On 30 May the Winnipeg police refused to sign a no-strike agreement. They were all sacked bar 23. An 1,800-man force of Special Constables was hired and deputised to suppress the strike, many of them from the Loyalist Veterans' Association who were now essentially strike-breaking goons.

At the time of the strike, daily newspapers — the *Winnipeg Telegram*, the *Winnipeg Tribune*, and the *Manitoba Free Press* — were the primary sources of information for the citizens of Winnipeg. The newspapers endeavoured to plant the image in the minds of the general public that the strikers were Bolshevik revolutionaries. The typographers at all three papers walked off the job on 17 May, but by 3 June the newspapers restored their regular distribution and redoubled their condemnation of the strike, misrepresenting the strikers and promoting the idea that the strikers intended to overthrow the government. The articles against the strikers became more strident in a campaign aimed at convincing the public and the world that Winnipeg was about to be taken over by insurrectionists. The *Western Labour News* was distributed by the Strike Committee to counter the propaganda.

The strike activists were to learn that there would be consequences from their actions. Eight involved in the strike were arrested on 18 July and subsequently brought to trial. A.A. Heaps, Reverend William Ivens, R.E. Bray, George Armstrong, John Queen, R.J. Johns and W.A. Pritchard were jointly charged on six counts of seditious conspiracy.

Bloody Saturday took place on 21 June. 25,000 workers assembled downtown for a planned march. Winnipeg Mayor Charles Gray read the riot act. When the 'forbidden' rally began Mayor Gray had at his disposal nearly 2,000 special constables, men from the Royal North-West Mounted Police (RNWMP), and General Ketchen's 800-strong militia along with its armoured car with three machine guns. RNWMP rode into the crowd of strikers, beating them with clubs, and then the Specials followed up, beating protesters with baseball bats and cudgels while the army patrolled the streets. By the time Bloody Saturday was over, one man - Mike Sokolowski - was shot dead and another protestor dying a few days later from his wounds. Many were injured and many arrested. Authorities also shut down the striker's paper and arrested the editors for commentating on the events of Bloody Saturday.

On 26 June, the strike was called off.

General Strikes as union tactic

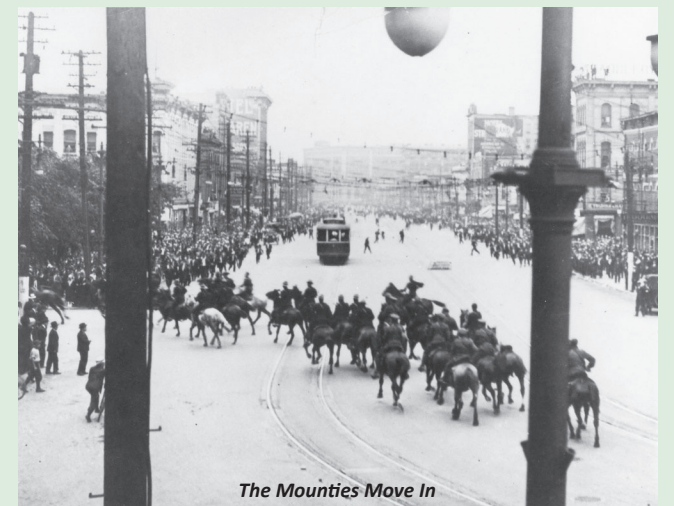
The tactic of a general strike keeps returning so we should not be surprised that the Winnipeg Strike will receive the attention of many on the Left who think that a general strike can bring on the social revolution and the fall of the whole capitalist system. The mirage that the general strike is the way to achieve socialism must be rejected. It is impossible for the working class to take and hold industry as long as the state is in the hands of the capitalist class. Time after time we have seen general strikes defeated by the forces at the disposal of the ruling class through their control of the machinery of government. Sometimes brutal force has been used, sometimes concessions are made, and sometimes, workers are

starved into submission. As James Connolly said, 'a full wallet wins out against an empty belly.'

An ill-prepared or poorly supported general strike usually is a huge self-inflicted defeat for the working class. The groundwork for one needs to be laid in every workplace and every community to ensure that no one is under any illusions that it will be an easy fight against an alliance of employers and the government. When we speak of the general strike, we are not concerned with the all-out strike of a single trade union but of all workers. It is no longer an expression of the trade union movement but has become a class movement. For the general strike to have a chance of success, workers should be convinced of the importance of the goal. It must be shown that the purpose is legitimate and victory a realisable prospect. The general strike cannot be camouflage for revolution. The general strike, although powerless in itself as a revolutionary strategy, remains an important tool for the working class. In war, including the class war, there are only two options: fight to win, or yield. Both options produce casualties. There is no safe option for workers under attack in the class war, no place to hide in the hope of protecting one's individual job, dignity and life. We can be certain that capital will continue to assault labour and workers will continue to defend their rights. Whether workers prevail will depend on the extent to which they fight as a class, using their greatest power – the power to stop production. Workers must use their power as a class and fight as a class. We must remember what it takes to win – fighting as a class. The general strike is a method to inflict damage upon our class enemy to protect ourselves rather than the means of our emancipation. Unions are bodies for economic defence, not political struggle. Workers join unions and go on strike to put more bread on the table. Only an independent political organisation of workers - a world socialist party - can promote the interests of the working class as a whole.

Bill Pritchard made a solidarity speech to Vancouver workers that their comrades in Winnipeg were in the fight, and it was now a question of standing by them and, if necessary, going down with them — or, later, going down by themselves. His advice was: 'If you are going to drown — drown splashing!' The working class must stand united, however ill-prepared their forces and however badly chosen the field.

ALJO



People as Commodities

A slave is the property of another person, just like a book, a shirt or a car. A slave can be bought, sold, punished, mistreated, ordered around, with no power or means to object or resist. Slavery was a lengthy stage in human history, found in the Roman Empire among many other places, and, with the slave trade, played a significant part of the development of countries such as the UK and the USA. It still exists today, and one of its most prevalent forms is human trafficking, the trade in human beings, which brings in vast profits for some and is accompanied by unspeakable human misery.

Human trafficking 'involves recruitment, harbouring or transporting people into a situation of exploitation through the use of violence, deception or coercion [where they are] forced to work against their will' (antislavery.org). It applies to perhaps twenty million people, though statistics are unreliable given its secretive nature; in 2016, there were globally fifteen thousand prosecutions for trafficking, with 66,000 victims identified. It need not imply actual transporting of a person from one place to another, as people can be forced or duped into working without necessarily being moved around. The term 'modern slavery' is sometimes employed in a slightly



different sense, without recruitment having to take place, as some people are actually born into slavery. But 'slavery' and 'trafficking' are frequently used interchangeably.

Often people are lured with promises of well-paid work in a comfortable situation with plenty of time off, only to find that they are effectively enslaved, living in dreadful conditions, forced to work long hours, with no pay and no holidays, given just enough food to maintain them; moreover, they have no dependants who need to be supported. Their passports will often be confiscated as a way of controlling them, and they may be threatened with violence or deportation if they complain too much. Women trafficked into sex slavery are a prominent example, with them having no say in how many men they have sex with. Other examples include domestic servitude and forced labour, including people having to work to pay off huge debts. Promises of a career in top-flight football are used to entice boys to travel to Europe. Even when released from slavery, the victims may be deported, or else left in limbo for months or years while police and government agencies decide what to do.

Some individual cases will put a human face on the statistics and general descriptions. In December 2017 two men pleaded guilty to trafficking a vulnerable 19-year-old woman who was compelled to carry drugs from London to Swansea (*Guardian*, 13 April 2018). After an exchange on social media, she had

been lured into a car and driven to South Wales. Her mobile phone had been destroyed, and she had been beaten and forced to store Class A drugs inside her. One estimate is that thirteen thousand people in the UK are held in slavery.

In a Bangladesh town, Rohingya refugees from Myanmar were trafficked to Malaysia, sometimes paying for the journey, sometimes taken in by promises of relatively high wages (*New York Times*, 23 July 2015). It began as a small-scale operation but gradually became much larger, even involving people being abducted so they could be trafficked. As many as twenty-five thousand made the journey in the first three months of 2015. People would be held in camps and their families asked for a ransom before they were released; and mass graves were discovered. It became a multi-million-dollar business, and any arrests were confined to low-level participants, rather than the police or politicians who were rumoured to be involved.

The US food industry makes much use of trafficked workers, in restaurants, bars and agriculture (npr.org, 29 March 2017). The workers come mostly from Asia and Latin America, are housed in squalid conditions, have no medical care, and can be controlled by being threatened with deportation. Poor knowledge of English helps to isolate them and makes it hard for them to fight against their situation.

The border between Nepal and India is a busy route for traffickers. Often men make contact with girls on Facebook, and then convince them to leave their families and run away with them, but with the sole aim of selling them to a brothel once they are over the border in India. One woman who now helps to spot trafficking victims at a border post said, 'My boyfriend sold one of my kidneys and then he sold me. I am only alive today because I was rescued' (*Guardian*, 8 February).

In 2017 the US State Department published a comprehensive report on human trafficking. The then Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, noted there that trafficking robs human beings of their freedom and dignity. But he also stated that it 'distorts global markets' and 'undermines the rule of law'. This is one reason why capitalism is opposed to trafficking and so attempts to stop or at least restrict it: it disrupts the 'proper' functioning of the profit and market system. If some employers can get round laws relating to minimum wages, health and safety, and workers' abilities to defend their working conditions, they are likely to make bigger profits than those who abide by such regulations. Politicians and so on may have moral objections to trafficking, but there are economic arguments too.

Slavery is fundamentally different from wage labour. Whatever the restrictions on workers who sell their labour power for a wage, slaves and trafficked workers are in a far worse situation. They have their whole lives controlled by those who own them, and cannot stand up for themselves in any way. Their living and working conditions are much inferior to even the most badly-paid and insecure wage workers.

The causes of slaving and trafficking are not hard to see. A few people make massive profit from such activities, while far more – often desperate and perhaps somewhat naive – are fooled into thinking that they have found a way to get on in the world, or coerced into working for a slave master. Basically it is their poverty that causes them to be trafficked, a situation that is likely to continue for as long as capitalism does.

PB

Radical World History from Below

In his *A Radical History of the World* (Pluto Press, 2018), described as 'a history of the world from below', Neil Faulkner is at pains to point to the endeavours of the 'common people' and to highlight the many historical examples of class resistance by the masses to their oppression. Most of this class struggle was of course unequal and a significant amount of the narrative tells stories of ferocity, atrocity and murder against the poor, weak and powerless by the wealthy, strong and powerful. At the same time the author makes it clear that history has also had (and has) other significant interacting drivers, in particular cumulative technical advance and struggles between rival ruling classes for control of surplus wealth, leading to wars and invasions on an ever increasing scale. So we are told how in Iron Age China, as the Qin rulers fought for supremacy over the Zhou dynasty, after one battle, 100,000 prisoners were beheaded and the King of Qin adopted the title of 'Divine Emperor'. The Roman Empire is described as 'a predatory imperial system of robbery with violence' in which 'the Roman ruling class seized by force the surplus, labour and means of production controlled by foreign ruling classes'.

The necessarily 'broad sweep' method that a 500-page book seeking to cover the whole of human history has to adopt is highly successful here in conveying how those drivers acted on human development and moved humanity through various phases from a relatively stable hunter-gatherer society to today's advanced industrial capitalism. So, for example, it tells us how, once settled agriculture became widespread as a way of living and produced a surplus, society became hierarchical and private property, class domination and power structures were established based on power and wealth differences. At the same time it illustrates the immense complexity of the development of class societies in different parts of the globe, while also pointing to their similarities, i.e. 'the dominance of one class over another or others, the exploitation of a propertyless majority by a small, wealthy, propertied majority, this always seeming to be a permanent, unchanging and never-ending state of affairs'.

Oh dear

Perhaps inevitably the largest part of this book deals with more recent history, the history of capitalist development - first from the seventeenth century onwards in its mercantile form and then moving to its industrial phase in the nineteenth century. The story of the coming of this 'new world order dominated by the market and the profit motive' is narrated with the succinctness and clarity characteristic of the way the whole book is written. And the 'history from below' element of this book comes much more to the fore in the author's perspectives on the development and events of modern capitalism. He sees many of the twists and turns of the last 200 or so years as driven, at least in part, by mass action of the dispossessed, from the French Revolution ('driven forward by mass action from below'), through the ending of the First World War ('ended by the revolutionary action of millions of workers, soldiers, sailors, and peasants across Europe') and the events of the Bolshevik revolution ('the Russian revolution had shown how the working class might lead a socialist revolution in a predominantly peasant country') to what are seen as revolutionary events that could

potentially have led to the working class taking power and to 'successful Socialist revolutions' in various parts of the globe since the second world war (i.e. Hungary 1956, France 1968, Chile 1972, Portugal 1974, Spain 1976, Iran 1979, Eastern Europe 1989).

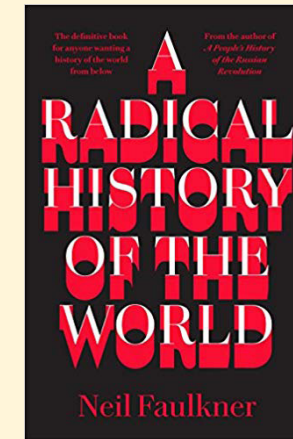
Oh dear. Socialist revolution needs mass understanding of the class nature of society and in none of those places at those times is there any evidence that such understanding existed. Struggle there may have been, but it was struggle to cast off one brand of ruler or way of running capitalism for another ('new rider, same mule', as the writer says of the post-revolutionary order in nineteenth century Latin America). This is a pity, since this book shows profound knowledge and understanding of the nature of capitalism ('capitalism is an irrational and dysfunctional system. Crisis is never far away. Boom and slump are its natural rhythms'), of its class basis ('a minority continue(d) to enjoy grotesque wealth while millions live(d) in poverty'), and of the potential for modern technology to produce an abundance of goods and abolish human want ('humanity is capable of producing unprecedented amounts of wealth'). It also makes real the enormity of capitalism's wars in terms of people killed,

lives destroyed and environmental ruin. Yet it is somehow stuck in the idea that a decent alternative society to replace capitalism can be brought about by a disgruntled but not initially class-conscious majority being led by a class-conscious 'leadership' into 'explosive' mass action to seize state power and this majority quickly developing that consciousness as a result. This is what informs the author's view about what he sees as 'near misses' in revolutions in the twentieth century (Russia, France, Spain, etc.). In reality the society to replace capitalism, though it needs to come from mass action from below, can only happen when the masses first understand the need for it and collectively take action to bring

it about. So, though the author has no illusions about the horrors Stalinism visited on the Russian people ('to satisfy the pace of state capitalist accumulation, the working class, the peasantry and the national minorities had to be pulverised into submission'), it is hard to regard the views he expresses on the Russian revolution and other uprisings elsewhere in the world since as other than romantic illusion.

So, in the later pages, we have less a history and more an ever so eloquent manifesto – broadly speaking a Trotskyist one. Yet, even so, from a socialist point of view, there is a vast amount to recommend in this book. Its consistently pithy characterisations of important truths are a joy to read ('capitalism is a system of competitive capital accumulation driven by profit and the enrichment of the few'; 'the struggle for reforms is a Labour of Sisyphus, in which that which has been won by ... one generation can as easily be lost in the next'; 'the stability of any class society ... requires that the masses be divided among themselves'; 'the Chinese ... have the worst of both worlds: the drudgery, poverty, and insecurity of free market capitalism, and the authoritarianism of a Stalinist police state.'). It defies the tenets of conventional history, slices through complexity and challenges the idea that historical judgement has to be 'neutral'. And it also quotes a marvellous line from Rousseau: 'You are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody'.

HOWARD MOSS



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How much are you worth?

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the Democrat member of the US House of Representatives who calls herself a socialist, tweeted in February:

'Workers are often paid for less than the value they create.'

The American financial magazine, *Business Insider*, picked this up, commenting 'this is essentially a restatement of Karl Marx's "Labour Theory of Value"'. But was it?

Ocasio-Cortez doesn't claim to be a Marxist – claiming to be a socialist is shocking enough for mainstream America – but her tweet is in the language of Marxian economics: workers create value and are paid less than the value they create. However, a further tweet suggested that she has a different theory of worker exploitation:

'In fact, wages are so low today compared to actual worker productivity that they are no longer the reflection of worker value as they used to be. Productivity has grown 62x more than wages.'

Since productivity is output per worker measured in money, 'output' can be very crudely – very crudely – interpreted as 'value', so what she is saying is that value created has increased faster than the value of what workers have been paid as wages.

Her beef is not that workers are paid less than the value of what they produce, but that they are not being paid enough of this value. On this theory, workers exploitation 'in the economic sense' is, as Paul Johnson put it in the *Times* (18 March), 'being paid less than their productivity would warrant'. This was not Marx's theory. He regarded all workers who produced value (and, for him, not all workers did) as being exploited in the sense that they *always* created a greater value than they were paid.

In its attempt to explain Marx's theory, the *Business Insider* wrote:

'Workers in a shoe factory are paid far less than the value they create. They have to be. If 100% of the money from shoe sales were paid directly to the workers then the factory would go out of business ... But that raises a contradiction. If all workers are paid less than the value they create, then there will never be enough workers to buy the

things they make.'

This is obviously true, but the article went on to misinterpret Marx:

'Marx thought capitalism was inherently unstable precisely because workers are not paid the full value of their labour, and precisely because it is impossible for capitalists to pay them the full value without going bankrupt. It's one of the internal contradictions that capitalism cannot resolve.'

There is a whole school of economics which argues this. But not Marx. The obvious flaw in this 'underconsumption' argument is that the part of the newly created value that the workers can't buy back can be bought by the capitalists out of the 'surplus value' they receive. Not so much to buy shoes and other consumer goods but producer goods like factories, machines, parts, materials and power. However, they will only re-invest profits in expanding production if they judge there is a prospect of making further profits by doing so. It is this that makes capitalism 'inherently instable' as this condition is regularly not met, meaning that capitalism continuously lurches from boom to slump and back again.

PROPER GANDER

Investigating The Yorkshire Ripper Investigation

Many documentaries about serial killers have a barely-disguised morbid streak to them. Gravel-voiced narration, flashy graphics and salacious reconstructions of the crimes often sensationalise the most horrendous acts. Fortunately, these kinds of cheap tactics to pull in the viewers weren't found in BBC4's recent three-part series *The Yorkshire Ripper Files: A Very British Crime Story*. Filmmaker Liza Williams focuses on the women who were attacked by the 'Yorkshire Ripper' and the police's hunt for him, interviewing some of the victims and their families, along with detectives, lawyers and journalists involved. Williams perceptively draws out how the case highlights some of the attitudes to women common during the 1970s.

Peter Sutcliffe killed 13 women and attacked at least eight others between 1975 and 1981, with his first assault dating back to 1969 (which the police dismissed at the time). He found his victims in Leeds, Bradford and surrounding areas, leading the press to dub him the 'Yorkshire Ripper'. Sutcliffe looked for women out alone late at night, began to talk to them and then struck them with a hammer before stabbing them. As well as the pain and grief caused to the victims' families, communities across the north lived in fear and suspicion.

Sutcliffe tended to target suburbs known for prostitution, such as Chapeltown in Leeds. Many families were struggling to cope financially, with jobs lost through the decline of heavy industries in the area, and so some women were pushed into the sex trade to bring in enough money. Police referred to the victims as women of 'loose morals' or 'doubtful moral character', and it was expected that they would treat crimes against sex workers less seriously than those against other people. For the police, sex workers were a frequent annoyance. Whenever a sex worker was arrested, they would get fined by the courts, and released to go back on the game to pay the fine, and so the cycle continued. As the number of Sutcliffe's victims grew, police officers, trained less in 'Public Relations' than now, came out with statements like 'of course we can't cater for the killing of the odd female at any

time'. The press were predictably tactless and offensive in how they reported the murders, referring to 'good time girls' and using headlines like 'the hazards of the job – by a whore'.

Prevalent attitudes of the time were also highlighted by the response to Sutcliffe's first murder of a woman not linked to prostitution, in 1977. Among many people there was the view that only now had the killer gone too far, and the police investigation was stepped up. The victims who weren't sex workers were described as 'innocent' and 'respectable', implying that the sex workers weren't. Alongside this was the assumption that sex workers were worth less than the other victims, and even that they deserved to be attacked.



Milgarth Police Station, Leeds. Centre of the Ripper Investigation.

Even though some of the victims had no connection to prostitution, the police, especially in the early years of the enquiry, focused on the theory that the killer was fuelled by hatred for sex workers. This narrowed their perspective too much; detectives followed their assumption that only sex workers were being targeted, which meant they didn't connect similar attacks on other women, and thereby missed important information. The case also shows other prejudices among the police. In 1976, Marcella Claxton survived being attacked, and subsequently provided a fairly accurate description of Sutcliffe. However, as the documentary explains, the police, predisposed against black women, didn't trust Marcella's testimony, and told her that her attacker must have been black. Again, vital evidence which could have caught Sutcliffe earlier and prevented further attacks was

ignored because of institutional bias.

The police investigation became the 'biggest manhunt in British criminal history', albeit botched. As well as not recognising Sutcliffe's attacks on women who weren't sex workers, the police were also diverted by fixating on a tape recording and letters sent to them by someone purporting to be the killer, which turned out to be a hoax. Sutcliffe was questioned and released nine times before being caught, which happened by chance when his car was found to have false number plates, by police officers not even assigned to the case.

In concentrating on the investigation and the stories of the victims, the documentary spends little time on Sutcliffe himself. It seems that he led an

otherwise unremarkable life, on the surface. He was quiet, married, and worked as a lorry driver. He developed a fascination with corpses, and a violent anger towards women other than his wife. He targeted sex workers because of their vulnerability and likelihood to be out alone after dark as much as because he hated them. Once arrested, he soon confessed to the attacks, meaning that his trial didn't need to determine whether he had committed the crimes, but instead whether mental illness accounted for his actions. Sutcliffe claimed diminished responsibility following his diagnosis of

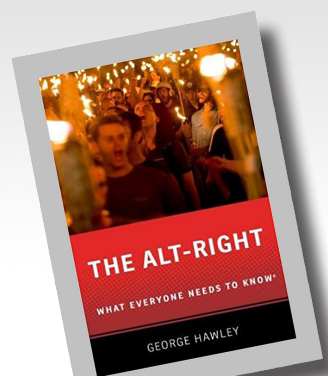
schizophrenia, but this defence wasn't accepted by the jury and he was imprisoned, where he remains now.

So, what does the case tell us about society's attitudes at the time? As the documentary brings out, it was particularly shaped by views towards sex workers, not only in Sutcliffe's brutal hatred of them, but also in the police's demeaning assumptions. Attitudes to women, both in terms of dismissing their evidence and of them somehow being less worthy if they were sex workers, shaped and delayed the investigation. The police, being a part of the state, are bound to reflect the values encouraged by our alienating, divisive system.

MIKE FOSTER

REVIEWS

Outside Right



George Hawley: **The Alt-Right: What Everyone Needs to Know.** Oxford University Press £10.99.

The label Alternative Right (now usually shortened to Alt-Right) was coined in 2008. It refers to a 'far-right radical movement' in the US, which has had some impact but is possibly now in decline, plagued by infighting. Here George Hawley discusses its origins, history and influences, and its connections to other political viewpoints.

As a movement rather than an actual party or organisation, the Alt-Right consists of a range of views, but the obnoxious core beliefs of its supporters can be described fairly simply. The oft-cited Fourteen Words are: 'We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children', while the website of the National Policy Institute, an Alt-Right think tank, describes it as 'dedicated to the heritage, identity, and future of people of European descent in the United States and around the world'. The Alt-Right is explicitly racist, seeing race as a biological category, and advocating white identity politics and a white ethnostate; it wishes to end all non-white immigration to the US. It is anti-Semitic, anti-feminist, and often misogynistic. Some of its supporters are neo-Nazis, but by no means all. It is not populist, as it holds in contempt many who are not part of the elite, calling them 'norms' and viewing them as not 'racially aware'.

The US political system, together with the vast sums spent by the two main parties, means that the Alt-Right has had little electoral success. It is mainly an online movement, setting up its own websites, making great use of social media, trolling people with other ideas and seeking to influence others. It has been open to doxing, where the real-

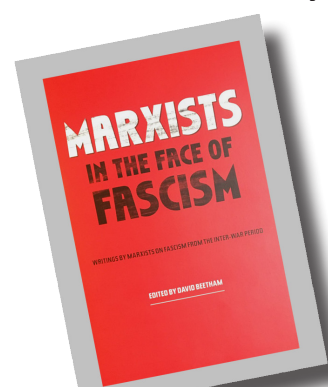
world identities of anonymous Alt-Right bloggers and contributors are revealed by opponents, which often causes problems for them. Its informal nature means it is impossible to say how many supporters or sympathisers it has, though its core advocates are fortunately fairly few in number.

The main example of Alt-Right activism that was not online was the 'Unite the Right' rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017. This became very violent, with many protesting in opposition, and one counter-protester was killed when a car was driven into a group of them. The rally clearly harmed the Alt-Right's reputation, though Donald Trump claimed that both sides shared responsibility for what happened.

Hawley gives a fairly thorough account of the various influences on the Alt-Right, their links to European organisations and their differences from mainstream conservatives. However, what the book lacks is much description and analysis of their ideas and aims. Presumably this is because, as he says, they do not 'offer a coherent or well-developed set of policy proposals'. But some more discussion of the views of its main figures, beyond the brief descriptions given, would have been helpful.

PB

Fascism as history



Marxists in the Face of Fascism. Writings by Marxists on Fascism from the inter-war period. Edited by David Beetham, Haymarket Books. 2019. 380 pages.

In his introduction to this reprint of a book that first came out in 1984, the editor points out that fascism is not a contemporary threat as historical conditions are not the same as they were between the last century's two world wars. The word 'fascist', however, is still frequently bandied about today and not just by 'anti-fascists' as it has come to

be used to describe any authoritarian individual or action. It was even misused at the time, as Togliatti, a leader of the Italian Communist Party pointed out in 1928 in one of his articles reprinted here: 'It has become customary to use it to designate every form of reaction. (...) [W]henver the so-called democratic freedoms sanctified by bourgeois constitutions are attacked or violated, one hears the cry: "Fascism is here, fascism has arrived."'

The book is a collection of articles from the period by mainstream Communists, dissident Communists, and Social Democrats. The original fascists were the followers of Mussolini who came to power in Italy in 1922 but the word was soon used to describe any reactionary, openly anti-working-class movement anywhere. The official Comintern line was that fascism was a mass mobilisation of the 'petty bourgeoisie' to further the interests of 'finance capital' that arose because of the failure of other countries to emulate the Bolsheviks' seizure of power in Russia in 1917. After Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933 it was seen as a particular threat to Russia whose foreign policy interests the Comintern was committed to defending.

Despite what Togliatti said, the Comintern did describe, as can be seen from their writings here, any policy of attacking working class living standards as 'fascist.' It was on this basis that, for a period, they denounced the Social Democrats as 'social fascists' because, when in government on their own or in coalition, they felt they had no choice but to support such a policy. As Otto Bauer, the leader of the Austrian Social Democrats quoted in the introduction, said in its defence: 'if you won't create a socialist society, then you must do nothing to disturb the mechanism of the capitalist order, under pain of economic catastrophe.'

It was not until 1933 that fascists (though that is not what the Nazis called themselves) came to power in Germany. The myth has grown up that this could have been prevented if only the Social Democrats and Communists had united to oppose it. This did not happen as the Communists had only just stopped calling the Social Democrats 'social fascists', while the Social Democrats pursued the policy of 'tolerating' as the lesser evil any government as long as it didn't include the Nazis. This policy failed as the non-Nazi right-wing parties did eventually allow Hitler to come to power constitutionally.

In Austria the Social Democrats did pursue, as Bauer pointed out, the different policy of refusing to 'tolerate'

REVIEWS

Under Pressure



James Bloodworth: **Hired: Six Months Undercover in Low-Wage Britain.** Atlantic £8.99.

any government that didn't include them. But they too were crushed, though by a different reactionary group to the Nazis. It was left to Kautsky to make the point that, as the Social Democrats and Communists together still represented only a minority of the population, there was not much they could have done to stop a government in control of political power and enjoying majority acquiescence.

It has to be said that the Social Democrats represented here, Bauer and Kautsky in particular, came up with a better analysis than the Communists. In fact it is surprising how 'Marxist' they were compared to the Leninists. Apart from Togliatti, the official Communists (who like the fascists also stood for a totalitarian, one-party dictatorship) didn't have much interesting to say, while the dissident Communists Trotsky and Thalheimer only confused things by irrelevantly describing 'fascism' as a form of 'Bonapartism' (after Napoleon's nephew who ruled France as dictator between 1852 and 1870).

Bauer, in the last article he wrote before his death in 1938, saw what was coming and why:

'With the new division of power brought about by the treaties of 1919 British and French imperialism achieved their war aims, and since then they have successfully defended the position of power won by conquest in the war. The imperialism of Great Britain and France is the imperialism of the satisfied, of the satiated. For this reason it is conservative and peaceful. In Germany and Italy, in contrast, there developed an aggressive, warlike imperialism, which seeks to revise the global distribution of economic and political power.'

This is one reason why fascism was a product of a specific period of twentieth-century history which is highly unlikely to be repeated, however much some may still cry 'fascist'.

ALB



This is a report on time spent living in various towns and working in insecure badly-paid jobs. It gives a vivid and depressing picture of what life is like for so many people who are near, if not quite at, the bottom of the social pyramid.

Bloodworth began in Rugeley, Staffordshire, working in an Amazon warehouse. Most workers there were recruited through one of two agencies, often on a zero-hours contract. The work was 'physically exhausting' and 'mentally deadening', as it involved walking around ten miles a day in the enormous warehouse, and it was particularly hard on those who were overweight or elderly. Simply walking to the canteen or queueing to have your pockets checked could take ten minutes or so, and that time was not paid for. Workers' every move was tracked by management, and they could be told to speed up. Six disciplinary points would lead to you being sacked ('released' was the euphemism used), and points could be awarded for being ill or being late because Amazon's bus had broken down. Few local workers would put up with the conditions for long, hence the high staff turnover and the many Eastern Europeans employed there. And the agencies would often pay workers late or underpay them.

Then he travelled to Blackpool, where he worked in the adult home care sector. Again there was a high staff turnover here, partly caused by the low wages but also by the fact that workers often had to rush around to complete their calls, making their working day very long and giving them barely enough time to deal with each person they visited. Many isolated elderly people just wanted a bit of a chat

but there was rarely time to do more than the bare minimum of caring. The private companies to which home caring has been outsourced just saw the people being looked after as 'first and foremost pound symbols on a balance sheet'.

In South Wales Bloodworth worked at a call centre in Swansea for the Admiral insurance company. He found working there relatively positive and tolerable, though there were still league tables for performance, and staff turnover was above the national average.

His final destination was London, where he worked as a cab driver for Uber, though strictly he was an 'independent contractor' in the gig economy. Industries like this are full of nice-sounding terms that mask the underlying reality: so the money earned at Deliveroo is called a fee rather than a wage. Uber benefits from having lots of drivers on call, with all the risk of going some time without a fare passed on to the drivers. The pay earned is unpredictable, and there are limits on how many trip requests can be rejected. He reckoned that his annual take-home pay would have been £15,600, about £7.50 an hour.

Besides describing the work he did, Bloodworth also says quite a bit about the towns he stayed in. Rugeley is one of several former mining areas that are now home to Amazon warehouses, but have seen little 'economic regeneration'. Of Ebbw Vale, he says it 'remains trapped in limbo between an industrial past and a future that has yet to arrive'. Blackpool, where the tourist trade has drastically shrunk, has some of the most deprived areas in England, a big homelessness problem and a suicide rate almost twice the national average.

He says that consumers have become used to products that are cheap because of places like the Amazon warehouse. But the blame lies in the system, not in those who are themselves victims of it.

PB



50 Years Ago

Elitism still haunts disenchanted Bolsheviks

Socialists are active wherever workers are developing their ideas through discussion. So a few of us turned up at the weekend conference of 'Libertarian Marxists' in Manchester. This was organised mainly by people who had become disenchanted with Bolshevism in the shape of the so-called 'International Socialism' group.

It was encouraging to find a number of workers, formerly committed to the extreme centralism of the Vanguard Party, who have seen through that fraud and come out against leadership. Unfortunately it soon became clear that elitist ideas were not dead. The conference was dominated by three speakers (R. Sumner, S. James, M. Orr), who together took up 90 per cent of the time. The air was thick with talk of 'the intellectuals' and their relationship to 'the workers', and the notion that workers learnt only from personal experience whilst abstract ideas were beyond them—the usual leftist claptrap.

Among the gems were S. James's announcement that she was a black nationalist, after she had denounced racism(!), and her revelation that 'workers can't read big books'. R. Sumner wanted 'all Socialists' to unite in bringing out a newspaper, without any 'contentious arguments' about what Socialism was. And M. Orr, an advocate of 'self-management', when pushed, said that he was in favour of abolishing wages, but not in favour of abolishing money!

They looked to incidents like the 1956 Hungarian uprising, and the May events in France, to bring 'Socialism.' We should not, therefore, take them too seriously, particularly as Mrs. James's model of a revolution without leaders was Castro's takeover in Cuba, and Mr. Orr insisted that the socialist revolution would be carried out by a minority, while the majority of the population was passive.

(*Socialist Standard*, May 1969)

OUR TIME TO ACT HAS COME

'We have reached a point in history when we have the technical capacities to solve poverty, malnutrition, inequality and, of course, global warming. The deciding factors for whether we take advantage of our potential will be our activism and our international unity. We need to start cooperating and sharing the remaining resources of this planet in a fair way.' So said one of the students involved in the climate change school strikes.

She probably does not regard herself as a socialist, but she echoes the goal pursued by the Socialist Party of Great Britain since it was founded in 1904: the planet owned in common and democratically controlled by the people who live on it, with production for need and not for profit.

Brexit or no Brexit, the market system continues to stand between us and what we need to live a good life: healthy food, good housing, access to health care and a clean environment.

Take the Folkestone seafront redevelopment. A socialist society would freely cooperate to design and build this on a human scale. It would democratically agree to use resources to repair



and run the Leas lift without having to beg for funding: in a society of common ownership, finance will no longer be a factor. Compare this with the powerlessness we all feel today, at the mercy of what is profitable for developers.

Voting for the Socialist Party will not of course bring

about this society overnight. But it will send a signal that we will no longer tolerate a world run in the profitable, destructive interests of a tiny minority. There is nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come.

The Socialist Party candidate is Andy Thomas.

Election leaflet for council election in Folkestone & Hythe District Council and Folkestone Town Council (Harbour ward) on Thursday 2 May.

NOTE: The Leas Lift was originally installed in Folkestone in 1885 and is a Grade II listed water-balanced funicular railway - one of the oldest water lifts in the country. For more than a century it carried passengers between the seafront and the promenade, with thousands of people per day using it at its peak in the 1940s and 1950s. But in 2016 it closed because of health and safety issues, and supporters are now working hard to raise the money for it to open again as a living museum. <https://www.visitkent.co.uk/attractions/the-leas-lift-2701/>

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

Meetings:

MAY 2019

CARDIFF

Every Saturday 1pm to 3pm (weather permitting)
Literature street stall
Queen Street (Newport Road end)

MANCHESTER

Sunday 5 May
May Day March (from All Saints Park on Oxford Road to Mechanics Centre) from 11.00 followed by Rally at Mechanics Centre
The Socialist Party will be leafletting these events. Meet outside Eighth Day (the vegetarian shop and café on the opposite side of Oxford Road from All Saints Park) at 10.50

BURNLEY

Monday 6 May from 11.00 a.m.
May Day Festival
Towneley Park, Burnley, BB11 3RQ
The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event.

SOUTHAMPTON

Monday 6 May from 12.00 noon to 4.00 am
The Bandstand, Palmerston Park, SO14 1ND (between Pound Tree, Palmerston and New Roads, and above Bar St).
The Socialist Party will have a stall at this May Day event.

BURFORD

Saturday 11 May from midday
Levellers Day
Warwick Hall, Church Green, Burford, Oxfordshire OX18 4RY
The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event.

SALISBURY

Saturday 18 May, 2.00 p.m.
South West Branch has been re-activated and will be meeting on the 3rd Saturday of each month commencing 18 May
Venue: Railway Tavern, 131 South Western Road, Salisbury SP2 7RR.

LONDON

Hammersmith

Saturday 25 May, 2.000 - 4.00 p.m.
Public Debate: Is the reduction of working time a revolutionary measure?
Yes: Simon Wigley (Labour Party member)
No: Socialist Party speaker.
Venue: Quaker Meeting House, 20 Nigel Playfair Avenue, London W6 9JY.
Nearest tubes: Hammersmith, Ravenscourt Park.

Street Stall, Wood Green - 11 May

<https://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/event/street-stall-wood-green-north-london-11am/>

North London Branch meeting/Social to celebrate Cde John Lee's 70 years in the Party - 16 May
<https://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/event/north-london-branch-kentish-town-8pm-2/>

Party Calendar - navigate to May

<https://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/events/>

MANCHESTER

Saturday 25 May, 2.00 p.m.
Following the Samuel Bamford Trail, Middleton (north Manchester)
Meet by the travel shop at Middleton bus station

JUNE 2019

CARDIFF

Every Saturday 1pm to 3pm (weather permitting)
Literature street stall
Queen Street (Newport Road end)



Declaration of Principles

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

Object

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

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

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



Chronic poverty

Marx (Groucho, that is) said: 'Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies.' The same applies to reformism.

1965: Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) formed.

1997: UK had the highest rate of child poverty in the industrialised world

1999: Blair: 'Our historic aim will be for ours to be the first generation to end child poverty forever, and it will take a generation. It is a twenty-year mission, but I believe it can be done.'

2019: 'DWP child poverty figures a 'national scandal' as 4.1million kids are hit' (mirror.co.uk, 28 March).

Diagnosis

This 'problem' existed long before the CPAG and many other charities came into being and will persist for another 50+ years if we continue to address symptoms rather than the underlying disease. Oscar Wilde expressed this well: 'their remedies do not cure the disease: they merely prolong it. Indeed, their remedies are part of the disease. They try to solve the problem of poverty, for instance, by keeping the poor alive; or, in the case of a very advanced school, by amusing the poor. But this is not a solution: it is an aggravation of the difficulty. The proper aim is to try and reconstruct society on such a basis that poverty will be impossible' (*The Soul of Man under Socialism*, 1891). The same *Daily Mirror* article informs us: 'The Child Poverty Action Group warned the Tories' cruel benefit freeze will plunge another 100,000 children into poverty by 2023-24.' Elsewhere (independent.co.uk, 15 March) we are reminded that parallels with 19th century poverty are not unwarranted. 'Britain's poverty crisis has seen children arrive at school with holes in their shoes and worn-out trousers, while some as young as 11 feel they have to work to provide food for their family, headteachers have warned. School leaders are providing

clothes, food and sanitary products to disadvantaged pupils.'

Political placebo

Prescriptions and pronouncements from politicians should be treated with the contempt they deserve. 'Work and Pensions Secretary Amber Rudd admitted the figures were "disappointing". She told MPs: "I have acknowledged that today's statistics are disappointing and I am highlighting that there is more to be done, both in terms of other services around benefits and in terms of my engagement with the Chancellor." She



added "no one in government wants to see poverty rise" and "we all came into politics to help people plot a path to a better life"' (mirror.co.uk, 28 March). Rudd and the other Mendacious Parasites do not serve us. Indeed, their disdain is often obvious. 'A group of homeless people were kicked out of public tunnels next to the Houses of Parliament. One man

claimed he was told by a police officer that an MP had complained about their presence. Two of the men who had been sleeping in the tunnels to keep warm told the *Independent* that Metropolitan Police officers ejecting them had cited section four of the Vagrancy Act 1824 – the 19th-century law which criminalises rough sleeping and begging. One man said a police officer had also mentioned clearing the tunnels, which connect Westminster Tube station to an entrance to parliament, "so the MPs can get to work"' (independent.co.uk, 26 March).

The socialist scalpel

Reformists and MPs, however well intentioned, serve the status quo here in the UK as do their counterparts worldwide. Too many poor? Let us have fairer wages. Only two minutes to midnight? Let the great leaders sign treaties. Are we drowning in plastic? Let us ban drinking straws. No more reformist rhetoric! Reforms can secure social stability: when the rule of capital appears to be under threat the ruling class is 'only too glad to buy a prolonged armistice at the price of ever-repeated concessions to the working people' (Engels). Capitalism is a worldwide system of war and want. After hundreds of years of reformism, both the problems of war and poverty, which most people consider to be rather important, are still major problems and are nowhere near solution. Those prescribing continuing medication when radical surgery is needed tell us that it is utopian to seek change which is not slow and gradual. We reply that we are in a hurry; we are not content with the way in which capitalism has been reformed and there are no reforms which could be offered that will distract us from the clear road ahead; we have a world to win and those who will not join us stand in our way.



FREE LUNCH

