

socialist standard

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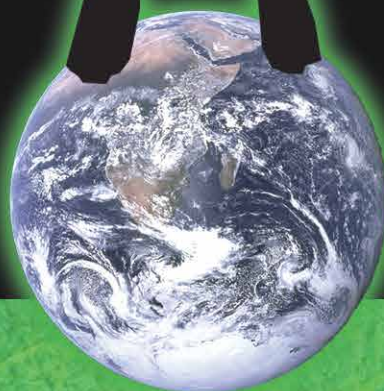
Journal of the Socialist Party of Great Britain Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement



**IDENTITY
POLITICS**



**CLASS
POLITICS**



also:
Mental Health
Climate Change
Game of Thrones



socialist standard

Contents September 2019

Features

- 10 No Outsiders**
Class Inclusivity
- 12 Mental Health**
In a Mad, Mad, World
- 14 Africa**
Can it help feed us all?
- 15 Capitalism & Climate Change**
Cause and Effect
- 16 Game of Thrones**
Medieval Clichés
- 17 Tolpuddle**
A Festival of Remembrance
- 18 Easy Rider**
Remembering Peter Fonda



Regulars

- Editorial 3**
- Pathfinders 4**
- Letters 5**
- Cooking the Books 6**
- Wood for the Trees 7**
- Material World 9**
- Cooking the Books II 18**
- Proper Gander 19**
- Reviews 20**
- 50 Years Ago 22**
- Meetings 23**
- Rear View 24**
- Free Lunch 24**



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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Save the planet, share the Earth

* Climate change is real and is a serious problem for all of us.

* Climate change has resulted from human activities, more exactly the activities of a minority privileged class of capitalists.

* Capitalism by focussing on the short-term is unlikely to take the longer term, and hence the environment, into account.

* Capitalists and corporations will seek to distort the facts of the matter so they can carry on as usual.

* Capitalists are ideologically blinkered against climate change since it exposes the dangers of capitalism as a threat to the environment.

Therefore, we cannot expect the problem to be solved within capitalism. All the signs point the opposite way. Consider the fact that this has been on the international agenda since the 1970s when scientists first expressed concern and nothing much has been achieved; emissions have even increased over previous decades. The agenda of all environmental activity groups, who seek to change things without completely scrapping this system, will prove to be futile.

Ultimately the issue of the environment

is an issue of power, of *who* has the power to determine what happens to this planet. Only in a society where we have the power to determine what can and cannot be done will we be able to stop this headlong rush to environmental devastation. That means a world of common ownership and democratic control. Anything else which anyone offers is merely using band aids to seal a volcano.

Radical change is necessary, a change in our thinking leading to a radical change in our socio-economic system. To save the Earth, life and human civilisation, we have to replace existing, profit-based, exploitative, oppressive, manipulative, disruptive and dehumanising capitalist society with long-overdue socialist society. A worldwide association of humans irrespective of nationalities, race, ethnicity, and sex has to be organised, which will function on the basis of participatory democratic principles.

This socialist, resource-based sustainable economy, with democratic control over the means of production and distribution, will produce things as per social needs. Preserving ecological balance is only possible in a world,

socialist society. The most serious barrier to doing this is the prevailing capitalist mode of production. It's the responsibility of the working class, who create and sustain human civilisation, to protect it by establishing world socialism democratically with the force of our immense majority.

The exact class which is actively cranking up the global thermostat that threatens to inundate 20 percent of the world's population currently controls the United Nations and the parliaments of the different nations. So, we, the working class, should expect nothing from the ruling minority capitalist class but should rapidly organise ourselves into a political party of our own on a global basis, with the aim of establishing socialism worldwide, democratically. This is the only way out for humanity.



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PATHFINDERS

Cunning stunts and climate tokens

WHAT WAS GRETA Thunberg thinking by travelling to the UN climate summit in New York on a small 'carbon-neutral' yacht across the Atlantic instead of flying like any normal person or even – since she admitted there was no hope of changing Donald Trump's mind about climate change – staying home?

She surely wasn't suggesting that a two week yachting cruise instead of a 7-hour flight was somehow the more practical or the safer option, or even realistically available to anyone apart from the rich and leisurely. She wasn't claiming that air travel, at around 2 percent of global carbon emissions, was the world's biggest problem. She wasn't seriously asking the world to revert to the nineteenth-century age of sail, was she?

Of course not, it was a media stunt, a token activity with no other purpose than to grab headlines. Seasoned media watchers won't be surprised by this. In just a few short months Greta has gone from schoolgirl-on-a-mission to a global 'brand' to be steered and navigated through the world's front pages by an expert PR team. It's a bit sad really. What the world loved about Greta Thunberg was her plain-speaking naivety, her quasi-autistic inability to dissemble. Now she's started pulling media-targeted eco-stunts like any selfie-obsessed YouTuber, it's hard not to see the tacky side. Her on-message team will have meant well, of course. Turning her into a global influencer means the potential to influence global climate policy, or so they hope. But in doing so they've played capitalism's game and commercialised her into a product. No doubt businesses are already bombarding her with eco-sponsorship deals. No doubt her engagement diary is fully booked and hefty appearance fees negotiated, all for the cause. But it's not quite the same now she can no longer stand apart from the system she is criticising.

Greenwash, or eco-tokenism, is equally evident in the much-vaunted 'global general strike' on 20 September, in which adults are asked to join schoolchildren in widening the protest against climate change. In one sense this was always going to happen, since children are not wage-workers and thus their withdrawal of 'labour' can have no realistic effect on capitalism's economy. But for a start it's not really a 'global general strike' – at the time of writing no or virtually no strikes are scheduled anywhere in Eastern Europe, Russia, China, Japan, Indonesia, New Zealand, the Gulf states, North Africa, South and Central America, Canada or

(weirdly – considering who started all this) Scandinavia. Nearly all the activity is confined to western Europe (except Spain), India, Sub-Saharan Africa, Australia and the US (<https://globalclimateshrike.net/>).

Secondly, what about the call to 'unleash mass resistance'? Resistance to what, exactly? Workers are asking their bosses for permission to go on this so-called strike, and getting it! One architect firm is keen to get behind the climate message by effectively giving its workers the day off: 'A number of our staff [have] asked whether they could join the protests (the answer: of course!)', (architectsjournal.co.uk/opinion/why-bennetts-is-joining-the-global-climate-strike-on-20-september/10044022).



article). They're not alone, as firms right across the sector scramble to get in on the act and proclaim their green credentials (see 'Architects sign on for the Global Climate Strike' - archpaper.com/2019/08/architects-global-climate-strike-september/). Other industry sectors able to spare a one-off Friday holiday will surely join the stampede.

There are signs that some state authorities are adopting a similar strategy ('Edinburgh youth climate strikers allowed one school day off a year', bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-49369163). One day off in a year to fight climate change? They must be kidding themselves because the kids won't fall for it.

It's not a strike if your bosses are giving you permission. All you're doing is making tokenistic statements and giving your

bosses the opportunity to indulge in some useful 'virtue signalling'. Everybody wins, but nobody accomplishes anything.

The problem with the environmental movement is that it doesn't know who the enemy is. It thinks we're all in the same boat and that cooperation is all that's required. But we're not, and it isn't. The enemy isn't air travel, or industry, or agriculture, or plastics, or your personal heating consumption – these may be factors but they are not the main problem. The real enemy is the stranglehold on decision-making possessed by the global billionaire elites – the One Percent – together with their puppet state administrations. It's their drive for profits – not some generalised human greed – which is ruining the planet. Universal democratic cooperation is out of the question while they remain in charge. They may pretend to be looking for a solution but they will try to prevent any activity which threatens to dethrone them.

And how do they do that? Brute force, in the last resort, however in capitalist economies where bosses wear suits and not battle fatigues they generally like to be more subtle. The trick is not to confront opposition directly, which might create sympathy for it. Instead you direct and channel it into the mainstream where its narrative is gradually diluted out of existence. If there's a figurehead you can't ignore, mock, bribe, discredit or kill, you can try to drown them in celebrity-wash until they become as transparent and irrelevant as any other reality star. That's another reason not to follow leaders.

So, if it's all tokenism, what's the point of this global climate strike? Well, at some level it's a valid consciousness-raising exercise and if you're in a position to take a free day off then there's no harm in it. But it won't trouble the corporations and the government mandarins, and it won't move the world a single step closer to what it really needs, the global abolition of the capitalist system with its class ownership and market economy. Instead of tokenism and virtue signalling, workers need to take the world into a new era of common ownership and democratic guardianship of all the world's resources. But don't bother asking your boss's permission for that, because you certainly won't get it.

PJS

Planning for socialism

Regarding your commentary on Socialist Planning, (*Socialist Standard*, July and August) I found it difficult to follow your logic. For over a century the Socialist Labor Party has advocated a clear concept of socialist society based upon working-class organization in industry originally envisioned by Daniel De Leon, adopted by the original IWW in 1905: a two-fold program of economic and political action.

Economic action advocates the need for unified organization on the economic field – class conscious unionism. Political action requires organization within capitalism's political domain by contesting and occupying the offices of the political state, for the primary purpose of disbanding them in coordination with the economic force of the working class in industry.

Socialism once established is based upon social production by industry – that is whatever industry workers are employed in planning production would be undertaken democratically in the shop, on a district-wide basis from the smallest unit to a regional and country-wide basis of democratically elected representatives. The SPGB knows this concept but has always ignored it to the best of my knowledge.

It strikes me that your organization is timidly tottering on the precipice of logical commitment. I understand why you have frequent occasion to argue with anarchists – your program, if it can be called that, offers only vague notions of an established socialist society. The SLPUSA's concept of Socialist Industrial Unionism is a clear-cut answer to the promise of a socialist society. That there are issues that remain that can only be resolved by a functioning Socialist Industrial Union society is doubtlessly true, but to fonder endlessly with the vagaries that characterize your program of political action only is what De Leon characterized as walking with one leg. You can enlighten yourselves by reading De Leon's *As to Politics*.

Bernard Bortnick, USA.

Reply:

It is difficult to make out what concrete criticism our correspondent is actually presenting with regard to the two articles he refers to. These articles were concerned exclusively with the question of the nature of planning in a future socialist society. They were not concerned with any 'programme of political action' that would enable or assist the realisation of such a society. That is an entirely different subject (which we will happily discuss) but our correspondent seems keen to want to conflate the two.

To the extent that he keeps on topic he suggests that the SPGB's programme 'offers only vague notions of an established socialist society'. This is not exactly fair comment. True, we don't offer a detailed blueprint – one could argue it would be unwise to even attempt this – but we do present a broad-brush picture of socialism that illuminates its fundamental operating principles in a way that we feel is quite clear, consistent and logical. See for example our pamphlet, 'Socialism as a Practical Alternative' <https://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/pamphlet/socialism-practical-alternative/>.

In contrast to our supposedly 'vague notions of an established socialist society' our correspondent offers his own conception of such a society as one based upon 'social production by industry – that is, whatever industry workers are employed in planning production would be undertaken democratically in the shop, on a district-wide basis from the smallest unit to a regional and country wide basis of democratically elected representatives'. While we hesitate to use the term 'country-wide' which could be interpreted as suggesting the continuation of the nation-state into socialism – something we would emphatically

repudiate – the basic idea of a tiered structure of democratic decision-making was precisely what was mentioned in the first of the articles he refers to and which he himself seems to have 'ignored':

'From our standpoint, it is entirely possible to envisage the world's productive resources being owned in common by the global community yet subject to a complex system of polycentric democratic planning – with multiple plans being implemented at different spatial levels of organisation: global, regional and local – (depending on the nature of the 'resource' in question).'

Society-wide central planning, by contrast, is predicated on a uni-centric model of decision-making involving just a single planning centre and a single plan for the whole of society. While you won't find many people actually advancing this idea as a serious proposal it is important to understand that Von Mises's entire economic calculation argument against socialism is predicated on the assumption that this is precisely how decision-making in a socialist society would be organised – from one single centre.

This is what the two articles set out to refute and in the process shed light on the workings of a socialist society itself. Society-wide planning is not only completely impractical, it is also at odds with the very nature of socialism itself. The only alternative to a uni-centric model of planning is – obviously – a polycentric model. But in acknowledging this we are also inescapably acknowledging that the overall pattern of production will be unplanned. Instead, this pattern will be the emergent outcome of a self-regulating system of stock control based on the principle of feedback. Understanding this is key to refuting the economic calculation argument itself.

So while our correspondent is right to emphasise the importance of democratic decision-making in socialism it is also important to acknowledge that a great deal of decision-making will not, and need not, be subjected to a democratic vote. It can simply be devolved to people on the ground. What point is there, for example, in organising a vote on whether to replenish a store's supply of baked beans, for example? None that we can see. Such a decision can be taken 'automatically'. It is only where genuine differences of opinion might arise over the allocation of resources that there will be a need to resort to democratic decision-making.

In short, we should not over-egg the democratic pudding but strive instead to strike a more reasonable balance which is what these articles have attempted to do. It does us no favours to caricature socialism as a society of endless debates and perpetual committee meetings, leaving nobody with much time to actually get anything done. – *Editors*.

Backstop

While I am a fellow socialist and broadly agree with your views, I was very disappointed to see the image on page 10/11 of the August 2019 issue of the *Socialist Standard*. Does the artist not know of the existence of the Republic of Ireland? Is it implying that the UK will invade said Republic to put an end to the hard border?

Mick Kennedy



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COOKING THE BOOKS

Who, where or what is Nairu?

'Having a constant pool of unemployed workers is deliberate policy', was the headline of an article by Van Badham in the *Guardian* (26 July) with the subheading 'The purpose is to maintain an economy for the benefit of the rich under the pretext of fighting inflation.' She referenced an article on the website of the Reserve Bank of Australia on 'Estimating the NAIRU and the Unemployment Gap'.

NAIRU, what's that? The article explained:

'The NAIRU – or non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment – is a benchmark for assessing the degree of spare capacity and inflationary pressures in the labour market. When the observed unemployment rate is below the NAIRU, conditions in the labour market are tight and there will be upward pressure on wage growth and inflation' (www.rba.gov.au/publications/bulletin/2017/jun/2.html).

The assumption here – and that's what's wrong with the theory – is that it is wage increases that cause inflation as the rise in the general price level, i.e. of all prices. Wages in general and inflation do move in line, but this is only because wages are a price, of people's working

skills, and as such rise with all other prices when there is inflation.

That wage increases cause other prices to rise is a fallacy that socialists have long had to deal with, going back to Marx's talk to English trade unionists in 1865, later published as the pamphlet *Value, Price and Profit*. Basically, an increase in wages, if it can be imposed, will be at the expense of profits. That employers could recover this by increasing the price of their products assumes that they are not already charging what the market will bear, which would be stupid of them. If, on the other hand, they are charging this they cannot increase the price as this would reduce their sales. They are obliged to take a hit on their profits.

As the word itself implies, 'inflation' is an over-issue of a currency, which results in each currency unit coming to be depreciated and so producing a rise in the price of all goods. It has been practised by all governments since the end of the last world war. They blamed the resulting rise in the general price level on workers obtaining wage increases and sought to protect these eating into profits through 'incomes policies', 'pay pauses' and 'wage freezes'.

After the 1970s these policies were abandoned, largely because it was

unnecessary as the end of the post-war boom led to an increase in unemployment which itself restrained wages. The ideology that wage increases cause inflation, however, was not abandoned. Keynes's successor as chief capitalist economist, Milton Friedman, proclaimed that the rate of unemployment that resulted in no inflation was the 'natural' one. As governments hadn't entirely abandoned inflation as a policy but aimed to maintain it at about 2 percent a year, the name was changed to 'non-accelerating' rate as the one that would keep inflation at this level.

Badham is right that governments are maintaining 'an economy for the benefit of the rich under the pretext of fighting inflation' but they don't create unemployment as a deliberate policy; that would imply that they could avoid it, which they can't. It is just something they accept and justify by theories such as NAIRU. It is also completely cynical and hypocritical since, at the same time that they are hounding the unemployed to find a job and reducing their dole to encourage this, they are accepting that many won't, even shouldn't find a job (the Reserve Bank of Australia says this should be 5 percent of the labour force).

WOOD FOR THE TREES



'We are going to die – and that makes us the lucky ones' is a quote from Richard Dawkins. Despite its melancholic tone it is, in fact, a statement of celebration because he goes on to explain that of all of the millions of possible genetic combinations generated by sexual activity, the meeting of a specific sperm and egg is the product of a purely chance encounter; an unimaginable number of other people could have been born instead of us – but against all the odds here we are. This is an example of a perspective that can give us a whole new understanding of who we are and what we could and should do with our lives. Being conscious of the universe in which we exist is rare and, for all we know, possibly unique in the vast nothingness that is most of the universe. Together with awe this kind of perspective presents us with a responsibility to ourselves and to our species. We know that nature is indifferent to our survival as a species so it is our responsibility to protect the tiny corner of the universe (the Earth) that alone sustains us.

Many claim that they have no time for such philosophical considerations and certainly capitalism presents the vast majority with an unending struggle for existence that distracts us from what we do best – think. Of course the hysteria of modern wage slavery and consumerism can also serve as an excuse to avoid the fear that many feel when confronted with meaning and mortality. Education so often tells us *what* to think instead of *how* to think. But life is not a riddle or an equation with just one correct answer; it is more akin to a journey of experience and contemplation of not only the individual but of us all from the past, in the present and the future. Together with the idea of just how lucky we are to exist at all here are some other examples of perspectives that might help us to look up occasionally from the mundane monotony of life in capitalism.

The observable universe is 93 billion light years in diameter and a light year equals 9.46 trillion (9.46 x one million million) kilometres (the Earth is 12,742 kilometres in diameter). Such size and

distance is barely conceivable and yet we have a number for it. This is the beauty of scale; once a standard measurement of size is achieved then everything else can be described as a magnitude of it. These numbers make most of us feel totally insignificant as individuals but what of the size of the collective intellect that produces them? If your physical size as a human being is important to you then the numbers concerning the infinitesimal are equally mind-boggling. The smallest known object is a sub-atomic particle called a quark and it measures minus 100,000,000,000,000,000,000th of a metre. The average radius of an atom is 300 trillionths of a metre which is some 10,000 times the size of its nucleus and the smallest form of life known is a virus that comes in at a mighty minus 10,000,000,000th of a metre. It feels as if we're somewhere in the middle of the almost infinitely large and the possibly infinitely small; doubtless this has something to do with the 'anthropomorphic principle'. This balance of perspectives can help protect our conception of ourselves from both the fear of insignificance and the hubris of over-importance.

Having dealt with space let's move on to time. The universe is 13.8 billion years old. The Earth is a mere 4.5 billion years of age and life first emerged a billion years later. Humans first came on the scene about 800,000 years ago. Again, in this context, our average 80 years or so of life doesn't seem to amount to much but then some species of mayfly only live for a few hours. For the vast majority of its existence humanity lived in hunter/gatherer communities and communism would seem to be the default social organisation for our species.

Some 10,000 years ago in a very limited region the Neolithic Revolution took place and humanity began its inevitable and brutal journey into private property. The agricultural surplus was stolen first by nomadic raiders and then by those who controlled the warriors who evolved to protect it from such depredations. Given the incredible speed of technological

advance we now find ourselves with the possibility of returning to our default socialist economic arrangement. We live primarily within a world we have created (a culture) which has stood outside of nature and it is only within this cultural arena of political action that we can liberate ourselves from the slavery of private property and re-enter the natural world as its protector. For those who are exasperated by the failure of the arrival of the revolution we can only point to the timescale of our incredibly young species and its meteoric cultural evolution. It took the capitalist class many hundreds of years, from its medieval origins, to achieve its present political and economic hegemony. In many ways modern socialism has just begun as both the knowledge and aspiration that can make it possible.

Some of the more scientifically-minded readers will observe something of an anachronism in the previous text; 100 years ago Albert Einstein synthesised time and space in his theory of General Relativity. This conjured up a demon that both science and philosophy have yet to fully comprehend, the black hole 'singularity'. This one-dimensional object is supposedly infinitely massive, infinitely small and bends space-time, you guessed it, infinitely. It would seem that if we follow scale to its logical conclusion it loses its coherence and meaning because we cannot imagine the infinite. Perhaps everything – ideas, worlds, energy, matter and even nothingness will eventually succumb to the embrace of the singularity. To comprehend nature and to find our place within it is humanity's true destiny but first we have to liberate ourselves from the infantile squabbles for money and power of the tiny irrelevant ruling elite. Part of socialist consciousness is to recognise the potential of our species after the resolution of the political struggle using our knowledge of philosophy and its young progeny, science.

WEZ

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North London branch. Meets 3rd Thurs. 8pm at Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Ave, NW5 2RX. Contact: Chris Dufton 020 7609 0983 nlb.spgb@gmail.com

South London branch. Meets last Saturday in month, 2.30pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Contact: 020 7622 3811.

West London branch. Meets 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY. Contact: 020 8740 6677. tenner@abelgratis.com

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Glasgow branch. Meets 3rd Weds. at 7pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Contact: Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. 01355 903105. peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk.

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Ayrshire. Contact: Paul Edwards 01563 541138. rainbow3@btopenworld.com.

Lothian Socialist Discussion @Autonomous Centre Edinburgh, ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Meets 4th Weds. 7-9pm. Contact: F. Anderson 07724 082753.

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Centre, Queens Street, Cardiff.

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MATERIAL WORLD

India Goes Dry

INDIA, ASIA'S third-largest economy, is facing perhaps the worst water crisis in its history, with millions of lives and livelihoods at risk. Indian temperature highs have been breaking all records. Overuse of rural groundwater is threatening food production and the country's food security. The acute water shortage has devastated villagers' agriculture. Major crops including maize, soya, cotton, sweet lime, pulses and groundnuts – drivers of local economies – have suffered, livestock left starving and thirsty. Scientists predict the region will experience harsher extreme weather events and water shortages. India's water crisis is far from even-handed – the elite in the country remain relatively unaffected while the poor constantly try to cope with what water there is.

The struggle for water has intensified in many parts of India, where villages and cities have run out of water. Groundwater, the source of 40 percent of India's water needs, is depleting at an unsustainable rate, Niti Aayog, a governmental think-tank, reported in 2018. Twenty-one Indian cities – including Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai and Hyderabad – are expected to run out of groundwater by 2020, and 40 percent of India's population will have no access to drinking water by 2030, the report said:

'60% of nearly 17,000 groundwater wells monitored to check ground water level showed a decline compared to the average level of the last 10 years,' said Kishore Chandra Naik, chairman of India's Central Ground Water Board. 'The decline is because of extraction, whatever may be the purpose for it.'

Bangalore, India's 'Silicon Valley' hi-tech hub, is no longer a city of lakes. Bangalore, which had more than 260 lakes in 1960, now has about 80 – and most of those are ecologically dead. Bangalore's population has more than doubled to about 12 million since 2001 and is predicted to hit 20 million by 2031. Bangalore's groundwater is running dry. Unprepared, city authorities did not adequately plan for Bangalore's growing water needs. The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board can provide only about 60 percent of the city. Much of the shortage is met by private traders. But as well operators drill deeper and deeper to find water, the price

per tank has tripled over the last 15 years.

Chennai needs 800 million litres of water a day to meet demand. At the moment, the government can provide only 675 million litres, according to the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board. Its four major reservoirs have fallen drastically to one-hundredth of what they were at the same time last year. Chennai depends on more than 4,000 private water tankers for its everyday water needs, with every tanker making up to five trips a day. Altogether, the tankers deliver 200 million litres of water a day.

A worsening drought is amplifying the vast inequality between India's rich and poor. In Delhi, India's capital city of almost 20 million people, the wealthy in central Delhi pay very little to get limitless

escape from leaky pipes. The situation has given rise to a 'water mafia' where criminal gangs and corrupt politicians which have total control over who will get how much water in the city and practise price gouging. People totally dependent on tankers are saying they are being held to ransom.

Chennai's highest court ruled that groundwater was the 'backbone of India's drinking water and irrigation system' and companies extracting it for profit without permission were engaged in criminal 'theft'

In village after village in Mumbai's hinterland, the wells have run dry due to a persistent heatwave with estimates suggesting up to 90 percent of the region's population has fled, leaving behind

the sick and elderly to fend for themselves in the face of the water crisis.

By the end of May, 43 percent of India was experiencing drought, with failed monsoon rains seen as the primary reason. With 80 percent of districts in Karnataka and 72 percent in Maharashtra hit by drought and crop failure, the 8 million farmers in these two states are struggling to survive. More than 6,000 tankers supply water to villages and hamlets in Maharashtra daily, as conflict brews between the two states over common water resources. About 20,000 villages

in the state of Maharashtra are grappling with a crisis, where no water is left in 35 major dams. In 1,000 smaller dams, water levels are below 8 percent. The rivers that feed the dams have dried up.

'The water crisis is worsening,' admitted Shakespeare Arulanandam, a bottled water producer, 'In the future we can only pray more fervently and hope for good rains to ensure there is enough water to go around. It will be up to the Gods.'

Together with our fellow socialists in the World Socialist Party (India), we urge our fellow-workers not to rely upon the divine. What is required is a change of social system where water is recognised as a natural resource to be shared fairly according to needs and, if a shortage means some form of rationing, it is done rationally and not reliant upon what people can pay.

ALJO



The sun goes down on one of Bangalore's diminishing lakes

supplies of piped water – whether for their bathrooms, kitchens or to wash the car or water a lawn. They can do all that for as little as £8-£12 a month. Delhi's privileged district gets about 375 litres of water per person per day but residents in lesser neighbourhoods receive on average only 40 litres. In one of the numerous slum areas or the sprawling housing estates on the outskirts, there is a daily struggle to get and pay for very limited supplies of water, which is delivered by tanker rather than piped. And the price is soaring as fast as the water is depleting.

The Delhi water board's 1,033 tanker fleet is well short of the city's requirements. Hundreds of private water tankers are operating. Most private tanker operators in Delhi either illegally pump out fast disappearing groundwater or steal the water from government supplies. In Delhi, nearly half of the supply from the Delhi water board either gets stolen with the connivance of lowly officials or simply

No outsiders in the class war

Two Birmingham primary schools starting the new autumn term will see the reinstatement of the 'No Outsiders' programme, dedicated to teaching LGBT rights and earlier suspended after being strongly opposed as non-age-appropriate by Muslim parents, an opposition widely interpreted as homophobic (BBC News, 3 July - [bbc.in/2xrzTZZ](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-40123456)).

The 'No Outsiders' programme presupposes that children have to be taught to accept diversity, whereas in reality the opposite is true. Outside the grip of parental or social indoctrination, children have no natural reason to be intolerant of others. Children have to be taught to be racist, sexist, or anti-gay. They are loaded with prejudice like a gun is loaded with bullets.

Muslims in Britain suffer their own share of discrimination, so you might imagine that such a marginalised group would be more sympathetic and respectful of other groups in the same situation (in the jargon, 'intersectional') and so less likely to dish out discrimination of their own. But you'd be wrong.

For example, racism is notorious in the gay community. For 'a glaring personification of the lack of intersectionality that exists within broader gay culture' see 'Gay bars can be mind-bogglingly racist' ([bit.ly/2xLeUlf](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-40123456)).

Gender surrender

Then there is the trans-terf war, which has ripped the LGBT community apart to the point where dialogue and compromise have become well-nigh impossible. This is partly a product of post-modernist 'queer' (LGBT) studies, in which the concept of gender as being socially constructed has moved the emphasis away from simply 'owning' identity towards 'performing' it, thus disappearing Alice-like down the rabbit hole to a Wonderland where anyone can identify as anything and any attempt to deny this is an oppressive act.

The fuss isn't so much about women self-identifying as trans-men, it's mainly the other way round. Many women are furious at what they see as a new form of male colonialism, in which men, accustomed to getting their way on everything else, now attempt to hijack womanhood itself. Others see it as an existential threat, a sinister plan to 'deconstruct' that womanhood out of existence. You can't fight for equal rights if you don't even exist.

Here is a domain where common sense has no sway. Is it reasonable for a man self-identifying as a woman to

be allowed to swim in the women's swimming areas of Hampstead Heath in London? No, you say? Yes, according to new rules from the City of London Corporation (Evening Standard, 23 May - [bit.ly/2NikFKZ](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/city-of-london-corporation-swimming-pools-a685456.html)). If a man self-identifies as a woman, should s/he be entitled to enter women's refuges? You might call that crazy, yet Women's Aid has indeed caved into this very demand and changed their entry policy accordingly ([bit.ly/2Jpp1m9](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/news/press-releases/womens-aid-changes-entry-policy-to-refuges)). Some situations you simply can't win. An attempt to combat the colossal rate of violence against and rapes of trans-women in male prisons resulted in one trans-prisoner being admitted to a women's prison and then committing several sex offences against women inmates ([bit.ly/2zxUg9d](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-40123456)).

Lesbians meanwhile are proposing to quit the LGBT collective ('Get the L out') in protest at the idea that someone with a penis must be accepted as an authentic lesbian, with the further implication that if they refuse to have sex with such a 'lesbian' they are being somehow oppressive.

Such protestors in turn are pejoratively labelled TERFs (Trans-Excluding Radical Feminist) by transgender activists. Do most trans-women really expect to speak for all women? Do they really have a male colonial agenda? Do they really expect lesbians to accept them as 'dykes with dicks'? Almost certainly not. Most trans-women would just like to get through the day without being spat on or hospitalised. They are rejected as men, obviously, but women are also slamming the door on them as women. So they are treated as sideshow freaks, as something less than human, as a perfect target for violence and murder ('Transgender hate crimes recorded by police go up 81%', BBC News, 27 June - [bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48756370](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-48756370)).

Why has this situation blown up now? It's partly a matter of technology. Successful transitioning from one sex to the other has not been possible until comparatively recently, so society has never really had to deal with this debate before. It raises all sorts of new questions about what we mean by gender, and whether we can continue to see things in binary categorisations (male/female, straight/gay) or whether in fact these are more like shades on a spectrum. And academic LGBT theory is running far ahead of the herd. Capitalism has only very recently started to normalise homosexuality, and then only in some places, and that has an ancient pedigree. There is really no precedent for people changing biological sex, and that is a challenge too far for those brainwashed with gender stereotypes and looking for someone easy to punch.

Now even anarchist and class-war political groups have waded in and taken up mutually hostile and hard-line positions. Liberals wanting to do the right thing are utterly perplexed. Express an opinion at your peril.

This is the war of all against all, the political nightmare of identity politics, a world of echo chambers and mutual rage, a world where everyone shouts and no one listens, where class consciousness evaporates and the working class eats itself alive. Who's right, in all this? That's just the point – everybody and nobody. Identity politics is never a battle of right versus wrong, it is always a tragedy of right versus right. In the multiple pile-up of discriminations capitalism engenders, nobody escapes completely innocent or unscathed.

So much for gurus

You might at least expect the Dalai Lama to rise above it all. But this widely-revered guru and living saint (and self-declared feminist) again caused a furore recently by reiterating his 2015 remarks that any female Dalai Lama 'must be attractive, otherwise it is not much use' and '[If not] people,



I think prefer, not see her, that face' (*sic*) (*Telegraph*, 2 July - bit.ly/2L9wOqe).

What would happen to the identity debate in socialism, a world of free association and free access, where nobody has power over anyone? There are no gurus to guide us there either. Nobody knows how gender and sexuality may evolve when society has stopped making war against itself. Perhaps there will be a continued trend towards post-humanism, as organic and machine technology converge in symbiosis. Maybe more people will want to change sex, or live as multiple sexes, whatever that means. Conversely it's possible that the current preoccupation with sexual and gender identity will come to be seen as irrelevant, an obsessive hang-up among many others typical of the capitalist age. From our barred window looking out from the current madhouse, we can't even say for sure what sanity looks like.

What is likely though is that people will adopt the practical limitation of freedom not licence. What this means is that you are free to do anything you like but you do not have *licence* to impose on the freedom of others. Anyone who objects to this is free to style themselves as an 'oppressed minority', however in a democracy there are always minorities, and not getting your way on everything is not the same thing as oppression.

Divided we fall

Returning to the present, the 2014 film *Pride* told the true story of lesbian and gay activists making common cause with striking Welsh miners who, for their part, had to confront their own entrenched homophobic attitudes. The film's feel-good message was unequivocal – if we are workers, whether we're gay, straight or whatever, we're on the same side in the class war, and fighting the bosses is what brings us together. Class consciousness transcends all and unites all.

The problem is, this consciousness of being part of a class prevails best when the external class threat is felt urgently and equally by all affected workers, as in the case of a strike or a lockout. But it's rare for a threat to be that localised and acute. The class war is not just a street battle or a strike, as the Left romanticise it. Class is really the dynamic expression of minority ownership of the means of living. We, the overwhelming majority excluded from and by this ownership, feel its force whenever we have to get up for work, tolerate our boss, pay our bills, swallow our dignity and accept our limitations.

Some workers face additional problems that come at them in different ways depending on who, when and where they are. Some of these forms may be just annoyances, but others can spell deadly danger. Sometimes they come from the police and the state, but often they come from other workers who are angry and ignorant and ready to lash out at somebody vulnerable and within reach. If you belong 100 percent to what society calls 'normal' then you won't be especially vulnerable or exposed, and you might be tempted to downplay these effects as trivial, or even imaginary. But if you are exposed, they can loom so large that they fill your horizons and eclipse all other things. And here is why class consciousness begins to fracture and fall apart. When you suffer as a victim, you don't care if you're helping to victimise others. If you're a battered wife, you don't care if you're also a racist. If you're a male with your head under the boss's foot, you don't care about your attitude to women. If you're attacked as an Asian, you don't care if you're also homophobic. Individual identities become locked into silos, and communication is cut off. Class consciousness is dead. Game over.

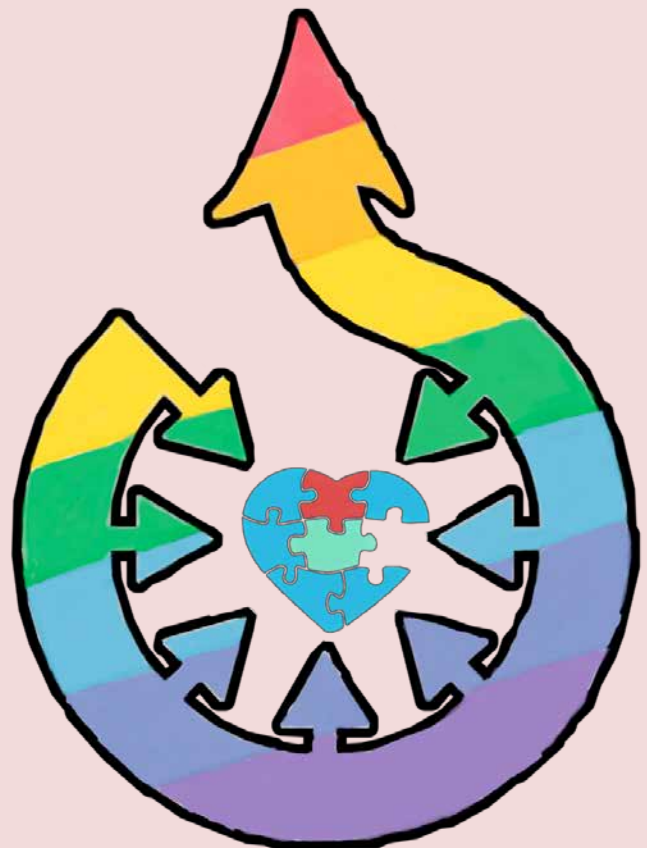
Hijacking at the intersection

If you don't want the capitalist class to win, you have to force people out of these silos by offering a generalised view of discrimination they can all relate to. Intersectionality was an attempt to do this, by creating a common framework of overlapping or 'intersecting' discriminations, but which has largely been taken out of context and distorted.

The trouble is, some people are too fired up to focus on common frameworks, and will seize any excuse to promote their unique victimhood (the 'I'm more oppressed than you' game). As soon as you accept the idea that people really do have different experiences of discrimination, and you try to understand these differences in order to work together, they will twist this into a promotion of their own agenda.

This is not a reason to throw the baby out with the bathwater, however. If your class consciousness is strong and coherent, then acknowledging as workers your different lived experiences will only make you stronger. And make no mistake, it is vital to acknowledge these different experiences, because in the past what has passed for class politics on the left has too often been the uni-dimensional preserve of a dominant identity group while other groups were ignored, marginalised or even excluded. In practice this leads to a self-perpetuating cycle in which like attracts like and the circle never widens. It's no good if you're attracting one person but putting off nineteen or twenty others because they fear they won't fit in. Class consciousness, properly understood, is more than just being against capitalism and bosses, it is also about ending minority ownership and all discrimination, and it requires some positive attributes too, like inclusivity, empathy, the ability to listen and share, to criticise honestly and to be open to criticism in the same way. This is the class consciousness socialists need to create, because it's the only kind strong enough to defeat capitalism, and that means including all workers, with nobody left outside.

PJS



Most of us are likely to experience mental ill-health at some point or another in our lives. For some it might be a short episode of low mood, or feeling a bit fed up and will usually pass within a few days or weeks at most. While for others it may include prolonged periods of intense depression and possible suicidal thoughts. And in the most extreme cases, the ending of one's own life.

So, what are the reasons that cause so many people to feel so hopeless and helpless as to feel that they have no choice but to take such a desperate measure as suicide?

The answer to this is of course a very complex one that cannot possibly be attributed to any one single factor affecting any one person's life. For most people who feel there is no longer any point to their existence, the chances are that their problems and challenges feel insurmountable and impossible to deal with, and as such they cannot face another day of the relentless torture associated with their thoughts and feelings of perpetual misery.

Sometimes these feelings can be caused by biological factors that affect thought patterns within the brain, while for many these feelings are entirely as a result of environmental factors.

Chemical imbalances

The brain is an extremely complex and intricate part of the functioning of the human body (and that of other mammals too). Comprising some 86 billion cells known as neurons, it is the command centre of the nervous system that in turn controls the body's sensory organs and outputs information to the muscles, which in turn control movement.

The brain is responsible for producing a number of hormones associated with pleasure including dopamine, oxytocin and serotonin. They each in their own unique way and when in balance are supposed to maintain a healthy and

Early example of 'snake-oil' for the treatment of 'nervous conditions'



happy state of mind and mood. But what happens when things go wrong?

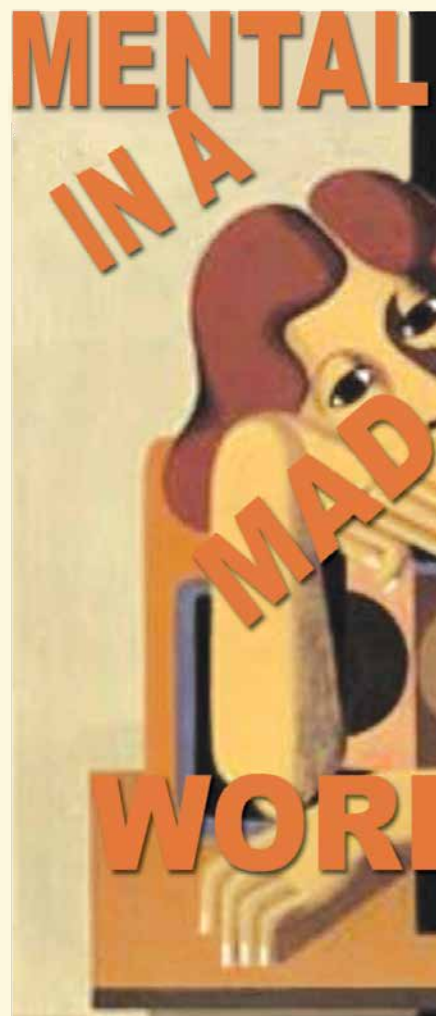
For some people they will no doubt take matters into their own hands. That is to say, they will quite often try to alleviate their symptoms by self-medicating in order to induce some kind of relief from the stress and/or misery that they are experiencing. This might take the form of a quick puff on a fag or maybe something stronger like a spliff – which some medical professionals say may actually worsen the situation. Some may hit the booze, while for others a coffee and a cream cake might offer a quick fix.

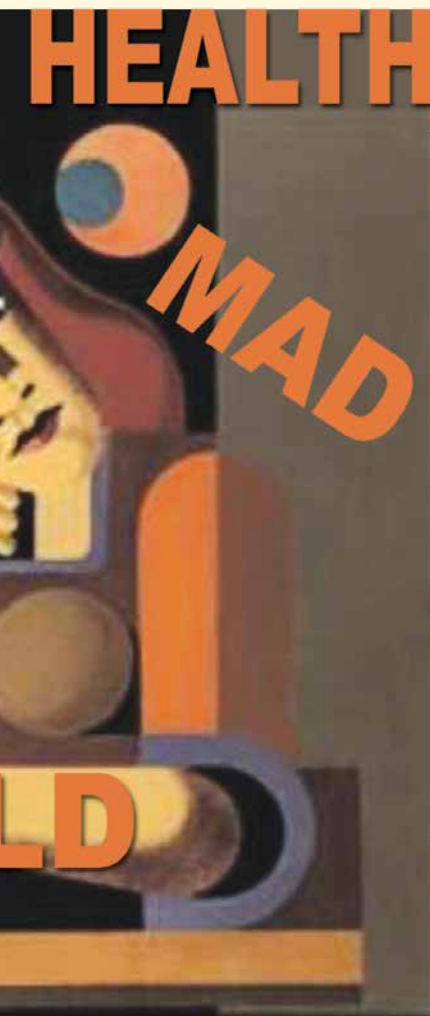
Should things not improve it may well become necessary to book an appointment with the local GP. No doubt having waited for several weeks for your appointment to finally arrive, it may be that having discussed the matter with your hard-pressed doctor you will be presented with a prescription for any one of the myriad antidepressant drugs available in order to try and lift your mood by restoring the natural chemicals that are missing. A further appointment will probably be made and following on from that, if the meds have worked and some relief has been found then you will probably be advised to keep taking the pills, given a pat on the back and told to come back if the symptoms worsen. On your way out you will probably pass another long line of people with identical problems waiting for their 10 minutes with the Doc and another repeat prescription for their preferred choice of antidepressant drugs. While somewhere in the background, the big pharmaceutical companies who produce these drugs are laughing all the way to the bank.

Rising Problem

In Scotland alone there has been a significant rise in the rates of suicide between 2017 and 2018. Recent figures show that in 2018, 784 people took their own life, an increase from 680 the year before, with an increase in the suicide rate among people aged under 25 in Scotland being the highest annual rate since 2007. While over the last 5 years, 3,560 people took their own life. Making the average suicide rate in Scotland for that particular period 13.4 deaths per 100,000.

James Jopling, Executive Director of Samaritans Scotland, said: 'Suicide is preventable. And that means not just looking at access to mental health services, but also at how money worries, job insecurity, experiences of loneliness and disconnectedness can impact young people's wellbeing ... People of all ages reach out to the Samaritans for a wide





range of reasons - some of the most common include worries about their mental and physical health, family and relationship breakdown and feelings of loneliness and isolation. Just under a third of people who contact Samaritans express suicidal thoughts and feelings'.

While these figures are but a snapshot of the picture in Scotland, the issues are the same the world over. And while each and every government or NGO attempts to solve these issues in their own way, there will never be enough resources available to deal with the epidemic that is such a blight on what the professional politicians and leaders like to describe and convince us is a civilised society, and the only one available to us. No

matter how hard they try to dress things up with their many brainwashing initiatives such as 'resilience building', 'managed expectations' and 'dealing with disappointment', there can be no escape from the harsh reality and brutality that is the fallout from the present global (dis)order and root cause known as capitalism.

What can be done?

Regular readers of this magazine will be all too aware of the issues raised within this article, most will readily relate to its content and will need little advice or information about the underlying cause and affects that capitalism has on predominantly the working class (I would not be so foolhardy as to suggest that members of the capitalist class are somehow exempt from feelings of clinical depression). However there can be little or no doubt that the challenges faced by the working class are far greater than those at the top of the tree looking down.

So, what can and must be done to find a cure for this imbalance and exploitation?

Far be it from us to sound like preachers or motivational speakers - we're sure you get enough of that bullshit when attending works seminars and such like. You know the kind of thing, everyone in a room for *team building exercises*, being forced to pair off with someone you don't really like, or worse still, if you've drawn a particularly short straw, the 'team leader' - the company man (or woman) for whom the company is the be-all-and-end-all in their life.

Mental Health within socialism

Given that socialism - properly understood - has never had the chance to be tested anywhere in the world before it is

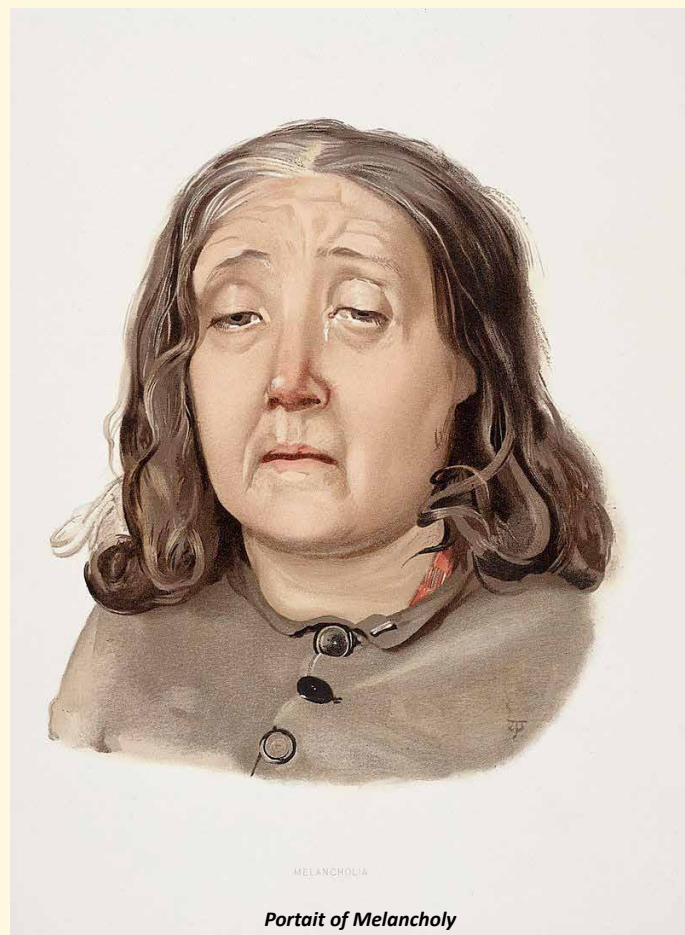
almost impossible to know precisely how this new system of society will unfold. That said, we can be sure of one thing, it couldn't possibly be any worse than it is for most of us under capitalism.

No more wars or terrorism, no more greed, hunger and thirst, no more decision-making based on budgets or cost effectiveness, no more social isolation or loneliness, seclusion or discrimination, no more choosing between heating or eating, and the list goes on and on and on.

With people throughout the world living their lives according to their own self-defined needs and in harmony with each other for the benefit of each other, there can be no doubt that slowly but surely as we all work together in order to reverse the damage caused by around 300 years' worth of the destructive fallout from capitalism, people's health, both mental and physical will improve dramatically as we all give and take our share of working together towards a truly civilised society, where no one will be left behind to fend for themselves. The elderly, the disabled, anyone born with a genetic condition and who may be predisposed to mental health issues, will all receive the best treatment and care without having to consider costs.

In truth, and for the sake of the continuation of our species, we simply cannot afford to do otherwise.

PAUL EDWARDS



Africa's Potential Bread Basket

'It is people who make the world: the bush has wounds and scars.'
- a Malawian proverb

Global food security is one of the most serious concerns of our time. The global food system is at the root of many environmental and health crises.

Humans have made the African savanna their home since the dawn of time and have greatly affected the environment. People in pre-colonial Africa were engaged in hunting and gathering, agriculture, mining and simple manufacturing. Agriculture involved most people and there were many different systems of agricultural production in pre-colonial Africa, to suit the variety of conditions the people faced. Without modern machinery and modern inputs such as fertilisers and pesticides they were not, however, able to transform nature on a large scale and were to a large extent at the mercy of the land and the weather. Intensive agriculture makes it possible for populations to grow.

Today, Africa does not grow enough food to feed its own population and African countries have tended to satisfy their increasing demand through expensive imports from the global market. The agriculture sector in many African countries is in a perilous state. It's a situation that results in discontent and unrest. It is stating the obvious that the solution to the food crisis in Africa is for Africa to grow more food. Africa does in fact have the ability to grow enough food not only to feed itself, but also to help feed the rest of the world.

Africa is host to 60 percent of the world's uncultivated arable land, yet currently spends tens of billions of dollars per year on importing food. This figure is projected to shoot up to US\$110 billion by 2025. Africa is importing what it could actually be producing. African countries export raw goods outside the continent to be processed into consumer products imported back into Africa for purchase. In essence, Africa is exporting jobs outside the continent, and contributing to Africa's poverty.

The African Guinea Savannah is one of the largest underused agricultural land reserves in the world with less than 10 percent used to produce crops. An area twice as large as that planted to wheat worldwide – a swathe of land with potential fertility that runs from the coasts of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Senegal eastwards to the Ethiopian border, then veers southeast to cover parts of Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and the Congo before spreading across the continent over large areas of Angola, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique and western Madagascar. Population figures are hard to come by when looking at the savanna, ranging from two to over 100 people per square mile and roughly 45 percent live in urban centres.

The Guinea Savannah zone covers about 600 million hectares, of which about 400 million hectares could be used for crop agriculture. Currently, less than 10 percent of this area is being cultivated. This region has the potential to feed Africa and send produce elsewhere. It features a warm tropical climate with 800–1,200 millimeters of rainfall annually, allowing for a growing period of 150–210 days. The variable annual rainfall and poor soil quality make this a challenging agro-ecological environment. It supports three main farming systems:

(a) the root crop farming system; (b) the mixed cereal-root crop farming system; and (c) the maize mixed farming system.

All have potential for increasing agricultural production. The zone is one of the major under-used resources in Africa. It accounts for about one-third of the land area in Sub-Saharan Africa and underpins the livelihoods of more than one-quarter of all African farmers. Maize is the most important cereal in most African countries and also serves as a staple food source for some 200 million people in the developing countries. People have farmed grains in this area for centuries. One could try to enhance productivity through increasing use of

manure to better fertilize their fields. Or to be mixing creatively different crops together that complement one another, so mixing legumes with grains, for instance — the legumes fix nitrogen and increase grain productivity. But one that is not so dependent on fossil fuel inputs from outside of the area.

According to Akinwumi Adesina, the president of the African Development Bank:

‘There is therefore absolutely no reason for Africa to be a food-importing region. Africa has huge potential in agriculture, but, as Dr. Borlaug used to say, nobody eats potential... Unlocking that potential must start with the savannas of Africa.’

There is indeed no ‘absolute reason’ why Africa couldn't produce enough food to feed its inhabitants, but there is a practical one: capitalism and its production for profit instead of to meet people's need for food (and everything else).

However, there is a cautionary note. When land is cleared and cultivated, carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere from the soil, and the plants, shrubs and trees that grow there. The more densely the land is packed with vegetation, the more carbon is released when it is cleared. Nevertheless, if even a small fraction is turned into farm-land – some 16 million hectares – is transformed, it could set Africa up to decrease dependence on food from elsewhere, feed itself and contribute to feeding the world.

Research scientists are studying groundwater resources in order to understand the renewability of the source and how people can use it sustainably towards a green revolution in Africa.

‘We don't want to repeat some of the mistakes during the green revolution that has taken place in Asia, where people opted to use groundwater, then groundwater was overused and we ended up with a problem of sustainability,’ said Richard Taylor, the principal investigator and a professor of Hydrogeology at University College London. Scientists are learning how and when different major aquifers recharge, how they respond to different climatic shocks and extremes, and they are already looking for appropriate ways of boosting groundwater recharge for more sustainability.

Using the Guinea Savannah predominantly for agriculture will inevitably, as all agriculture does, bring some environmental costs, but agriculture can also benefit the environment. This ecosystem is delicate and it needs to be kept in balance.

People attribute Africa's problem to overpopulation yet most parts of Africa are not densely populated at all with much lower density rates than many states in America. Yet there are those in the ecological movement who tend to focus on the population issue and concentrate on family planning. Hunger is not Africa's inescapable destiny and it can be eliminated.

There is no such thing as benevolent capitalism. Socialists know that under capitalism attempts to change the way food is produced so as to fill the empty bellies of Africans will be thwarted by the international trading system and foiled by the national ruling class. But this land is our land and should be used to feed the people and not the greed of shareholders in Wall Street, the City of London or Shanghai.

What is required is the democratic self-empowerment of the workers to replace the exploitative global economic system of capitalism by socialism so as to be in a position to genuinely satisfy the food needs of the people. This is no fantasy but a practical, revolutionary proposition to live in a world without waste, want or war, and in which each person benefits from sharing in the fruits of the Earth. Hunger is not Africa's inescapable destiny but it can only be eliminated by ending the capitalist system.

ALJO

Have We Time to Wait for Climate Change to Threaten Profits?

In a recent interview with Channel Four veteran Jon Snow, Bank of England Governor Mark Carney made the audacious claim that capitalism is part of the solution to climate change (www.channel4.com/news/mark-carney-capitalism-is-part-of-the-solution-to-tackling-climate-change). Carney calmly delivered this claim in an ongoing capitalist context of political malaise, escalating trade tensions, continued financial mismanagement, and imminent sovereign debt crises.

The argument he made was that in order to mitigate risks (not doing anything about climate change rendered a risk to profitability, rather than dealing with the problem being a genuine social priority), capitalist businesses will have to move their focus from where we are today, to where we need to be tomorrow. Perhaps this wooliness doesn't placate your concerns? Well, Carney went further in arguing that the financial sector had a prominent role to play in this switchover, whereby funds will be withheld from businesses that are unable to move with the times and prioritise climate change.

When probed by Snow, Carney reiterated that capitalist businesses which ignored climate change would go bankrupt '100 percent'. While you could argue that an incumbent business which completely disregarded climate change could plant the seeds of their own long-term demise, the '100 percent' route to bankruptcy is by a capitalist ignoring profitability. Carney would most probably respond that, as climate change poses a 'risk' to long-term profitability, capitalist businesses will be forced to prioritise the mitigation of climate change. However, surely the Governor cannot believe that other 'risks' of not making a profit are simply going to make way for the prioritisation of the environment?

Leaving aside Brexit and the US-China dispute, let us consider a few contemporary 'risks' prioritised by financial institutions. Argentina, for example, faces yet another sovereign debt collapse. Once perceived as an emerging market with relatively wide investment margins, its borrowings from western financial institutions soon proved to be unsustainable. Rather than allowing for an accountability of failure on behalf of banks and investors, the Argentinian government has been provided with multiple large IMF bailouts. Only months since a \$7.1 billion IMF loan, Argentina's dollar-denominated sovereign debts appear on the precipice of default as the strongly IMF backed incumbent government came second in primary elections, resulting in a 25 percent devaluation of the peso and a stock market collapse.

In Malaysia, Goldman Sachs has promised to 'vigorously defend' itself against state prosecutors who claim that senior bankers and domestic politicians alike had embezzled state investment funds, defrauding investors in the process. Does any of this inspire confidence that the financial sector can lead a gilt-edged defence of the environment? Not when such

unprofitable investments in loans are bailed out and fraud and embezzlement are vigorously defended. Capital that risks disappearing because a sovereign state borrower is unable to repay the loan cannot be protected by central banks and monetary funds indefinitely, but they will be defended as long as possible at whatever social cost. The idea that investments in loans that are not 'profitable' will lead to an immediate risk to bankruptcy or to a redirecting of capital into sustainable and socially

acceptable ends is an age-old laissez-faire myth.

As per usual with liberal economics, climate change has been reduced to an economic abstraction in an effort to plead for the capitalist system. Can we afford to wait for climate change to pose the biggest risk to capitalist profits? Are central banks and the IMF going to allow financial institutions to go 'bankrupt' if they continue to make loans that turn out to be unprofitable investments, as Carney insists? Is it likely that in the immediate future climate change will overtake the quarterly demands of investors? How long will it take to simply wait for the profitability of environmentally-damaging goods to slowly deplete?

Can we afford to wait? The answer of course, is no. Environmental groups must no longer prioritise the achievement of empty emissions promises from politicians on behalf of financiers and capitalists. The socialist response is to advocate a system based on common ownership and economic democracy which can prioritise social need, rather than the ability to make profits and if not, to defend unprofitable investments at any social cost.

JAMES CLARK



Game of Thrones, the telly series, has finished. Mercilessly hyped on media and billboards, it was, for eight seasons, a cultural phenomenon. It broke out of the normal nook the fantasy genre occupies, and became a smash hit. Part of its attraction was the fact that its creator, George R.R. Martin, used the real world history of the English 'War of the Roses', and bloody incidents in Scotland to shape its narrative.

What it meant was that millions of people enjoyed the depiction of a libidinous, transgressionally incestuous and ruthless violent medieval world. It was, in fact, merely another piece in a long line of fictional depictions of feudal life that stretch back as far as Shakespeare. For Shakespeare, it was Spain and Italy that were the imaginary bastions of the by-gone era of Catholic superstitions, lusts and excessively passionate ways. For *Game of Thrones*, it is a fantasy world with real dragons. For the capitalist class, it is the past.

The secret history of the revolutionary ways of the city dwellers, and how they overcame the martial classes of the feudal nobility lives on primarily in these fictional displays. Official history is one of gentle and reasonable progress: enlightenment values overcoming the dark superstitions of the medieval world revealing the natural order of good commerce and individual aspiration. The memory of the events that inspired the modern world, the ideas, practices and institutions against which the modern ideology defines itself live on in fiction.

Indeed, and . . . spoiler alert: the series ends with the end to the *Game of Thrones*: the Iron Throne is melted, and the Lords of Westeros agree to elect a ruler from among their own number, rather than have the hereditary King. This is the liberal fantasy, a revolution without mass participation with just enlightened realisation of rulers that merit matters more than birth. That it leaves the existing elite in place is an added bonus. It is this denouement that is the fantastic core of the series, more than the magic and the dragons.

In much of the world's imaginary, today, 'medieval' is a synonym with brutality, lawlessness and bloodshed. In Martin's world, rulers deal out immediate bloody justice with swords. Much as, in the real world of today, many Arab and Islamic states retain the rough and ready systems of recently feudalistic/tribal arrangements. For some on the right, that is why Islam fitted neatly into pre-existing prejudices as a sort of feudal mirror image to define themselves against, to continue the fight that began so many hundred years ago.

The memory of capitalist revolution does not just live on the right, though. The left remembers the revolutions, and those memories structure what is expected of a revolution: mass crowds on city streets, barricades, committees of public safety. The battle remains against kings and courtiers. The intellectual equipment of the modern revolutionary is geared towards fighting the last war, not the future one.

The socialist revolution won't be the same as the capitalist (bourgeois) ones, we are sure of that: we can't simply lop off a crowned head to win our victory. We need to help protect



ourselves by dispelling the ghosts of feudalism.

Firstly, by looking for, and at, how the class struggle worked under feudalism not as partisans for the then contending classes but as partisans of the working class. The bourgeoisie's (broad sense) fight against lords and kings is not our fight. Simply ridding the picture of the medieval world of caricature and understanding how the people who lived then were like us – rational human beings living in particular economic and social circumstances – is a big step to getting

rid of ideological shackles.

Millions of people, for centuries lived quiet and orderly lives in feudal society, the cherry-picking of the massacres and murders that punctuated that world plays a large part in how the modern capitalist class and its apologists define themselves against the feudal world.

Violence was common, after all, society was ruled by a martial class (and it is arguable that peasants also could be viewed as a martial class, given how many of them went to war for excitement and largesse). The bourgeoisie were decidedly not a martial class. As David Graeber notes in his book *Debt: the First 5,000 years*, capitalism emerges as a social form through the alliance of the martial and commercial classes (in the form of colonialism and mercantilism). When the bourgeoisie first tried to rebel, they found the vigorous feudal lords waiting on the battlefield to slaughter them.

Taking a sideways step allows us to see the bourgeoisie's class struggle, and its methods as being part of their situation and time, and allows us to pick at our differences in situation to see how our revolution will be different.

This is not to repeat the old mechanical schematics of one class surpassing another until the inevitable end of history comes into play, but, rather, to look at how one set of struggles against oppression and exploitation lead to new circumstances and new forms of exploitation. This is the approach William Morris took in his novella *A Dream of John Ball*. He imagined himself back in the time of the Peasants' Revolt, and drew out the commonalities between the struggle of Wat Tyler's peasants and the workers of his own day. It is not the inevitable end point that matters, but the constant human character and yearning for self-development and identity in the differing material circumstances.

At the moment, socialism and socialist revolution are fantasies, fantasies that are as much in dialogue with history as they are with the circumstances of the world around us. We cannot begin to free ourselves, until we know what we want: and fantasy helps define that. We need to know what our fantasy is, so that we can begin to try and make it a reality, and some future George R.R. Martin or some future William Morris will write in turn about our dreams. The *Game of Votes*, perhaps?

PIK SMEET

(From "Living the Dream", publication for this year's Socialist Party Summer School.)

Reflections on the Tolpuddle Festival

The festival, deep in the Dorset countryside, was held this year on the weekend of 20/21 July to remember the six farm labourers who in 1834 were convicted of swearing a secret oath as members of the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers (engaging in trade union activity), and sentenced to seven years penal transportation to Australia. We were represented at the event by our South West Regional Branch and whilst, unfortunately, our numbers were small we managed to make a fair impression at this well-attended event. However, examining most of the stalls on display made one realise that in general the task of our movement is a difficult one as the theme of reformism still dominated.

The Tolpuddle Festival has a trade union background so it is not surprising that most of the stalls are related to various campaigns and it is not unique compared to other similar events in that its basic message is reforming capitalism rather than replacing it. However, for those who have been involved in putting forward the case for socialism over a long period it is disappointing to see the same slogans and demands that we have been witnessing for so many years.

The stall opposite ours was the so-called Socialist Party, formally known as the Militant Tendency and now Socialist Party of England and Wales (SPEW). It was quite remarkable to gaze over at the amount of reforms they were advocating. Their various posters read; Tories Out - Fight the Cuts - Save the NHS. Alongside this they were attempting to get people to sign a petition calling for an early general election. This they obviously saw as a way of defeating the evil Boris Johnson. Whether or not their dreams of a humiliating defeat for Johnson and a glorious victory for Corbyn's Labour Party would be the result of such an election is open to doubt, to say the least.

One of the participants at the SPEW stall had a UNITE trade union t-shirt pleading with Honda to remain in the UK. In addition to all of this they were selling or giving out Trump Out badges. How people displaying Trump Out badges in this part of the world is going to remove the President of the United States from office is rather beyond our comprehension. However, we could suggest many other candidates from various parts of the world for similar treatment, perhaps Putin or how about Bolsonaro the current President of Brazil who is overseeing the destruction of the Amazon where in the past year an area the size of 500,000 football fields has been destroyed, nearly half a billion trees have been torn down and entire indigenous communities are threatened with eviction from their lands?

The point, of course, is that the removal of individual leaders from office is not going to change the direction that world capitalism is leading us in. The only logical way to remove leaders is to stop following them. As a Trotskyist party SPEW believes that if they can con people into supporting such reforms they will

become willing workers for their state capitalism revolution. Thankfully this strategy has failed to work so far and is unlikely to be successful now or in the future.

SPEW were not, by any means, the only reformist tendency on display. Jeremy Corbyn t-shirts were available, supporters of the Palestine cause had posters and shirts with the message Stop Arming Israel. But why, people might ask, stop at Israel? What about the bombing and other military action being inflicted on the populations of, for example, Yemen and Syria and of course you could name so many other areas of the world where a call could be made to impose a ban on the sales of military equipment. However well-meaning, the problem cannot be dealt with in such a piecemeal way. The only way to do away with the war-torn world that capitalism has created is to do away with its cause which is the system itself.

You could almost feel sympathy for Corbyn with the weight of expectation the Left in this country have been placing on him. To criticise the belief that a Corbyn Labour government, if elected, can really create a society which is 'for the many, not the few' is almost to commit heresy. There were some who visited our stall who posed questions on why we stood a candidate against Corbyn, or why we would not be urging people to vote Labour at the next election. The answer, in short, was that we are socialists and Corbyn and the Labour Party are not, as whoever their leader is their intention is to administer capitalism. A brief examination of political history, not just in this country, but around the world shows the reality that running a society based on minority ownership of the means of living alongside production for profit for the purpose of capital accumulation is at complete odds with the concept of a society 'for the many not the few'. The latter can only be achieved by creating a majority world-wide movement whose sole purpose is to abolish capitalism as a world-wide system and establish a society which can operate for all its members in harmony with the planet we inhabit.

Of course it is very tempting to engage in reformist activity in the belief that solving particular problems is far easier than removing the system itself. However, just a glance at your TV screen during one of the many commercial breaks highlights the sheer volume of problems we would need to solve to create a world fit to live in. In most cases these issues are highlighted by various charities and involve damage inflicted on people, animals and the planet. But charities or attempts at reform have failed to make a dent. Today there are more charities in existence than ever before but the problems they aim to cure persist. The time has come, in reality it came some time ago, when we need to concentrate attention on the cause of the problems we face. Hopefully future years at events similar to the Tolpuddle Festival will begin to show signs that a large minority, at least, are coming round to a rejection of the reformist road and turning to a more radical perspective.

RAY CARR



Transcript of a scene from the film in which Peter Fonda who died last month played Wyatt.

Billy: Oh, wow... what... What's that, man. What the hell was that?

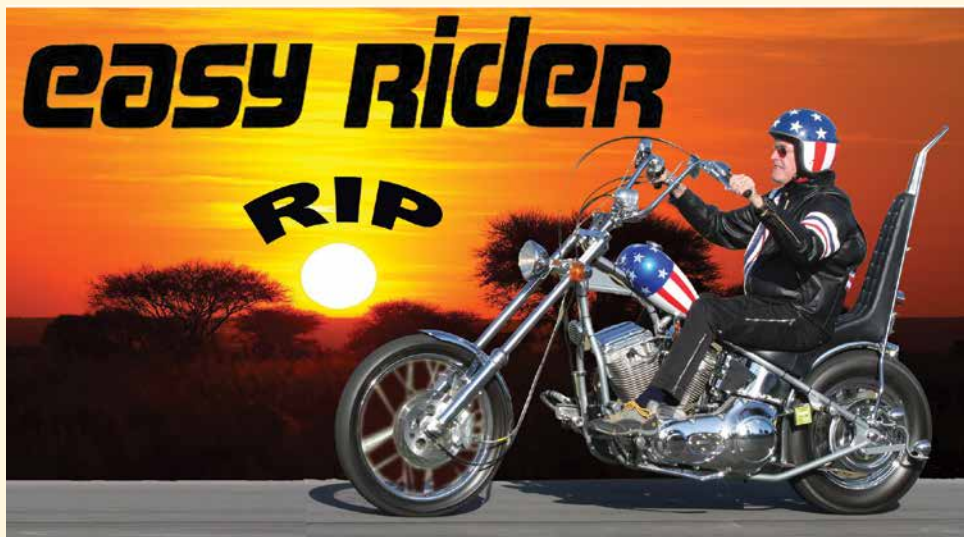
Wyatt: Huh?

Billy: No, man, like, hey man, wow! I was watching this object, man, like the satellite we saw the other night right and it was going across the sky, man, and then it just suddenly, yeah, it just changed direction and went whizzing right off, man. It flashed . . .

Wyatt: You're stoned out of your mind, man.

Billy: Oh yeah, I'm stoned, man. But like, I saw a satellite, man, and it was going across the sky and it flashed three times at me and zigzagged and whizzed off, man, and I saw it.

George: That was a UFO beaming back at you. Me and Eric Heisman was down Mexico two weeks ago. We seen forty of them flying in formation. They've got bases all over the world now. They've been coming here ever since 1946 when the scientists started bouncing radar beams off of the moon. And



they have been living and working among us in vast quantities ever since. The government knows all about them.

Billy: What are you talking, man?

George: Well, you just seen one of them, didn't you?

Billy: Hey man, I saw something, man, but I didn't see it working here, you know what I mean.

George: Well, they are people

just like us, from within our own solar system. Except that their society is more highly evolved. I mean, they don't have no wars, they got no monetary system, they don't have any leaders, because I mean each man is a leader. I mean each man... Because of their technology they are able to feed, clothe, house and transport themselves equally and with no effort.

Wyatt: Wow!

COOKING THE BOOKS

The Next War

'In the next war, we'll need the Royal Marines' was the heading of an article by Roger Boyes in the *Times* (17 July), subtitled 'Other nations are scaling up for an amphibious conflict over trade but Britain is ill-prepared.' He quoted Hannah Arendt about the age of imperialism being when 'businessmen became politicians and were acclaimed as statesmen, while statesmen were taken seriously only if they talked the language of successful businessmen,' adding: 'These times are back.'

Socialists have always contended that the underlying cause of war is the competitive struggle for profits that is built-in to capitalism and which leads to conflicts between capitalist states over sources of raw materials, trade routes, markets, investment outlets, and strategic points and areas to protect these. Normally, this competition is peaceful and differences are settled by diplomatic means in arrangements which reflect the relative strengths of the states involved. Here might is right, and not just economic might but also the military force at a state's disposal. This is why all states try to equip themselves with the most up-to-date and deadly weapons that they can afford.

War is only resorted to as a last resort, when those in charge of a state judge that its vital interests are at stake. After all, war is costly and risky for a capitalist state. On the other hand, sabre-rattling, as a threat to go to war, is a normal part of diplomacy. Economic sanctions, in which states try to impose a mediaeval-type siege on the population of a whole country, have more recently become an alternative to actual war.

All that happened after the end of the stage of capitalism Arendt commented on was that 'statesmen' found it politic to speak of war as being fought for 'freedom', 'democracy', 'human rights' and other such lofty ideals, in order to disguise the real reason from populations less likely to support a war over such a sordid thing as trade. Now, it seems, they don't feel the need to do this so much.

Boyes, who is the paper's diplomatic editor but who sounds more like its war correspondent, was mainly concerned in the article about conflicts over trade routes, mentioning in particular three strategic sea lanes:

- The straits of Hormuz which controls the entrance to the Persian Gulf 'through which a fifth of the world's oil passes.'

- The Bab el-Mandeb straight between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, through which all shipping using the Suez

Canal has to pass.

- The Malaccan straits 'through which 80 per cent of China's imported oil passes from the Indian Ocean into the South China Sea.'

There is already a war going on in the Red Sea area, on one side of which is Yemen where America's allies, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, are fighting against local militias serving as Iran's proxies, with, as always in wars, devastating effects on the local population. The main flashpoint at the moment, however, is the straits of Hormuz which Iran is threatening to close in retaliation for the crippling economic sanctions imposed on it and the US is mobilising a war fleet to keep them open if needed.

Boyes views this as normal: 'Proximity to the sea lanes that define global trade has become something worth fighting for.' Actually, from a capitalist point of view, it always has been, but in expressing this Boyes is at least being honest, while at the same time confirming the socialist case on why wars happen – and why we say that defending trade routes is not worth a single drop of working class blood.

PROPER GANDER

Can't A Cleaner Like Avocados?

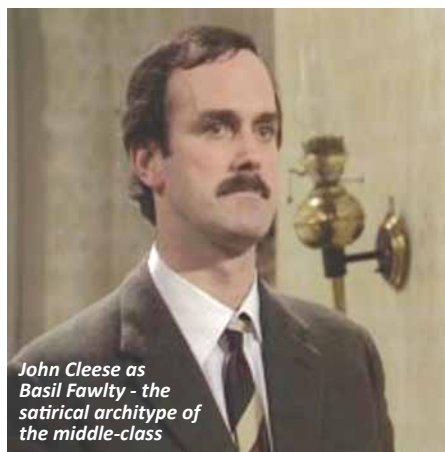
'MIDDLE CLASS' is a term which everyone recognises, but the more you pick apart at its meaning, the more meaningless it becomes. It's often used to refer to people with 'professional' jobs or who work in 'business' with a reasonable salary, contrasted with 'working class' when used to denote people who do physical labour and who have a low income. But what about admin staff in 'business' who have a smaller wage than a builder? And isn't all labour physical anyway? The 'middle class' have to work as much as 'working class' people do, even if they do it wearing smarter clothes than overalls. In other words, the vast majority of us are working class, whether or not we identify as 'middle class'.

Making a distinction between 'middle class' and 'working class' throws up all sorts of confusions, so it was fitting that BBC2's recent *How The Middle Class Ruined Britain* was a confused hodgepodge of a show. It was put together by Geoff Norcott, who has found his niche as a 'Conservative voter, leave voter, working class' comedian. His definition of 'middle class' is someone who watches foreign-language films and who 'likes a protest march so long as it's followed by a spot of light brunch', probably involving avocados (can't a cleaner like avocados?). His main charge against the 'middle class' is the generalisation that 'they're hypocrites because they claim to be virtuous and caring and yet simultaneously they are doing things that serve their self-interest against other people's'.

He finds an example of this in attitudes to schooling. He says that 'middle class' people claim to be fans of the comprehensive system, but wouldn't want their own children to go to any old comp filled with hoi polloi. Instead, he argues that the 'middle class' resort to sneaky tricks to ensure their offspring get enrolled at schools with a decent reputation: 'nicking the best school places is their version of benefit fraud'. Tactics include signing up with a church just to qualify for a faith school, and pretending to live in the catchment area of a preferred school by borrowing the address of a (wealthier) friend or relative. Havering Council employs 'a dedicated team of super-sleuths' to investigate suspicious applications for school places, which

Norcott likes to make look like something from a cop show. Some parents have to resort to fibs and scams to get a school place because parts of the educational system aren't open to all, and these are schools which have better resources. Schooling is subject to the same scarcities and divisions that other aspects of society are, so people are pushed into competing for what's best.

Norcott says that 'middle class' people's attitudes to comprehensive schools are similar to those about social housing: something they say they want, just not near them. He rightly points out that new housing developments don't tend to include many council or housing



association-owned properties, or those which are otherwise cheaper than ones aimed at 'young professionals'. This prices many people on lower incomes out of newly-gentrified areas, which you would have thought an 'aspirational' Tory like Norcott would approve of. While he at least acknowledges his own hypocrisy here, he goes for the wrong targets in those he criticises over the issue. He dislikes what he calls the 'hard left' who engage in protests against building developments. When he meets a group of protesters in Deptford, London, he patronises them about their placards and songs, and raises an eyebrow when he can't think of a punchline. These protesters don't do themselves any favours, though, by carrying out a 'symbolic salt ceremony' which involves one of their more eccentric number sprinkling salt on the pavement 'to ward away the greedy evil spirits'. He then meets a 'top dog' from a Labour

council to challenge the 'posh boy' about social housing still being too expensive, even though the councillor is just a very small cog in a very big machine. The real problem here is that housing is a commodity, and can't be anything else within capitalism, whatever councillors and protesters prefer. Cheaper houses and flats, including those owned by councils or housing associations, don't rake in much profit, and so developers are bound to build more swanky pads which do.

He says that 'middle class' people's attitudes to schooling and housing show how they like to keep those on lower incomes at arm's length, and then he jumps to another example of this: a dating app aimed only at those who were privately educated. He goes to a 'fancy dating event' where he pays £16 for a pint and realises that people tend to associate with others from similar economic backgrounds and those without much money get priced out of wealthier social circles.

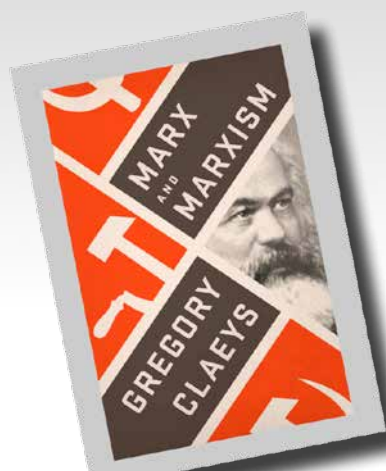
The same applies to Westminster. It's pointed out that these days, far fewer Labour MPs come from lower-income backgrounds compared with the past (Norcott doesn't cite figures about the backgrounds of Tory MPs, unsurprisingly). He meets an exception to this, Gloria De Piero from Ashfield in the East Midlands, who acknowledges that the things discussed in parliament don't address most people's concerns. While it's true that the working class don't have enough of a political voice, MPs coming in from outside the Oxbridge bubble wouldn't have any more ability to reform capitalism than any other. Even if they sincerely aimed to represent and help out their more disadvantaged constituents, they'd soon get unstuck by bureaucratic inertia and, above all, the dictates of the economy.

How The Middle Class Ruined Britain highlights some of the ways which wealth shapes capitalist society, from the kinds of houses which are built to the backgrounds of those with more power. But to see them you have to look past Norcott's own prejudices and misperceptions. The conflict isn't between 'middle class' and 'working class' – it's between the majority and the system itself.

MIKE FOSTER

REVIEWS

Marx or Lenin?



Marx and Marxism. By Gregory Claeys. Pelican. 500 pages. 2018. £8.99

It is a tribute to the continuing relevance of Marx's ideas that books about him and them are still being published. Claeys's is divided into two parts, the first on Marx, the second on 'Marxism' but which is in fact on Leninism.

Since socialists accept Marx's basic ideas – his materialist and class approach to history, his analysis of the capitalist economic system, and his advocacy of the need to win political power to change the basis of society – how Marx came to these is of some interest. However, the details of his private life – that, for instance, he was irascible and didn't suffer fools (or those he considered fools) gladly – are only marginal and of no guide whatsoever as to how a socialist working class majority in control of political power would behave.

The intellectual journey which led to Marx becoming a socialist is more relevant but not crucial. After all, he is only one socialist amongst many and few (none in fact) are likely to follow the same route, i.e., via German idealist philosophy. Claeys's treatment of this is reasonable and he does raise some issues which socialists still debate, such as to what extent are humans social by biological nature (i.e., is human nature 'good' and not merely neutral?) and whether the socialist case against capitalism is based on a morality as well as class interest (Marx certainly denounced capitalism's treatment of workers in a distinctly moral terminology).

In a bid to partially acquit Marx of the charge of utopianism, even millenarianism, Claeys places too much emphasis on what Marx wrote about

producer cooperatives, at one point even seeming to suggest that Marx envisaged capitalism coming to an end through the spread of cooperative societies. In fact, while Marx was not opposed to workers forming them any more than he was to them forming trade unions, his main point was that they showed that production does not require a private owner to be carried out; producers can organise this themselves. He did not envisage socialism as a system of separate cooperatives producing for the market but as being a sort of nation-wide cooperative producing directly for use.

Apart from 20 pages on pre-WW1 Social Democracy, Part Two is of no interest. It reads like a hastily written description of what Lenin and Leninists did when in power. Lenin's defining difference with Marx was his theory of the vanguard party, not only to seize power as a minority but to hold it dictatorially as the self-appointed representative and sole interpreter of the interest of the working class. This contrasted, both in theory and in practice, with what Claeys previously referred to as 'Marx's account of a fully class-conscious revolution led by a democratically organised majority' (page 249).

Leninism is a quite different theoretical system from Marx's. There is, however, a historical question that needs explaining: how a theory of state-capitalist development under a totalitarian single party should have come to be associated with Marx when it clearly had nothing of substance in common with what Marx as a socialist advocated? A subject for some aspiring Ph.D student.

ALB

Before and After



Ra Page ed: **Protest: Stories of Resistance.** Comma Press £12.99.

Here is an interesting idea: twenty short stories, each dealing with an example of resistance and accompanied by an afterword. The stories range from the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 to the demonstration against the Iraq war in 2003, though most deal with the twentieth century. The afterwords are by a variety of authors, from historians to activists, and deal with various different issues. Most of the examples discussed are fairly well known, but some will be familiar to fewer people, such as the Radical War or Scottish Insurrection in 1820 and the National Blind March of 1920.

In his introduction, the editor notes that the stories are not about leaders or heroes but the 'ordinary' participants, about whom history usually has little to say. The only real exception is one scene dealing with a visit by Malcolm X to Smethwick in 1965, shortly before his assassination (this is based on a real event). A small amount is known about Andrew White, the central character in Laura Hird's fine story of the Radical War: he was transported to Australia but later returned to Britain and probably became an active Chartist.

Three participants in that rising were executed, and state brutality is one aspect of the book. Michelle Green makes very vivid the trauma of suffragette prisoners being force-fed: the doctor 'finds the gap ... left by my treacherous missing tooth, and the steel jaws open with each turn of the screw, forcing bare the softness of my throat'. There were spies and agents provocateurs at Pentrich in 1817, and police violence at the Poll Tax demo in 1990.

A natural question to ask is how successful the various protests were. The Blind Persons Act of 1920, following from the March, did lead to improvements in the lives of blind people, and the repeal in 2003 of the notorious anti-gay Section 28 happened after a great deal of LGBT protest (though, as Em Temple-Malt says in her afterword, it probably also came after social attitudes had changed). At the end of Martyn Bedford's story on the Miners' Strike, one character says that the miners won, as you only lose if you don't fight. But it is hard to see how the strike and the suffering and bitterness it caused resulted in success in any way.

Many of the stories emphasise the importance of co-operation and solidarity, but sadly also reveal how many struggles within capitalism do not deliver what was hoped for.

PB

REVIEWS

Anti-Trumpism



Resisting Trumpist Reaction (and Left Accommodation). Marxist Humanist Initiative. New York, 80 pages. 2018.

This is an odd pamphlet from a group entitling itself 'Marxist' in that it argues that workers should vote for a 'centrist neo-liberal' to stop Trump being re-elected in 2020 just as it says that they should have voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016.

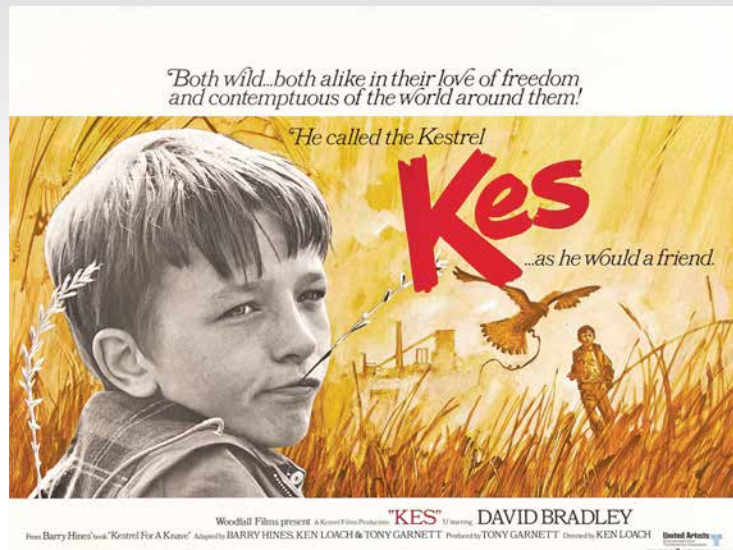
Their argument is based on the premise that 'Trumpism' is some sort of modern form of fascism and that Trump wants to replace political democracy in the US by an openly authoritarian regime. Political democracy in the US (such as it is) is not under threat, but even if it were the answer would not be to line up behind pro-capitalist politicians.

The pamphlet claims that the position Marx took up of supporting the North in the US Civil War and the separation of Ireland from Britain vindicates their position. Marx supported the one to hasten capitalist development in America and the other to undermine the power of the landed aristocracy in Britain, both issues long since settled by history and of no relevance today.

Their argument is that Marx also had in mind that both would free workers from 'supremacist' ideas – racism and anti-Irish prejudice. Maybe (not that it did) but this would not imply voting for the Democratic Party today. That's not going to change anything. Rather would it suggest some other way of overcoming the prejudices of Trump voters. Such as a straightforward campaign to explain that their problems are caused by capitalism and that it is their interest to unite with other workers to establish the common ownership and democratic control of the means of life. A message that should be equally directed at Democratic Party voters.

ALB

Meanwhile in Barnsley



Washington DC was preparing for its bombastic military parade. It seems the US president had been inspired by his new friend in Pyongyang. Meanwhile, a few thousand miles to the east, another more modest, though worthwhile, procession took place through the streets of Hoyland Common, Barnsley.

Led by a brass band an invited group walked from the Saville Square pub where they'd assembled along a short route to an unassuming terraced house. The occasion was the unveiling of a blue plaque honouring Barry Hines, the author of *A Kestrel for a Knave*. Written in the 1960s, it became the film *Kes* directed by Ken Loach who took part in this event.

The honour of unveiling the plaque fell to Barry's surviving brother who delivered a short speech about how the son of a South Yorkshire miner came to write the book that made his name. Speeches concluded and, following a final couple of tunes, instruments returned to their cases, it was time to return to the Saville Square for lunch.

In the foyer of the pub stood a full-size fibreglass version of the bronze statue, sculpted by Graham Ibbeson, which is to stand in Barnsley in Barry Hines' honour. The money for this has been raised through a vigorous funding campaign led by Ronnie Steele and a dedicated group of volunteers. Beginning in January 2018, through a mix of crowd funding, the sale of bronze maquettes and live public performances by an eclectic mix of musicians, the statue has been cast and paid for.

It depicts the central character of the story, young Billy Casper, his arm extended with the kestrel perched on his hand. It presently stands in Barnsley's new library,

but the group intend that eventually it will stand on a plinth outside for all to see. Ronnie Steele gave a brief speech of thanks to all involved before declaring the buffet open. While people ate there were songs by performers Dave Cherry and Del Scott Millar, and Celtic-style traditional music by Barnsdale Hood.

There are a few political points to be drawn from this event. Common arguments against socialism are that people will not work for free and, as people are naturally greedy, free access to resources will result in people taking far more than they need.

The many, actually uncounted, hours of often quite tedious work by Ronnie Steele and his group to organise the campaign and events was entirely voluntary. The performers who gave their time to play at those events did so unpaid. All they required was a shared objective.

The buffet itself was greatly over-catered. However, people did not eat more than they wanted, each more than capable of deciding when enough was sufficient and then stopping. People had to be almost pleaded with to take remaining food away and then no one scooped up armfuls. Just a paper plate or two for family or friends who would appreciate the largesse.

And this is very much in the context of capitalism where selfish individualism is supposedly the driving force behind how people act. While this is not socialism of itself, it is a glimpse of possibility, that people without state or company direction can organise and act in a social way.

The world of mining communities as depicted by Barry Hines has gone, but the potential of the working class remains, if still largely untapped.

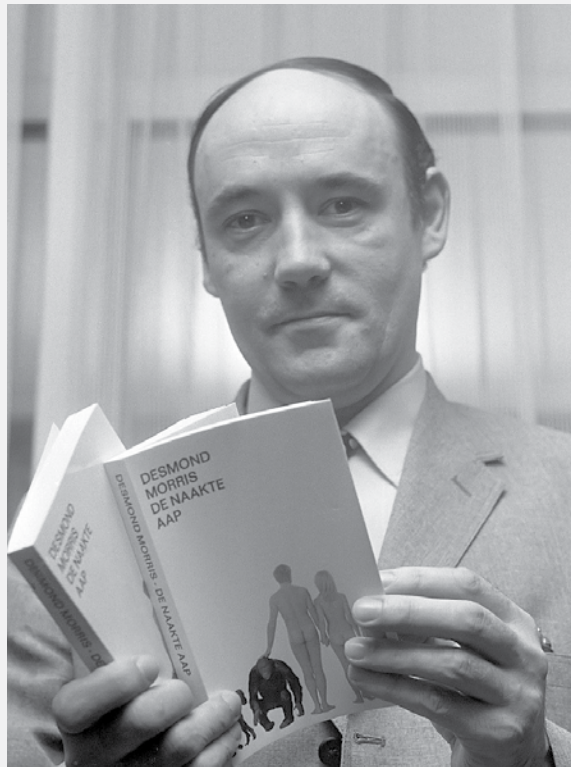
DAVE ALTON

50 Years Ago

Man: Ape in Wolf's Clothing?

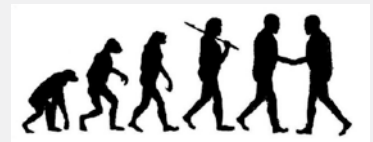
Perhaps the most famous of scientific frauds was the fake Piltdown Skull of 1910, a “missing link” fabricated by a person unknown. That anonymous joker put together an ape’s jaw with a human skull. Desmond Morris has grafted the most ignorant fairy tales about human society onto a body of basically sound ideas about human biological evolution. *The Naked Ape* is a barefaced hoax.

As a gimmick, Morris pretends to describe the human animal just as it would be pictured by a zoologist if it were a newly-discovered species. “Naked ape” is a clinical term (like “black-footed squirrel”) which is supposed to denote men’s most noticeable characteristics: their lack of fur. But evidently, Morris has become a rich man because to millions of his readers, nudity is a novelty. It should be obvious that the most important thing about human



animals is not that they are *naked*, but that they are *clothed*. In other words, they produce what they consume; they turn the artificial into the necessary, and (like Morris) sometimes confuse it with the natural.

His book is a hymn of praise to modern capitalism. All the current practices, preoccupations, superstitions, myths and manners are, according to Morris, highly admirable. Furthermore, they are *natural* because they stem from man’s past as a wolf-like, monogamous, predatory killer. (*Socialist Standard*, September 1969)



What a pity

‘Large numbers of children in Britain could grow up struggling with “financial illiteracy” if the UK becomes a cashless society and does not educate children on the concept of paying for things, a maths professor has warned. Many children are failing to grasp the concept of exchanging money for goods because they have never seen their parents or carers handing over coins or notes to a cashier, warned Dr Jennie Golding, at the UCL Institute of Education.’ (i paper, 15 June)

Why would this be a problem if Adam Smith was right about humans having a ‘propensity to truck, barter and exchange one thing for another’? But wait till we have socialism when we will all be ‘financially illiterate’ and adults, let alone children, won’t know what a cash machine was or what paying for something online means.

They still don’t get it

‘Working-class values like hard work should be rewarded with decent pay and security. The Government should concentrate on rebuilding working-class jobs with decent pay’ (Frances O’Grady, TUC General Secretary, *i* paper, 10 August).

It must be nearly two hundred years since the slogan ‘a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work’ was first raised and it’s over 150 years since Marx urged English trade unions to abandon that ‘conservative motto’ for the ‘the revolutionary watchword, Abolition of the wages system.’ Maybe the C in TUC stands for ‘conservative’.

Ten less years

‘For most people, health has little to do with healthcare. It is genetically and socially determined, and in a country like the U.K. with high levels of child poverty and income inequality, the consequence is a 10-year gap in life expectancy between rich and poor, and a 20-year difference in healthy years lived.’ (M.D., *Private Eye*, 9 August).



Meetings:

SEPTEMBER 2019

CARDIFF

Every Saturday (weather permitting), 1.00 p.m. – 3.00 p.m.

Street Stall

Venue: Queen Street (Newport Road end), Cardiff CF10 2HQ

DORCHESTER

Saturday 7 September from 11.00 a.m.
Dorset Radical Bookfair

Venue: The Corn Exchange, Municipal Buildings, High Street, Dorchester, DT1 1HF
The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event

WIGAN

Saturday 7 September from 11.00 a.m.

Wigan Diggers Festival

Venue: Gerrard Winstanley Gardens, The

Wiend, Wigan, WN1 1PF

The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event

LONDON

Holloway

Saturday 14 September, 11.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.

Street Stall

Venue: Nag's Head Shopping Centre, on the pavement in Holloway Road at the end of the covered walkway leading to Morrison's.

Hammersmith

Saturday 14 September, 2.00 pm. - 4.00 p.m.

Public Meeting: "Fascism and Populism: Can You Spot the Difference?"

Venue: Quaker Meeting House, 20 Nigel Playfair Avenue, London, W6 9JY

CANTERBURY

Saturday 21 September, from 12.00 Noon

Street Stall

To be confirmed

OCTOBER 2019

CARDIFF

Every Saturday (weather permitting), 1.00 p.m. – 3.00 p.m.

Street Stall

Venue: Queen Street (Newport Road end), Cardiff CF10 2HQ

MANCHESTER

Saturday 12 October, 2.0 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.

Public meeting: "What will Socialism be like?"

Venue: Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester, United Kingdom M2 5NS

LONDON

Clapham

Saturday 19 – Sunday 20 October, 10.30 a.m. – 5.00 p.m. both days

Autumn Delegate Meeting

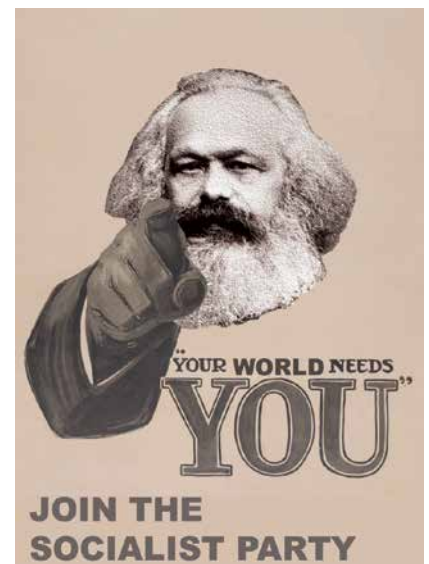
Venue: Socialist Party's Premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN

CANTERBURY

Thursday 24 October, 5.00 p.m. – 6.30 p.m.

Public Meeting: 'Socialism: a world of common ownership and free access', a talk by Andy Thomas (Socialist Party).

Venue: Making Politics Matter, Lecture Theatre Og32 – Old Sessions House (main reception on campus), Canterbury Christ Church University, North Holmes Road, Canterbury CT1 1QU



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.

So far, so good

Faiza Shaheen in an article titled *The Rich Are Getting Richer, And It's Not Just Their Business – It's All Of Ours* (huffingtonpost.co.uk, 6 August) informs us '...the top 0.1% enjoy pre-tax incomes in excess of £650,000 a year. And guess what? The increasingly rich elite are increasingly turning their back on the rest of us – moving into spatially more concentrated areas in London and the south east.' She adds, '...more than three quarters of us are stressed about money. Household debt is at record highs and work simply no longer pays, with 70% of children in poverty living in a household where an adult works...'. She also notes that most of their stolen wealth is inherited - '...the supposedly self-made nouveau riche like Donald Trump got a \$400 million leg-up for his businesses' and the '7th Duke of Westminster, for example, is worth at least £8 billion, largely because his ancestors acquired loads of valuable land in London' - and concludes 'when the economy is only working for a small percentage of the richest and this in turn is concentrating power and influence skewing our media, politics and inevitably negatively shaping how we feel about each other, the 99% must do more than demand a greater share of the pie - we need to change the recipe'.

So near yet so far

Faiza Shaheen is a director for *Centre for Labour & Social Studies*, which has the promising acronym CLASS. She notes that in the UK the 1 percent is concentrated in London and south east. Here, and worldwide, capitalism shows one of its hallmarks, class division. Poverty is found alongside plenty, the well-heeled alongside the homeless. 'More than 6,000 homes in Kent are empty. *Action on Empty Homes* has revealed a total of 6,172 residential properties have no one living in them. And yet 4,723 people are either living in temporary accommodation or sleeping rough in the county' (kentonline.co.uk, 7 August). These empty homes are

worth an estimated £1.8bn. And here another hallmark can be seen: production is for profit not need. Houses are built by workers to be sold on the market and those with holes in the pockets need not apply. Shaheen's recipe for change is nothing new. Indeed, she and *Action on Empty Homes* are reading the same reformist cookbook. CLASS - a 'think tank dedicated to championing policy so that the political agenda works for everyday people' and AEH's campaigning issues, such as 'Council Tax can now be doubled on homes left two years empty. We campaigned against discounts for empty homes and support councils implementing new premiums' - is thoroughly reformist.

Reform or Revolution

Nearly 150 years ago, Engels stated that there is no possibility of a rational approach to housing within capitalism. 'As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated solution of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the fate of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation

of all the means of life and labour by the working class itself' (*The Housing Question*, 1872). 'A social transformation and a legislative reform do not differ according to their duration but according to their content.' A revolution is the work of a class which has gained political power in order to transform society to suit its interests; a reform is carried out only within the framework of the social system created by the previous revolution. Hence reforms cannot end capitalism; they can modify it to some extent, but they leave its basis untouched. To establish socialism, a revolution - a complete transformation of private property into social property - is necessary. 'That is why people who pronounce themselves in favour of the method of legislative reform in place of and in contradistinction to the conquest of political power and social revolution, do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the same goal, but a different goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new society they take a stand for surface modifications of the old society.'

Socialism or Barbarism

We have a choice, but, to quote Rosa Luxemburg, 'without the conscious will and action of the majority of the proletariat, there can be no socialism.' We need to seize the bakery and create our own recipes for the cookshops of the future socialist world of production for use and allocation according to self-defined need.

Faiza Shaheen



FREE LUNCH THE JEREMY CORBYN SONG IN FULL...

