

socialist standard

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CAPITALISM'S GROTESQUE INEQUALITY



also:
Law and Order
No Deal Brexit
Extinction Rebellion



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Introducing the Socialist Party

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

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

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

Gradualist reformers like the Labour Party believed that capitalism could be



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

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

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

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Neither Brexit nor EU but world socialism

BY now most people are fed up with hearing about Brexit and just want the issue to be settled one way or the other, many not particularly caring which way. They are right. The point at issue is the trading arrangements of the British capitalist class, and this is a matter of indifference as far as the class of wage and salary workers is concerned. Customs union, single market, free trade area, tariffs, World Trade Organisation terms, the terminology speaks for itself.

This is not how the partisans of Brexit or Remain see it. They are making all sorts of claims to get workers to take their side. The Brexiteers are promising 'sunny uplands' while the Remainers are promising that 'if we stop Brexit, then we can build an economy that works for everyone' (as a LibDem leaflet puts it).

But we have heard such promises before – at every general election – and we know from experience that they are not worth the paper they are printed on. Capitalism, as a system of class ownership and production for profit, cannot be made to 'work for everyone'.

And capitalism will continue to exist whether the UK is in or out of the EU. In other words, so will an economy that can only work for the few who own and control the means of life.

While government economic decisions cannot make things better for people, they can make them worse. A no-deal Brexit, for instance, even if it wouldn't be the end of the world that Remainers predict, would temporarily cause great inconvenience for ordinary people. It would also cause problems for the capitalist class; which is why those in parliament representing (consciously or not) the interests of the dominant section of this class, which never wanted to leave, have gone to great lengths to try to prevent it. Even the Johnson government says it wants to avoid this and most of its members probably genuinely do. But it could still happen by accident, given the personal and political ambitions of MPs.

Former Prime Minister David Cameron has now revealed that he realised from the start that his fellow Tory

Boris Johnson was an unscrupulous opportunist prepared to put his personal ambition ahead of the national capitalist interest. On the other side, the Remainers could overplay their hand with their politicking and provoke a no-deal outcome.

It is not up to socialists to advise the capitalist class and its politicians how to manage their affairs, but if they would settle the differences between them without causing any collateral damage to the working class, this would clear away an irrelevant issue. The real issue of our time is not Brexit but: capitalism or socialism? Class ownership, production for profit and rationing via the wages system or common ownership, democratic control, production directly to satisfy people's needs, and distribution on the principle of 'from each their ability, to each their needs'?



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PATHFINDERS

Capitalism's holy grail

HERE'S an easy question - what's your view of censorship? If you're a socialist and a democrat, you're probably against it. After all, you argue, the only really effective way to combat bad ideas is to bring them out in the open and put them up against good ideas, and you can't do that if the bad ideas aren't allowed to circulate in the first place. The battle of ideas must be fought in public or it becomes totalitarianism.

So how fares this public battle today? Not well, actually. Everyone knows that society has changed rapidly in the last two decades. The mass-market passive consumerism of the twentieth century has given way to the individualistic, two-way street of the internet. But instead of this opening up debate it seems to have done the opposite. Very few people would include a public political meeting as part of their normal week's activity. Street-corner debates are a distant memory for the oldest among us. Now ideas don't normally challenge each other in large open auditoriums. Instead they exist in largely separate and closed worlds where each person sees what they want to see.

This is not to say that the concern over social media echo chambers should be overstated. Social media groups tend to reflect the organic composition of friendship networks, which don't typically consist of one exclusive type of belief or idea. Sure, you may not be besties with a Tory, but you probably know one or two, and you may have friends or relatives who think differently from you on a lot of issues. Social networks are like Venn diagrams, overlapping each other in a multi-dimensional nest. Comfort zones they may be, but most people don't want or expect them to be hermetically sealed. At least, not reasonable people.

But in the pressured depths of the web where reasonable people don't go there are unmoderated groups where something quite different is going on. Here the most one-dimensional views are expressed, and there are no dissenting voices to challenge them. Here is where a macabre game of Dare is played out. Far-right bedroom trolls take over a forum and use it as a playground to make violent death threats against black people, Hispanics, Moslems, Jews, gays or some other minority. It's just talk at first, but the feedback loop ramps it up as each participant tries to outdo the last. Finally someone ups the ante to



the limit, thereby winning the kudos and respect of all participants. What is this limit? Carrying out the death threat in reality.

This is what is thought to have happened on the 8chan discussion forum prior to the shootings in El Paso in August, when 22 people were killed and 24 injured, and the next day in Dayton, Ohio, where nine people were shot dead and 27 injured. 8chan was also used by the shooter in April's Poway synagogue shooting in California, and in the mosque massacres of Christchurch, New Zealand, in March, where 51 were killed and 49 injured, and where the shooter live-streamed the massacres on Facebook.

Let's take a moment to revisit that ethical question on your view of censorship. Given the track record of 8chan, if it was in your power to close it down by pressing a big Kill button, would you do it? Or would you defend 8chan in the name of free speech, saying as some US Republicans did at the time, that's the price you pay for liberty?

Of course there was no shortage of hackers keen to take 8chan down. One easy way to do that would have been to launch a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack on it by bombarding it with traffic until its servers ground to a halt. But this wasn't possible because the site was protected by online security firm Cloudflare. After the Dayton shootings however, the owner of Cloudflare finally pulled the plug, saying: '8chan has repeatedly proven itself to be a cesspool of hate. They have proven themselves to be lawless and that lawlessness has caused multiple tragic deaths' (BBC News, 5 August - [bbc.in/2IX1r6T](https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-51916671)).

8chan duly went offline almost immediately, however its users will certainly migrate to a different forum and continue as before. Even if you agree that

'free speech' has limits and such sites need to be stopped, the question is how. The internet is just too big.

Artificial Intelligence is held up as the great unbiased censor, the thing that might save society from its own worst nightmares, however the hype around AI is a good deal more advanced than the technology itself. AI is good in situations with finite options and clear rules, which is why it can beat the world's top game-players. But ask it to make a value judgment or an ethical call, and it won't have a clue.

Even so, it's good enough to 'benevolently' censor you. AI manages what you see on the GAFA big four (Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon), sifting your data to serve up what it thinks you will like and hiding what you won't. That's why two people doing the same Google search will get different results. Meanwhile YouTube's algorithms attempt to keep users on-site by serving up material on a 'same-but-even-more-so' basis. With an estimated 500 hours of material loaded every minute, YouTube can't possibly keep track of its content. Thus, right-wing extremists end up being offered ever more extreme right-wing material, so that the site may be upping the ante in the same way as 8chan. Some people are demanding that it changes its algorithms in favour of more balance, while others are calling for it to be shut down altogether (*New Scientist*, 24 August).

There is, though, another reason to be highly resistant to any kind of censorship. What if they turn it on us? In China open dissent is impossible. People have to use secretive Virtual Private Networks to hide their identity when accessing forbidden western resources like Wikipedia. No wonder Hong Kongers are fearful. Who's to say other states wouldn't adopt Chinese tactics if it saved them money and created more docile populations?

What's worrying about certain one-dimensional internet trends and also calls for more censorship is their general intention to disable the human critical faculty. They're not interested in debate, they are engaged in whiter-than-white brainwashing, and never mind the victims or the collateral damage. In a way that's the holy grail of capitalism too. It aims to create the perfect customer, even at the cost of the perfect storm.

PJS

LETTERS

Dear Editors

IN the September issue ('Mental Health: In a Mad, Mad World') you seem to give some credence to the theory that mental illness arises from a chemical imbalance in the brain and that antidepressant drugs work by restoring the balance. In your version of the theory the balance that needs to be maintained is that between serotonin, dopamine and oxytocin. The first two of these are neurotransmitters, the third a hormone; they perform quite different functions.

There are other versions of the theory. Often the theory is presented without specifying the substances that have to be 'in balance'. The ratios that constitute 'balance' or 'imbalance' are never indicated. Nor is it ever explained why it is essential to maintain such ratios. Even if it were established that certain ratios among specified substances have to be maintained, no instruments exist to measure such ratios in a patient's brain. There is no way for a physician to determine what quantities of which substances need to be added to achieve balance or check whether a drug has restored balance or just created a new imbalance.

Strictly speaking, this is not a theory at all but a poorly formulated hypothesis that is never proven but is endlessly repeated in order to convey the false impression that the

biochemistry of mental illness is understood and sell the drugs that allegedly correct the imbalance.

The drugs prescribed for mental illness mess around with the brain in various complex and poorly understood ways. They may relieve distress by dulling all feelings, good as well as bad, but at the cost of serious 'side effects' and harm to the brain. Some drugs entail heightened risk of aggression or suicide.

Stephen Shenfield

Reply:

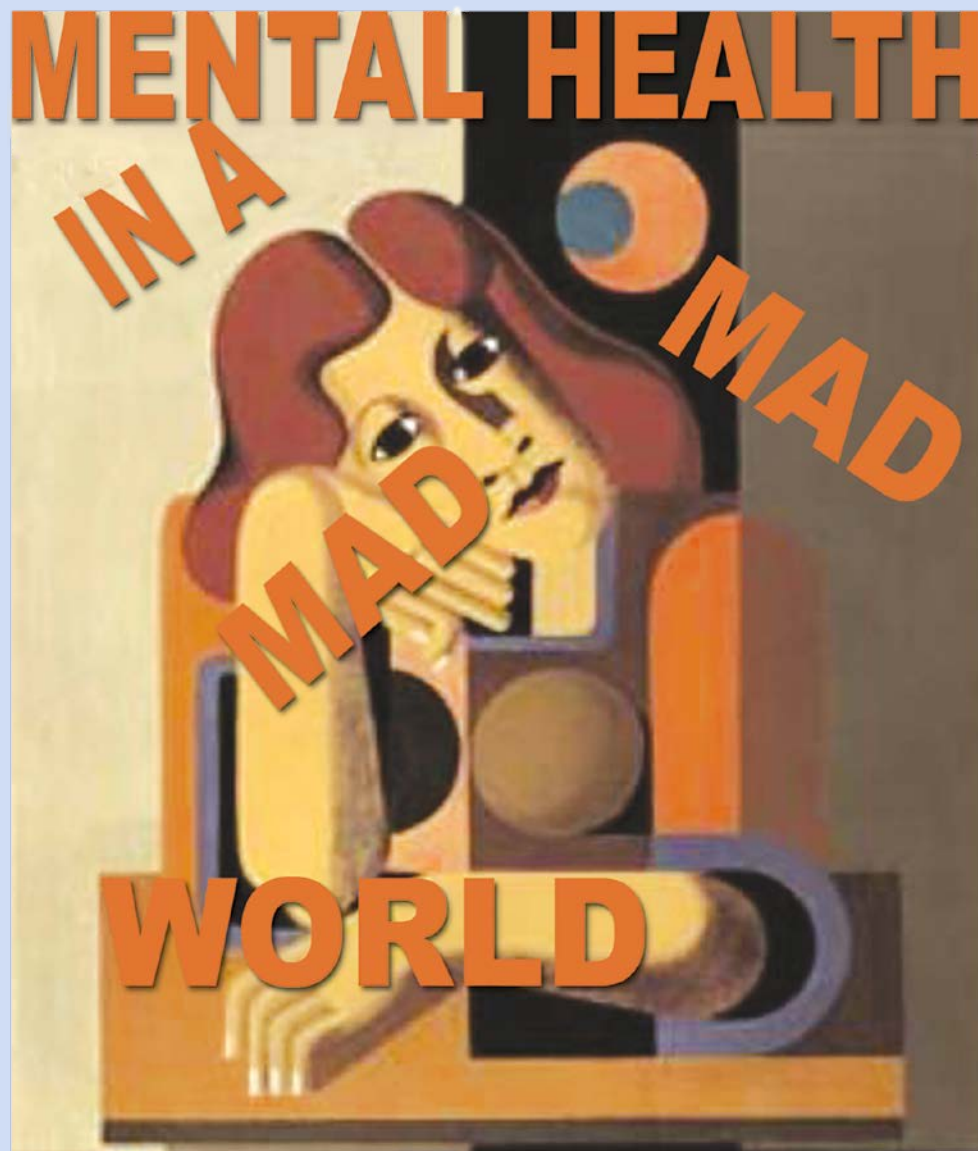
We agree with much of what you say, and of course you're correct to distinguish between a hormone and a neurotransmitter. But we're not sure we'd want to throw all psychiatry – the treatment of mental health conditions with drugs – out of the window, given that many conditions, for example schizophrenia, are known to occur across family generations and therefore seem to have some genetic component. The article rightly argues that environment and biology are both factors.

The article states that mental health is the result of the correct balance of chemicals in the brain. You seem to reject this theory because nobody knows what that balance is,

or even how to measure it, yet it seems to us that an optimal evolutionary balance must logically exist. We can't see what you're objecting to here. If there are stressful environmental factors at play, these will trigger 'fight or flight' hormones like cortisol and adrenaline which will in turn alter the brain chemistry. Conversely, if someone pops an ecstasy pill at a festival they'll be flooded with dopamine and oxytocin hormones, and that will change their behaviour towards others. So environment changes chemistry and chemistry changes environment.

Of course it's true that the chemistry of the brain is poorly understood, and that advances are achieved more by trial and error than by sound theory, but the same could be said of most branches of medicine, and even most branches of science. Some drugs have caused unexpected and disastrous side effects but that's why the testing procedures are so long and complex, and we certainly wouldn't want to reduce those in socialism.

The article's larger point, with which you surely won't disagree, is that a huge proportion of the world's mental health problems, including epidemic rates of suicide, are caused directly or indirectly by the capitalist system itself, and that no amount of drugs is going to make that particular problem go away. – *Editors.*



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COOKING THE BOOKS

Who are the working class?

To coincide with its conference in September the TUC brought out a report, *Building Working Class Power: How to address class inequality today* (bit.ly/2INfyMa), which called for discrimination on the basis of class to be outlawed, as with race, sex and disability today.

This requires a clear definition of 'class', which the report attempts. Recalling that the TUC was formed to advance the 'general interests of the working classes', it noted:

'There's a long historical tradition of contested definitions and meanings of the term class. One understanding see [sic] only two classes – those who own capital, and those who exchange their labour for a wage.'

Yes, there is such an understanding, and it's the socialist position. The report, however, rejects this definition in favour of 'narrower definitions of class' based on occupation. It opts for a definition of 'working class' as someone doing a routine or semi-routine job, while noting that people doing such jobs amount to 'just over twenty per cent of the employed population.'

This definition is so narrow that most people reject it, as the report is forced to admit: 'research conducted in 2015

found that 60 per cent of people identified as working class – a figure unchanged since 1983 – including 47 per cent of those in jobs classified as managerial or professional.'

Despite this, the report persists with its definition of 'working class'; which would imply that the TUC is committed to furthering the general interests of a mere 20 percent or so of the working population. Presumably, unions representing workers in 'lower supervisory and technical occupations' and 'lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations' had no input into the report.

The report goes on to narrow the definition of 'working class' even further by citing another measure telling 'us something important about class': 'there is also a strong sociological tradition of looking at "cultural" as well as economic capital, exploring the ways that cultural choices like the way people dress, or the type of music they like, have been used a way of marking and maintaining class distinctions'.

So, even if you are doing a routine or semi-routine job but wear red corduroy trousers and listen to classical music you are not working class.

The report says that it doesn't want

to get into 'a lengthy debate about definitions'; but, if it wants a law to be brought in to ban 'class discrimination', there would have to be a precise definition of 'working class'.

In any event, what the report is in effect demanding from its definition of working class is that people should have an equal chance to occupy managerial, administrative and professional jobs, i.e to escape from the working class. This is more 'the working class can kiss my arse, I've got the foreman's job at last' than 'building working class power'.

The report, then, is both confused and confusing. In an advanced capitalist country like Britain, there essentially are only two classes – the capitalist class who own the means of life and the rest who, as Engels put it in a footnote to the 1888 English version of the *Communist Manifesto*, 'having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live.' This includes not just those doing routine or semi-routine jobs but all in employed jobs who, with their dependants, make up 90 percent of the population.

The way to end discrimination against them is to end them being reduced to working for wages by making the means of life the common property of society under democratic control.

WOOD FOR THE TREES

WATCHING THE recent dramas broadcast from Westminster one would be forgiven for thinking that it represented the heart of political activity in this country. The participants are all convinced that as 'representatives' of their constituents it is they who decide the future of us all. This conceit is widely believed and, of course, the legislators and executives of the state do have an important, if exaggerated, effect on all our lives.

How have so many become so convinced that this sideshow is somehow the alpha and omega of political activity? To answer this we have to understand the history of the conversion of wealth into political power. Parliament is primarily about getting and spending money to preserve the wealth and power of the elite class. The two houses of parliament are not there, despite all the propaganda, to preserve the rights of 'the people' but to curtail their rights. How could such a paradox arise and why do the majority not recognise it as such?

Originally the King called upon an assembly or parliament of respectable property owners to organise and legislate for the taxes he needed to finance the military activity that defined kingship. Inevitably this caused tension and dissent among the already impoverished majority together with the wealthier emerging middle class, and the king always found a great reluctance in parliament to raise taxes without some kind of consent from and representation for those who paid the taxes. After years of riots and revolts it all came to a head in 1628 with the 'Petition of Right' which sought to make laws prohibiting the king from demanding arbitrary taxes without the consent of parliament. The king promptly 'prorogued' parliament (sound familiar?) which started the build-up to the English Revolution in 1642.

The growing bourgeoisie or capitalist class, whose wealth now rivalled that of the nobility, decided that a parliamentary coup would be their route to political



power. After an attempted counter-revolution in 1688 they consolidated their power and took over the state using parliament as their executive voice. The bourgeoisie could now concentrate on what they did best – exploit the labour of their fellow humans for profit. They left the running of the state to underlings and those who took to politics as a career. There were, and still are, two main duties for MPs: raise taxes to run the state as cheaply as possible and make laws to secure the property of the capitalist class.

In 1799 'income tax' was introduced and in contrast to the preceding land tax it gave the impression that the exploited majority were paying it instead of their employers. This deception made it appear that the working class had an incentive to keep taxes low in common with their masters. From then on it became a priority to minimise 'public spending' to keep taxation low. However, later in the nineteenth century it became clear that capitalism was failing to keep the working class in an even minimal state of health and this was obviously hurting profits. Bismarck was one of the first European statesmen to recognise this and together with his fear of a growing 'socialist' party he was motivated to introduce a form of welfare state. Although this placated many, as with all state spending, it was always kept under pressure by the need to keep taxes down.

Soon, in many capitalist states, the majority of the infrastructure was taken under government control along with welfare services. Leftist political parties

adopted state or public ownership as some perverse form of socialism forgetting its origins as a cheap way for the capitalists to finance the infrastructure of the state by sharing its costs. To this day the ideological battle between left and right centres on the argument about levels of government investment in the state (seen as benefitting the majority and stimulating economic activity) or minimising public spending and letting the market decide by

privatising and deregulating former state-owned industries/services. It has become a matter of ideological dogma and faith on both sides – ignoring the fact that both originated from the needs of capital and not labour.

Socialists find such a debate meaningless from a working class perspective. The present Brexit furore is a typical example of the anachronistic debates that we see in today's hopelessly arcane parliament. Socialists and the class we represent have no interest in whether we're exploited by European capitalists or those in the US and we certainly don't give a flying fig about the internecine struggle within the ruling class concerning their contrasting economic interests.

All of the rhetoric about democracy, national self-determination, labour rights, cultural identity and emigration is merely hyperbole disguising sordid greed. The interminable manipulation of procedure and legislation underlines just how inappropriate the esoteric rituals of parliament are in a twenty-first century global capitalist context. Not until the majority recognise that real democracy is only possible when the production of the means of life are taken into common ownership will debate become a meaningful reality to which they will all personally contribute; the squabbles between ex-public schoolboys about how they can best add to the wealth left to them by their daddies will be long gone.

WEZ

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Lancaster branch. Meets 2nd Sun (Jan 3rd Sun), 3pm. Friends Meeting House, Meeting House Lane. Ring to confirm: P. Shannon, 07510 412 261, spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org.

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MATERIAL WORLD

Indonesia: from anti-imperialism to imperialism

In August, East Timor (Timor Leste) celebrated 20 years of independence from Indonesia. The 1974 left-wing coup in Portugal led to the dismantling of its colonies including what was then called Portuguese Timor. Indonesian forces commenced covert attacks, then invaded in 1975. There were an estimated 100,000 conflict-related deaths through the entire period 1974 to 1999, including 18,600 violent killings. Indonesia was held responsible for 70 percent of the killings.

With the armed resistance largely crushed Indonesia held civilians in detention camps where there were 84,200 deaths from disease and starvation. In 1976 Indonesia declared East Timor the country's 27th province. Many countries looked the other way. In 1979 Australia became the only western nation to recognise the annexation of East Timor and quickly sought a treaty with Indonesia to divide the spoils of East Timor's sea-bed so both could access the off-shore oil resources.

On 30 August 1999 78.5 percent voted for independence. Festivities were short-lived. Indonesian-backed militia groups terrorised the population. A three-week campaign of violence killed 2,600 people, nearly 30,000 were displaced and as many as 250,000 were forcibly relocated into Indonesian West Timor after the ballot.

August also saw a resurgence in the unrest in occupied West Papua with government troops being deployed. When Indonesia gained independence in 1945,

the Dutch government declined to cede control over West Papua arguing that it was to be given the freedom to determine its own future. In 1961-1962 West Papua was invaded and annexed by Indonesia. An estimated 30,000 Papuans were killed up to its incorporation into Indonesia in 1969, after a sham referendum.

According to an article in *Red Pepper*: '...The occupation of West Papua receives little attention in the UK. This is, in no small part, due to Indonesia's ban on foreign journalists and its outlawing of West Papuan social movements who try to speak out internationally. However, West Papua has not been forgotten by international corporations, including companies from the UK. For them, Indonesia's brutal occupation of West Papua provides lucrative opportunities for profit.' (www.redpepper.org.uk/west-papuas-silent-genocide)

The article by Egret and Anderson details how mining companies exploit West Papua's vast wealth. US company Freeport-McMoRan operates the Grasberg mine in Papua – the largest gold mine and the third largest copper mine in the world. It is Indonesia's biggest taxpayer, making billions of dollars for the Indonesian government every year. TIME stated that 'In 2015 alone, Freeport mined some \$3.1 billion worth of gold and copper.'

BP profits from the occupation through its massive liquified natural gas fields in Tangguh, BP's biggest operation in SE Asia. Papuan communities are also being

evicted from their land for palm oil. In addition, Papua boasts timber resources worth an estimated \$78 billion.

Indonesia is an ethnically diverse country, made up of 17,000 islands, with around 300 distinct native ethnic groups and 700 local languages. The country's official language is a variant of Malay. Indonesia can be described as an invented nation-state that having been subject to colonialism has become itself imperialist.

In the pursuit of profits and administrative control, the Dutch imposed the authority of the Dutch East Indies on an array of peoples who had not previously shared any unified political identity.

The name 'Indonesia' is derived from the Greek (Indian islands) and was employed by an 18th century English naturalist to classify the ethnic and geographical area. 'Indonesia' was seized upon by nationalists as a word to imagine a unity of people. By the twentieth century, the Dutch had formed the boundaries of a colonial state that became the precursor to modern Indonesia. During the 1920s and 30s, a small elite began to articulate a growing anti-colonialism and nationalism, striving to carve out a place for themselves. In 1928, the All-Indonesian Youth Congress proclaimed the Youth Pledge (Sumpah Pemuda), establishing the nationalist goals of: 'one country – Indonesia, one people – Indonesian, and one language – Indonesian.' After the surrender of Japan, Sukarno proclaimed Indonesian independence. The Dutch attempted to re-establish their rule, and an armed struggle ensued but in 1949, the Dutch recognised Indonesian independence.

Indonesian independence.

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The Socialist Party rejects nationalism as anti-working class because it has always tied the working people to its class enemy. Nationalism is the ideology of an actual or an aspiring capitalist class. It is of the practice of native capitalists that when imperialism prevents them for building their own independent capitalist state, they lead resistance against it. Sooner or later, successful anti-imperialism then becomes imperialism.

ALJO



Australian members of International Forces East Timor (INTERFET), talk to a citizen in Dili, East Timor.
(Photo by PH3 Dan Mennuto)

Extinction Rebellion: what do they stand for?

As its name suggests, Extinction Rebellion (XR) holds the view that continuing to emit greenhouse gases is leading to a change in the Earth's climate that would be so drastic as to threaten the 'extinction' of the human and other animal species, and that this justifies a 'rebellion' in the form of civil disobedience and getting arrested for blocking roads, bridges, and government and fossil fuel company buildings.

The political philosophy behind their 'Declaration of Rebellion' of 31 October 2018 is strangely old-fashioned. It is based on the idea that there is an implicit social contract between a state and its citizens, under which the state agrees to protect its citizens and guarantee them human rights and democracy while in return the citizens agree to pay taxes and obey the law. According to the declaration, by not doing enough to deal with global warming, the state has broken its contract, so:

'We hereby declare the bonds of the social contract to be null and void; the government has rendered them invalid by its continuing failure to act appropriately' (<https://rebellion.earth/declaration>).

Or, more prosaically, as Sutton Local XR put it in a leaflet, 'the Government has failed to protect us'.

Nevertheless, XR's demands are directed at the government. They demand that it adopt the aim of achieving net zero carbon emissions, i.e., that no more is released into the

atmosphere than is extracted from it, by 2025. Again more simply, as one of those blocking the A38 in Birmingham at the beginning of August put it, 'what we are here to do is force the government to pay attention to the issue of climate change and take urgent and decisive action' (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-49263916).

At this level, this is pure reformism, calling on a capitalist government to implement some desirable measure within capitalism. This is probably all that most of those taking part in XR activities want or expect.

The famous 3.5 percent

However, their leaders are more ambitious. They envisage overthrowing any government that refuses to accede to XR's demands. As described by one of their prime movers, Roger Hallam, this begins with only a few thousand practising civil disobedience but eventually:

'The arrogance of the authorities leads them to overreact, and the people – approximately 1-3 per cent of the population is ideal – will rise up and bring down the regime. It's very quick: around one or two weeks on average. Bang: suddenly it's over' (XR handbook *This Is Not A Drill*, p. 104).

XR's Media and Messaging Coordinator, Ronan McNern, explains how this figure was arrived at:

'Our media messaging is based on research by Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, which demonstrates that to achieve social change the active and sustained participation of just 3.5 per cent of the population is needed. It's that 3.5 per cent that we want to engage' (p. 126).

There is some ambiguity here. Hallam writes of bringing down the regime while McNern writes of achieving social change. Nor is it clear what McNern means by 'social change': is it a change of society (a social revolution) or a change within existing society (social reform). A statement on XR's website seems to settle this in favour of the former, saying that one of its aims is 'mobilising 3.5% to achieve system change' (<https://rebellion.earth/the-truth/about-us>).

Hallam might be right about bringing down a regime (the state-capitalist regimes in Eastern Europe did collapse in that sort of way) and McNern about achieving some overdue political measure that is no threat to the system (as the Civil Rights movement in the Southern states of the USA), but 3.5 percent cannot bring about 'system change'.

What system change?

XR are rather ambiguous about what they mean by 'system change', but they do identify capitalism and its drive to perpetual economic growth as the problem and they do emphasise that any post-capitalist society should involve a participatory democracy for decision-making, with citizens assemblies and the like. So the question arises: how could a minority of 3.5 percent bring about a participatory democracy (let alone the common ownership of the Earth's resources that socialists want in addition)?

A participatory democracy has to be based on voluntary participation and voluntary cooperation. It is not something





that can be imposed on people; they must want it and understand its implications. At the moment this is far from being the case. Even if Hallam's 1-3 percent minority did succeed in bringing down a government that refused XR's demands, this would still be the case. In the absence of a majority wanting system change, the system would remain the same, i.e. capitalism, and the emergence of an understanding and participating majority would still be needed.

Unfortunately, that's going to take time, more time in fact that XR ideologists, and Hallam in particular, think is needed to avoid climate catastrophe. Interviewed on BBC News Hardtalk on 16 August by Stephen Sackur (<https://youtube/9HyaxctatdA>), Hallam claimed that, if things continued as now, in ten years' time there would be 'social collapse', the beginning of a period in which only one billion of the world's current population of 7 billion would survive:

'The capitalist system, the global system that we are in, is in the process of destroying itself and it will destroy itself in the next ten years. The reason for that is because it's destroying the climate'.

The message is hopeless in both senses of the word: since, given that most people don't want to replace it with common ownership and democratic control of the Earth's resources (socialism, properly understood), capitalism is not likely to be abolished within the next ten years, humanity and the planet are doomed; six out of every seven of us are going to perish in the Armageddon that will begin in ten years' time, i.e. in 2029.

But are the prospects really that bad?

Is the End Nigh?

Is the threat as serious as XR's ideologists maintain, i.e. that the human species is threatened with 'extinction', beginning in ten years' time?

At the moment average global temperature is about 1 degree above pre-industrial levels and the UN's 'worst case scenario' assumes an increase to 4.5 degrees (that's if nothing at all is done to decrease emissions) by the end of the century. Such an increase would certainly cause problems, especially under capitalism, with the flooding of low-lying land, mass population movements, and more extreme weather. But it would not mean that six out of every seven humans will perish.

It is possible that XR's leaders know this and are painting a doomsday scenario to jolt people into taking action. (It is also possible that they have deluded themselves into believing it; Hallam certainly comes across like this). If so, this approach is debateable and is in fact being debated amongst those concerned about climate change, where the point is being

made that such alarmist scenarios risk encouraging inaction and an attitude that the situation is so unavoidable that it is not worth trying to do anything about it or, if it does jolt people into action, it might not be what XR wants; it might be support for some eco-fascist dictatorship.

Whatever they might believe is likely to happen, XR's leaders obviously feel that they should offer some hope. Hence their reformist demand that the government adopt the aim of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2025 instead of the announced 2050. Although this does seem to offer hope amongst their doom and gloom, it doesn't really as it's not realisable (not even if socialism were to be established tomorrow). In his interview with Hallam, Sackur made the following (valid) point that 'it's not possible within the framework of our capitalist economy without causing unimaginable damage to people's lives.' To which Hallam replied:

'Well, the damage is imaginable and it's proportionate and it's necessary because the alternative is social collapse'.

So, even if the government did adopt XR's policy, there would still be 'necessary' damage to people's lives. Whatever we do, we are doomed to suffer one way or the other.

There is a way out

Climate change, as a result of global warming caused by human activity over the past two hundred years and still continuing, is a problem and something needs to be done to deal with it, but XR's strategy for doing so is seriously flawed. Capitalism, with its built-in economic imperatives to endless growth (capital accumulation) and to produce as cheaply as possible (to remain competitive in the race for profits) is indeed both the cause of the problem and an obstacle to its solution and needs to go. But what to put in its place?

Socialists contend that the only framework within which the problem of global warming can be tackled is the common ownership (no ownership) and democratic control of the Earth's natural and industrial resources as this will put humans in control of what is produced, how, and for what purpose and stop the operation of the coercive economic laws of capitalism. However, this can only be established by the consciously socialist action of a majority of the world's population, which must include those in the developed capitalist parts of the world even if those from the rest of the world take the lead. It is not something that can be provoked by any minority, let alone a small minority of 3.5 percent.

ADAM BUICK

Contrasts: on yachts and tropical diseases

Huge numbers are hard to visualize. A billion dollars, let's say. That's the sum you have to accumulate to get yourself listed as a billionaire in Forbes magazine and denounced by Bernie as a member of the 'billionaire class.'

Start with a wad of twenty \$100 banknotes. That makes \$2,000. Then imagine a suitcase packed with 500 of those wads. That makes a million. Then imagine entering a big storeroom with 100 of those suitcases lined up on shelves. That still gives us only one tenth of a billion.

Or we can tackle the problem in another way. We can ask what can be done with a billion dollars. What can be bought with that much money? What can be achieved?

Homes and yachts

Meet Mr Mukesh Ambani – chairman, managing director, and largest shareholder of Reliance Industries Ltd., a conglomerate that owns numerous firms throughout India. He spent one of his fifty-plus billions having a home built for himself, his wife, and their three children. With the possible

exception of Buckingham Palace, it's the priciest home in the world. Named Antilia after a mythical island in the Atlantic, it towers 568 feet over the smog-laden Mumbai landscape. Its facilities include parking space for 168 cars, a car service station, 3 helipads on the roof, 9 elevators, a spa, an ice cream parlour, terraced gardens, a temple, a vast library, a dance studio, a swimming pool, a gym, yoga room, and snow room, a ballroom, guest suites, a 50-seat theatre, and accommodation for 600 permanent staff. Ample use was made of marble, rare woods, and mother of pearl in the construction.

Another way to spend a billion dollars is to purchase a fancy yacht. If it hasn't yet been snapped up, you could buy the *Streets of Monaco*, a 'floating city' that displays a miniature scene from the fabled principality. When it comes to yachts, however, a billion is not enough to take you right to the top. That place is occupied by the *History Supreme*, made of solid gold and platinum and valued at almost 5 billion dollars. It belongs to Mr Robert Kuok Hock Nien of Malaysia.

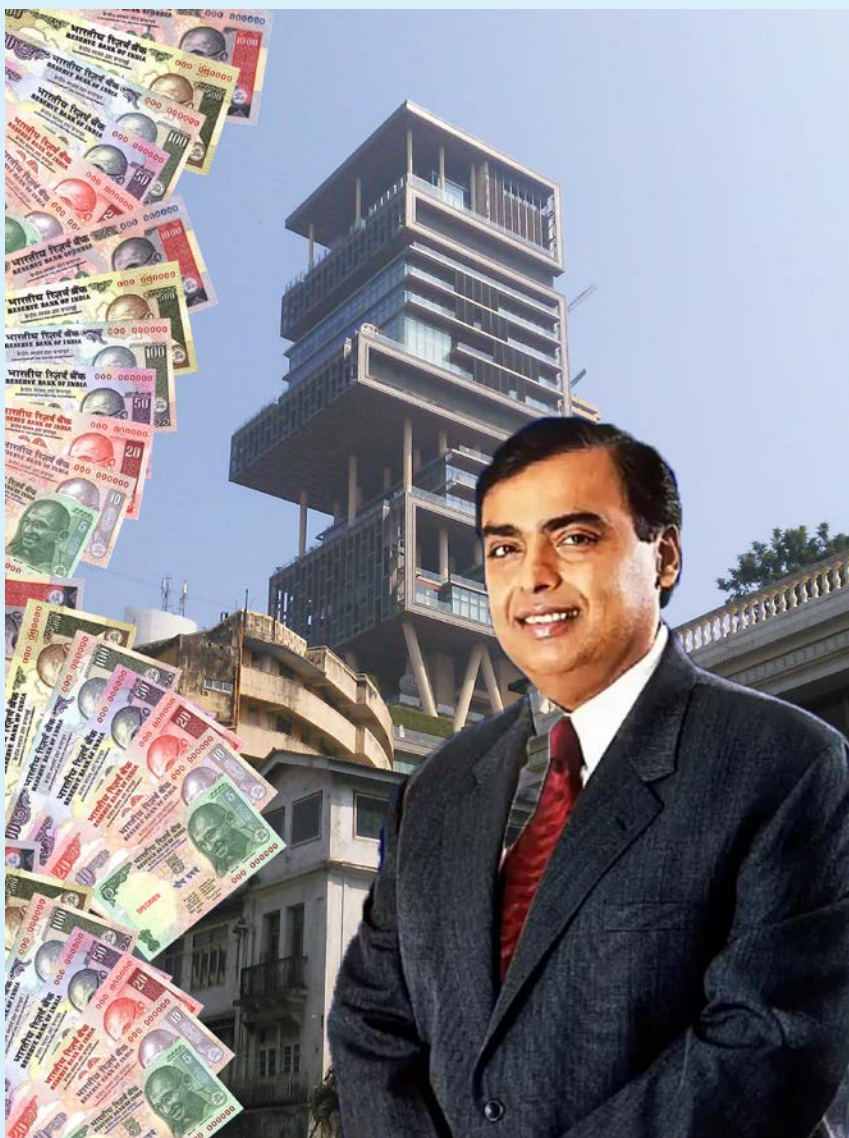
Trachoma

Searching for more ways to spend a billion dollars, I came across this news item. The World Health Organization (WHO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, had declared that it could eradicate trachoma within 4 years if it had a billion dollars to devote to that purpose.

Trachoma is a highly contagious eye infection. It scars the eyelids and turns them inward, so that the eyelashes scrape the cornea with every blink, causing great pain. Untreated, it leads to permanent blindness. Trachoma is endemic in many poor rural areas and affects over 21 million people, over a million of whom are already blind. However, the bacterium that causes trachoma is known. The condition is easy to treat, cure, and prevent.

So, says the WHO, it could eradicate this scourge if it were able to allocate \$250 million a year to the task for 4 years. How much does it currently allocate for trachoma? Published data do not answer this question. The WHO's *Programme Budget 2018–2019* does not give figures for any specific communicable diseases except HIV and hepatitis (which are lumped together), tuberculosis, and malaria. Trachoma is placed in the category of 'neglected tropical diseases' (NTDs) alongside river blindness, leprosy, trypanosomiasis, lymphatic filariasis, elephantiasis, and dracunculiasis. This is not a complete list because 'new diseases are constantly being added to the portfolio'; all low-income countries are affected by at least 5 NTDs (Section 1.4).

The amount spent by the WHO in 2018–2019 on all NTDs was \$107.3 million. Of this \$42.6 million was spent at headquarters, leaving



TRACHOMA

Defeating the world's leading infectious cause of blindness.



World Health Organization

TARGET: Elimination as public health problem

THE DISEASE

Caused by infection with ***Chlamydia trachomatis***



Transmitted from person to person



Multiple infections lead to visual impairment and blindness



Blindness from trachoma is irreversible

only \$64.7 million for work in the field, mainly in Africa and Southeast Asia. How much of this went to treat trachoma we do not know, but clearly it must have been far below the \$250 million required for eradication within 4 years.

This low level of expenditure reflects the chronic underfunding of WHO programmes by national governments. As one analyst remarks, 'the WHO is required to function on a budget equal to that of the university hospital in Geneva [Switzerland] and less than the budget of many major hospitals in the United States.' Hence also the pitifully modest targets that the WHO sets itself – for instance, to reduce 'the number of people requiring interventions against NTDs' from a baseline of 1,700 million to – wait for it! – 1,500 million.

'Neglected tropical diseases' – that is not a medical term. Rather, it describes an economic and political situation. Pharmaceutical companies and entrepreneurial physicians neglect these diseases because hardly any of the people who suffer from them can afford to buy medical goods and services. As economists say, they create negligible 'effective demand.' And relieving their misery evidently comes very low on lists of governmental priorities.

Implications

The contrast drawn here highlights the cruelty and waste of a social system that caters with unstinted generosity to the trivial whims of a tiny minority while brushing aside the vital needs of millions of people. Many similar contrasts could be drawn. The sum of money could be larger or smaller. Instead of yachts we could talk about private jets. Instead of treatment

for disease we could discuss the supply of drinking water (although that too is a healthcare issue).

It is not essential that comparisons be drawn in terms of money. Instead we could, for example, compare the numbers of people employed in socially useful and in socially useless work (money-handling jobs coming under the latter category). Money is not a very good measure of human effort and other resource use, even though in this society it is the most convenient one. Thus the value of Antilia on the real estate market has risen to two billion dollars, but this does not mean that the resources embodied in its construction have changed. Conversely, money values take no account of many very important resources.

Nor is it essential to focus solely on the luxury consumption of the wealthy. Luxury consumption is a significant and growing source of waste, but several other sources of waste are no less significant. Annual world military expenditure is rising toward the two-trillion-dollar mark (\$1.822tn in 2018 according to SIPRI). There is also the waste inherent in unemployment and in built-in obsolescence, the waste of the creative abilities of working people, and the destruction of goods that cannot be sold at a profit.

A gloomy picture, to be sure. But it does draw attention to the vast scale of the resources that *could* be redirected to satisfy people's needs and meet the climatic, environmental, and other global challenges faced by our species, once those resources are appropriated by the human community and brought under its democratic control.

STEFAN

Animal Farms

In July this year, police forces in over a hundred countries detained nearly six hundred people in an operation aimed at wildlife smuggling, and seized over fifteen thousand animals in the process. 'It is vital that we stop criminals from putting livelihoods, security, economies and the sustainability of our planet at risk by illegally exploiting wild flora and fauna,' said the secretary general of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species).

After drugs and weapons, the trafficking of animals and their 'derivatives' is the third most valuable illegal trade in the world. It may be worth up to \$10bn a year, though its illicit nature means that estimates are only approximate. Its prime motivation, of course, is profit, supported mainly by conspicuous consumption or display of trafficked goods.

The Caribbean, with its rich biodiversity, is one of many places from which animals are smuggled. Many smuggled animals are taken to China, where animal products are used in traditional medicine. Despite claims about turning the country into an 'ecological civilisation', and banning the domestic trade in ivory, the trade in rhino horn and tiger bone was recently reopened, though supposedly under strict controls. This relaxation was postponed after protests, but the situation remains uncertain. Tiger farms in China hold over six thousand animals, but there are very few rhinos, and the demand for rhino horn in China is mainly met from South Africa, where private ranches hold at least seven thousand rhinos. Demand and profits were also increased massively when a myth began to circulate in Vietnam that rhino horn could cure cancer.

To emphasise the link between trafficking humans and trafficking animals, it is often the same cartels who control both kinds of smuggling from Latin America into the US. But as clamping down on security at the US-Mexico border has increased, smugglers turn elsewhere. In 2017 over one-third of

illegal animals seized in the US had come from Indonesia.

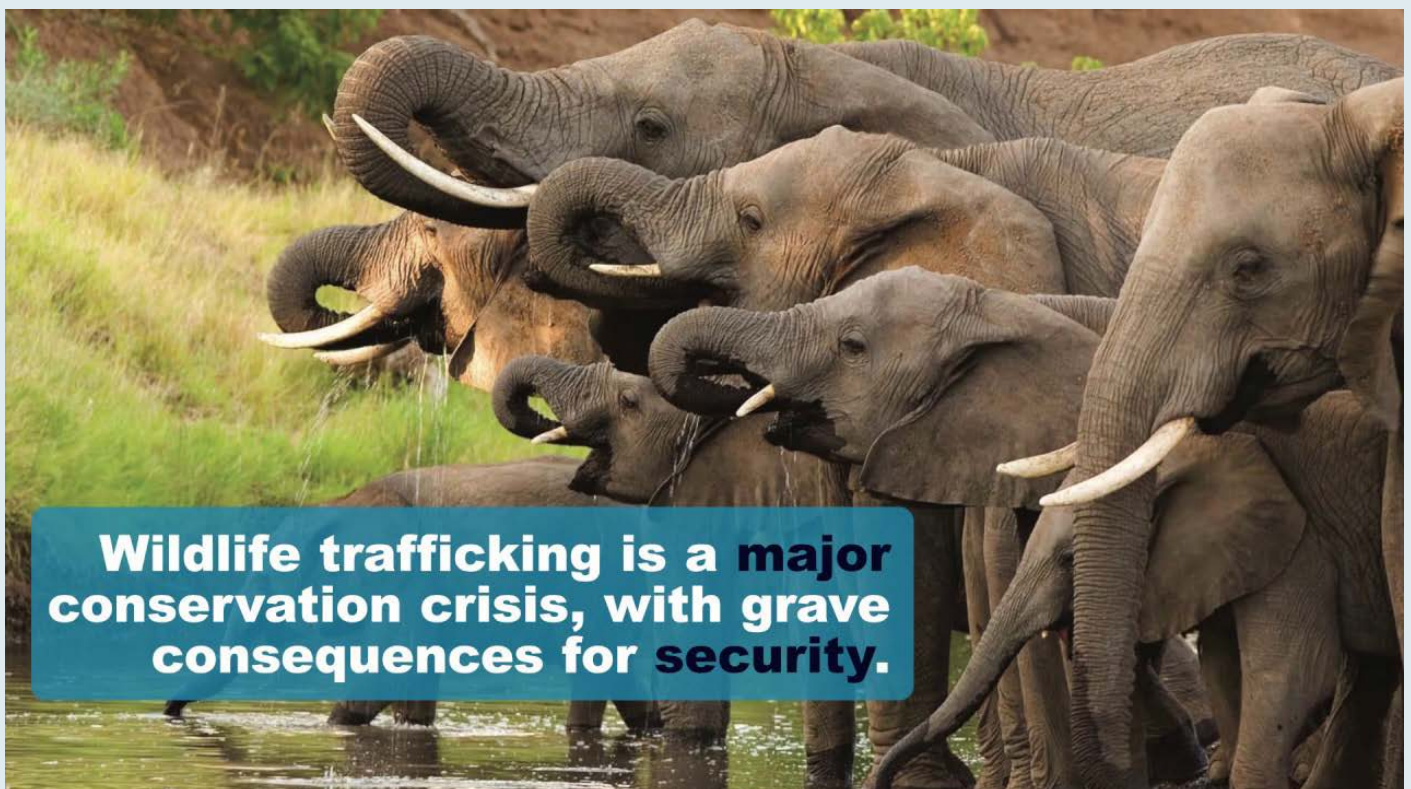
Exotic pets can be smuggled to wealthy owners who want a kind of status symbol. They may be transported in appalling conditions in order to get past customs checks, such as infant snakes being shipped in CD cases. Many die on the journey, or are very badly treated by dealers in the destination country, or even by their eventual owners, who often abandon them after a few months.

Apart from the suffering of the animals concerned, what other kind of impact does all this have? For one thing, many people in the poorest countries depend on wild animals for food, and poaching and smuggling can reduce their food supply. Invasive species sometimes have a devastating effect on local ecology, such as Burmese pythons let loose by their owners in the Florida everglades. Trapping and poaching can incidentally kill other species as well, for example in traps. Some non-traditional pets can have diseases that spread to humans, such as the herpes B virus and salmonellosis.

CITES is an international agreement that came into force in 1975, but countries only enter into it voluntarily, though it becomes legally binding once they do so. Yet that does not mean that it has much effect in practice. In some US states, for instance, the Fish and Wildlife Service has no officers to inspect wildlife shipments. Many smugglers who are caught just pay the fines and carry on smuggling, seeing the fines as part of the cost of doing business. Animals probably come near the bottom of capitalism's priorities in terms of protecting the victims of crime.

And people who want 'exotic pets' or furs as some kind of status symbol could well look at themselves and ask if they really need such items.

PB



Wildlife trafficking is a major conservation crisis, with grave consequences for security.

Who would benefit from a no deal Brexit?



The British state risks subordination like never before to the interests of global capitalism. If the UK were to have a 'no-deal' or 'hard' Brexit, it would change the face of British capitalism.

But the question does remain an 'if'. As we go to press attempts are still being made to leave with a deal, especially after the opposition parties got together, just before Boris Johnson's suspension of parliament, to pass a law to block no-deal. Even so Michael Gove, the minister in charge of Brexit arrangements, has made it clear that the British government is operating under the assumption that a deal will not be struck.

It is worth asking, then, who actually wants no-deal?

Corbyn, in an article for the *Independent* (26 August), described no-deal as a 'bankers' Brexit', serving the interests of this powerful group primarily. This isn't to say that no-deal would benefit the capitalist class as such – no-deal is more likely to be driven by nationalism than simple economic gain. *The Daily Telegraph* and other mainstream media outlets condemned this as just left-wing ideology, noting that bankers were originally in favour of remaining in the EU. However, other publications, such as the *Financial Times*, have reported some recent shift of bankers' views to favour a no-deal Brexit, and more so since Johnson's premiership.

The potential effects on the economy are worth considering. No-deal would, if Bank of England reports are to be believed, risk recession. This might, in a way, favour some sections of the capitalist class – regulations could be dismantled and business take the helm more firmly, as is the inevitable to-ing and fro-ing in a capitalist economy. On the other hand, some businesses have already started asking for handouts from the government, such as the food and finance industries. The food

industries are going further, demanding exemption from competition laws so that they may collude. In all likelihood, the capitalist principle of 'privatise profits, socialise losses' will prevail.

There are also numerous other consequences to no-deal, leaving aside the domestic affairs. America has been the most forthcoming in stating its willingness to make a deal with the UK: President Trump has repeatedly expressed his enthusiasm about the current government. He has maintained that the UK may have to leave without a deal, saying 'the European Union is very tough to make a deal with – just ask Theresa May.' Johnson has said that he looks to make a 'comprehensive deal with the US'. Other potential trade partners include Brazil, currently the site of major ecological damage. The British government is still, however, vying for the EU's favour. British-European trade may carry on despite tariffs (most likely dictated by the EU, not the UK).

In this case, the UK would be jumping from the frying pan into the fire. All its trade deals would no longer be made through the EU, but based on World Trade Organization rules. No-deal is also sometimes called 'leaving on WTO rules'. This would mean drawing up individual 'schedules' (lists of quotas, tariffs, and concessions for goods and services) for every WTO member the UK trades with. Britain would have to negotiate any trade deals on its own. As Britain would not have the bargaining power of the EU, British capitalism, under these circumstances, would most likely take on a much more American face. The interests of star-spangled industry would be catered to by British government more attentively.

No-deal has, however, been criticised by both right and left. The former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, has said that there was no mandate for leaving the European Union without a deal. The previous Prime Minister, Theresa May, attempted to get a deal approved three times, each attempt ending in failure. Some people argue that leaving the EU without a deal is an expression of the democratic will expressed in 2016. Often, these people are supporters of the party which has stymied parliament.

Global capitalism is strengthening its hold on British society, seemingly subverting systems of democracy to do so. The government will probably drift further into right-wing populism. It is unclear what the precise effects on the electorate will be, but disillusionment with the liberal order is more likely than ever.

M P SHAH

The 'hang 'em and flog 'em' brigade goes into overdrive

Boris Johnson strides into the room with his sidekick Priti Patel grinning effusively alongside him. It could be an audition for the next Bond movie, with Boris cast in the role of the mad scientist and Priti as his sinister and glamorous assistant. But in fact these characters are the UK's new – and already beleaguered – Prime Minister and his pristine Home Secretary. And this is not a film set, but rather the inaugural meeting of the National Policing Board; a cunning little invention by the former Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, to usher the UK a step nearer to a national police force and thus provide one more brick in the wall in the inexorable construction of a more policed state.

Priti Patel wasted no time in setting out her stall; a message in very few words: 'tough on crime! tough on crime! and tough on crime!' Haven't we heard this somewhere before? It has been the mantra of a long line of her predecessors; including Michael Howard, Jack Straw, Theresa May and Amber Rudd, to name but a few. It has also been deployed by an array of world leaders in the form of Trump, Bolsonaro, Duterte and others; all engaging in the same trite rhetoric in order to whip their public into a state of fear and frenzy, rather than adopting a more thoughtful approach to social order.

Who is Priti Patel?

Anyone who was hoping that the UK's first Asian woman Home Secretary might bring a feminine, multi-cultural perspective to the role will be disappointed. It's hardly surprising given that Priti Patel's self-proclaimed idol was Margaret Thatcher. Priti is from similar stock as the Iron Lady; both sets of parents were shopkeepers and both women vehemently supported the death penalty, until recently when

Priti back-tracked from this position.

An enthusiastic proponent of law and order for everyone else, Priti Patel does not demonstrate the same zeal in regard to her own conduct. In 2017 she was forced to resign as International Development Secretary following the disclosure that she had secret meetings with a variety of Israeli politicians; contrary to the Ministerial Code and without informing her boss, the then Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson. No sooner had Priti got her feet under the table at the Home Office than it was revealed that she was working for Viasat, a US corporation with contracts to supply the UK Ministry of Defence. This was a breach of the Ministerial Code in that she had failed to seek guidance from the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACOPA) before accepting the position; which, as a Strategic Adviser, apparently involves her in five hours per month at a rate of £1,000 per hour. ACOPA, seemingly without reference to the dictionary to remind them of the meaning of 'integrity' and 'public service,' gave retrospective approval to the contract with the proviso that Priti does not engage in behaviour that might assist Viasat and thus compromise her position as a government minister.

Not that such associations are anything new to her. Before entering politics Priti was a PR executive servicing corporate clients such as British American Tobacco. Subsequent to her entry into politics she lobbied for 'light touch regulation' for both the tobacco and the alcohol industries. The revolving door keeps spinning. Recently she was a significant player in the Brexit campaign, on one occasion advocating threatening the Republic of Ireland with food shortages to hasten its cooperation with the UK's exit from the EU; afterwards stating that her remarks were 'taken out of context.'



The 'big idea' for fighting crime

By way of a little elaboration on her 'tough on crime' slogan, Priti Patel explained that it involves: 'zero tolerance' and 'making criminals feel terror on the streets.' In order to achieve this she intends to: increase police numbers by 20,000 (reversing the 20,000 reduction in police officers carried out by the Tories in the past 10 years); build more prisons; lock people up for longer; carry out more surveillance on the public; relax controls on stop and search and secure the UK's borders. In relation to drugs she, of course, wants to wage war against those who use them; castigating the police for turning a blind eye to 9 out of 10 culprits caught growing or using cannabis. Boris Johnson chipped in for good measure stating that there were two vitally important things that his government will do for the police: it will give them the legal protection and also the political protection to do their jobs. Effectively the same dog whistle that Trump, Bolsonaro, Duterte et al used, signalling to the police and security forces that they will have the government's backing to do what is 'necessary,' whilst insulating them from legal accountability and protecting them from any parliamentary backlash.

No matter that fifteen racial equality organisations, in an open letter to the Home Secretary, reminded her that research has shown that stop and search doesn't work and is counter-productive to racial and community relations (see: bit.ly/2kNpBAA). No matter that the UK already has the largest per capita prison population in Europe and that endless published research has demonstrated that locking more people up for longer doesn't work. No matter that a recent Amnesty report said that: 'the UK is leading a Europe-wide race to the bottom with Orwellian counter-terrorism measures that seriously threaten human rights and are amongst the most draconian in Europe' (bit.ly/2jkfL3Z). No, none of this evidence matters to Boris, Priti and co. They are not ones to allow the facts to get in the way of politics, especially when careers are at stake and a general election is around the corner.

As if these stupefying ideas were not enough to send sane people running to the asylum, much more madness is in the pipeline in the name of crushing crime. Priti will no doubt be hastening along the recent 'initiative' of the London Metropolitan Police in its use of data from the 2,500 Transport for London cameras in order to deliver real-time facial recognition on every motorist entering London. And she will welcome the £5 million of extra funding given to West Midlands Police to continue trials of the National Data Analytics Solution (NDAS). The NDAS has so far isolated almost 1,400 'indicators' of future criminality in a population sample of five million, analysing more than a thousand gigabytes' worth of data using artificial intelligence from local and national police databases. Soon the police will have the capability to pull in data from the 6 million CCTV cameras around the UK, courtesy of private companies such as Facewatch. We are all potential criminals now in the eyes of an increasingly paranoid state and Priti Patel's stance on law and order perfectly encapsulates this pathology.

Have any UK politicians ever tried to do things differently in relation to law and order than this facile claptrap? Once upon a time two Tory Home Secretaries, Douglas Hurd and Ken Clarke, attempted to introduce a more nuanced approach to tackling crime, but they were soon ousted for offending against their party's hang 'em and flog 'em mentality. The previous Labour leader Tony Blair invoked the slogan: 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' and followed through on the rhetoric by creating 4,300 new criminal offences; almost one for every day of the 13 years that New Labour was

in power. What might we expect in the increasingly unlikely event of a Corbyn-led Labour government? Its latest manifesto announces that Labour will be: 'tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime'. Not much new there then. It goes on to declare its support for the police in doing its job; proposes to increase police number by 10,000; (short change compared to the Tories' 20,000); and promises to properly secure the UK's borders (labour.org.uk/manifesto/safer-communities/). It would be unfair to measure the difference between Labour and Tory policies on crime as the width of a single cigarette paper. It might be as much as two.

What would 'law and order' look like in socialism?

To begin with there would be no need to 'secure our borders' as there wouldn't be any. Socialism is a world system where there are no political or economic boundaries, where people are free to travel anywhere they wish. With no borders there would be no need for the concentration camps springing up around the UK and in much of Europe and the world; incarcerating thousands of migrants in degrading and inhumane conditions; detained indefinitely, their crime being that they are poor and destitute and effectively stateless. This abolition of borders would extinguish the crime perpetrated by national governments and the private prison corporations on these defenceless people. Without borders there can be no nation states. Without nation states there can be no war; thus the huge amount of crime – murder, torture, rape, environmental destruction etc. – associated with war will cease.

Socialism will be a society of equals where everyone's basic needs for food, health care, housing and fulfilling work are satisfied; a society that will promote cooperation and harmony instead of competition. In the absence of the misery and deprivation created under capitalism it is inconceivable that crime would continue unabated.

But socialism will not merely reduce crime it will reduce the need for law itself. In socialism the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth will be held in common for the use and benefit of everyone and placed under democratic control. Under such conditions the system of law that provides a pillar of the superstructure of capitalism – the enforcement of private property rights, facilitating accumulation of wealth and exchange through the money system and regulating the labour relationship – will be redundant, as will the coercive state which administers it.

But capitalist law is not the totality of law and a society without any enforceable norms of behaviour would amount to a kind of tyranny of the individual and, as such, would not meet the definition of a civilised society. Socially-useful rules regulating human relationships and our relationship with the broader environment will persist in socialism. Enforceable rules and regulations which prohibit certain conduct towards environmental destruction and such things as violence, rape, drunk driving, child abuse and similar will continue in a socialist society, but its purpose will be to serve the interests of society as a whole, not the capitalist class. Such rules and regulations will be conceived and administered by members of the community as part of its democratic structures and adjudicated by ordinary people, perhaps through an expansion of the jury system, or similar. They will not be punitive, but rather restorative and rehabilitative to facilitate social inclusion.

The message to Priti Patel is clear. If she is serious about reducing crime she should become a socialist.

TIM HART

Marx, Engels and Science

That Marx followed the progress of natural science can be seen from the fact that chemistry professor Carl Schorlemmer and evolutionary biologist Ray Lankester were among the nine who attended the private funeral gathering to mourn the passing of an obscure economic scientist whom Engels eulogized as ‘the best hated and most calumniated man of his times.’

Engels studied mathematical physics in many sources, including the classic eighteenth-century *Traité de dynamique* by Jean Le Rond d’Alembert (co-publisher with Denis Diderot of the great French *Encyclopédie*). However, his primary modern source for mathematical physics was the Feynman lecture course of his day, the celebrated nineteenth-century *Treatise on Natural Philosophy* by Thomson and Tait (popularly known as ‘T&T’).

Engels’s primary modern source for chemistry was the celebrated *Treatise on Chemistry* by Roscoe and Schorlemmer. Those familiar with the Marx-Engels correspondence will have met organic chemist Carl Schorlemmer as a Marx/Engels comrade-in-exile from 1848 and their trusted scientific consultant.

The two treatises that Engels primarily studied happened to be the standard university textbooks from the mid-nineteenth century right up to the First World War.

Engels adopted a field (non-atomic) approach to electricity (of course, the electron had yet to be discovered, but so too had quantum electrodynamic field theory). To deprive Marx of an atomic theory is to ignore his PhD dissertation on Epicurus in which he famously defended Epicurus’s statistical atomic ‘swerve’ (a Greek pre-echo of quantum indeterminism) for allowing ‘free will’ to arise within a primarily deterministic atomic world.

Volume 31 of Section of *Marx Engels Collected Works MEGA(2)* [not yet translated into English] lets us glimpse the extent to

which Marx took an active interest in the progress of natural science. A paper by MEGA scholars Somnath Ghosh and Pradip Baksi (<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/26/173.html>) sets out the contents of Marx’s scientific notebooks of 1877-83:

Notebook 1. On the Atomic Theory

Notebook 2. Tabular summaries of inorganic and organic chemistry

Notebook 3. Tables of chemistry

Notebooks 4 & 5. Tables of inorganic and organic chemistry

Notebook 6. Formulae of organic chemistry.

Marx’s Notebook Sources include:

- Chemistry: Lothar Meyer, Henry Roscoe, Carl Schorlemmer, Friedrich Kekule
- Modern chemistry: Marx attended August Hoffmann’s lecture course at the Royal College of Chemistry, London
- Agricultural Chemistry: Justus Liebig
- Physiological Chemistry: Wilhelm Kuhne
- Human Physiology: Ludimarr Hermann; Johannes Ranke
- Physics: Benjamin Witzschel
- Geology: Joseph Jukes
- Studies in electromagnetism: Edouard Hospitalier

Forthcoming natural scientific materials (perhaps now published) include Marx’s notes and excerpts on Physics, History of Technology, Geology, Soil Science, History of Agricultural Plants, Agricultural Chemistry, Physiology of Plants, of Animals and of Human Beings, parts of Mathematics and on the interrelationships of the Natural Sciences and Philosophy. One day we will discover just what the mature Marx actually wrote about the latter.

WJC

COOKING THE BOOKS

Not applying technology

In his book *Fully Automated Luxury Communism* Aaron Bastani quotes the US economist Paul Romer’s definition of technological change as ‘an improvement in the instructions for mixing together raw materials’ (he meant physical materials). He summarises Romer’s conclusion as that ‘over time, as technology develops, the value increasingly arises from the instructions for materials as opposed to the materials themselves’.

This is similar to what Marx, in ‘The Fragment on Machines’ in the *Grundrisse*, had said would eventually happen, with general scientific knowledge becoming a more important factor in production than direct labour. As this knowledge is a social product it’s an additional argument for socialism.

According to Bastani, Romer made the further point that ‘once the cost of creating a new set of instructions has been incurred the instructions can be used over and over again at no additional cost’. In other words, these instructions, once developed, could be available to be used for free in much the same way as digitised articles, books, films and music can be.

But there is a snag, as Bastani noted. This knowledge is privately owned and only made available by the developers to others at a cost – the royalty payments for the use of the patent. Some is even kept as a ‘trade secret’. Patents and other so-called ‘intellectual property’ rights are merely a legal fiction, applicable solely because they are entirely the product of a legal enactment, enforced by the courts and, ultimately, by the coercive power of the state.

Property rights over material goods are also a legal fiction, though not as blatant, as people can imagine more easily material goods being possessed in the absence of legal backing. On analysis, however, property in land, factories and other means for producing material things is not the same as physically possessing them. The owner of a landed estate does not physically possess the land in the same way that they possess their clothes or their car; nor does a capitalist shareholder. Their property rights have also been created and are enforced by the state.

The fact that scientific and technological knowledge has developed to the point where it could be applied to produce enough

for everybody to be able to satisfy their material needs strengthens the case for socialism. It confirms that, whereas capitalism has developed the potential for this, it is incapable of activating it for the benefit of all. Capitalism has solved the problem of producing enough for all, but cannot distribute it. Only socialism can do this, on the basis of production directly for use, not profit, and distribution according to needs, not rationing through the wages system.

‘Fully Automated Luxury Communism’, as a description of socialism, is a deliberate exaggeration to dissociate the idea of communism from what happened in Russia with its shortages and queues. But it risks another misunderstanding – that socialism only becomes possible if there is ‘full’ automation. This would mean that it is still not really possible. This in fact is the justification that Bastani (and his fellow FALC advocate, Ash Sarkar) give for supporting the gradualism of the left-wing of the Labour Party. A better term, though admittedly not quite as snappy, might be ‘Highly Automated, Non-Austerity Communism’.

PROPER GANDER

Palmed Off

ONE of capitalism's booming industries over the last few decades has been palm oil production. In the early 1960s, less than a million tonnes were being processed each year, compared with well over sixty million yearly more recently. The negative impact this has on the environment is now being reported more widely, and BBC3 has joined in the debate with a short-but-sweet documentary focusing on palm oil's use in the cosmetics trade.

Unmasked: Make-Up's Big Secret is presented by Emmy Burbidge, who runs her own beauty salon in Somerset. She says that more of her clients are asking about the make-up of the make-up she uses, especially whether it contains palm oil. Finding this out can be tricky, as it's often hidden under less-than-glamorous names like 'sodium kernalate' and 'octyl palmitate'. But as palm oil is used in 70 percent of cosmetics, especially oilier products such as lipsticks and foundations, there's a reasonable chance that your slap contains extracts from palm trees grown thousands of miles away.

The oil comes from the fruit which grows in bunches on the trees' branches. The flesh in the kernel is used for cosmetics, being more saturated than the rest of the fruit, whose oil is used as an ingredient in many foods. Being solid at room temperature, it's useful for making in-front-of-the-telly grub such as biscuits, instant noodles and peanut butter. It's also used in biofuels, which are gaining traction as an alternative to relying on ever-dwindling fossil fuels. In 2018, half of all the palm oil in Europe was used to fuel cars and lorries (Reuters, 14 June 2018). Unfortunately, though, palm oil-based biodiesel generates three times as much carbon emissions as fossil fuels (dw.com, 22 June 2018), so it's less environmentally friendly than we might assume.

The main reason that palm oil has been cited as bad for the environment, however, is that to make room for its plantations, millions of hectares of rainforest have been bulldozed. In the jungles of Indonesia, Malaysia and Nigeria, complex, lively ecosystems have been destroyed, with the added disadvantage of losing plants which soak up carbon from the atmosphere (including that which comes from palm oil-based biofuel). The programme shows sad footage of an orangutan trying to hit back at a bulldozer

driving through churned up soil and tree stumps. For the documentary, Burbidge flies to Papua New Guinea, home to the world's third largest rainforest, and sees through the plane window what some of this forest has been turned into by palm oil producers.

She visits an indigenous community who leased their land to a large developer company after being promised money and improved homes and schooling, most of which hasn't materialised. Maybe one reason why the school was never built is that it would pull children away from being used as labourers in palm harvesting. Many of the people she meets are upset and even ashamed that they've had to sacrifice some of the forest they live in for not enough money to manage. Some producers aim for more sustainable methods by avoiding ploughing up more rainforest and treating their workers less harshly than the more unscrupulous companies. The workers Burbidge meets don't know what happens to the palm fruits once they leave the plantation for processing or what their oil is used for, so she introduces them to lip gloss. It's not clear whether they think that the shiny pink goo is worth their long hours and the loss of the rainforests.

It does feel worth it, though, to the corporations behind palm oil production. The industry has become such a profit-magnet not just through exploiting workers and the environment, but because palm oil has several advantages over similar products. As well as its versatility, the palms used have a much higher yield than other oil crops. To produce one tonne of oil from sunflowers

or coconuts uses up to ten times as much land than is needed to produce the same amount of palm oil. This efficiency means that it can be produced at lower costs, leaving more money to end up in the company owners' coffers. The profitability of palm oil production is the reason behind its growth in the market, with environmental damage being a consequence which has only recently become controversial, or even noticed. But what is to be done?

Boycotting products made from less environmentally-friendly palm oil would only have a limited effect, even assuming people would know which products to avoid. As Burbidge discovered, finding palm oil's pseudonyms on an ingredients list isn't always straightforward, and there's no widely accepted certification for more sustainably-produced palm oil, unlike for 'Fairtrade' products, for example. And how many people worldwide would bother, or even be in a position to pick-and-choose? Even if a mass boycott dented the profits of the dodgier production firms, it wouldn't remove the profit motive which leads companies to find the most cost-effective methods, regardless of the harm to the environment. Nor would it prevent the workers harvesting palm oil from being exploited both through their labour and selling off their land, whether or not they want to get dragged further into the capitalist economy. The downsides with how palm oil is produced are symptoms of wider problems with the system itself, and so it must be the system which is changed.

MIKE FOSTER



Land cleared of tropical rainforest for establishment of oil palm plantation in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo

REVIEWS



Violent Extremist Tactics and the Ideology of the Sectarian Far Left. Daniel Allington, Siobhan McAndrew and David Hirsh. 2019.

Citizen Smith in focus

Lovers of 1970s TV will remember Citizen Smith, he of the mythical Tooting Popular Front, exhorting his comrades to 'smash the state'. Dave Spart still does the same in Private Eye, forever hitting out at the 'running-dog lackeys of US imperialism'.

With the resurgence of terrorism inspired by fundamentalist religion and also the far right, three academics have now decided to take a look at those on the far left and their attitudes to terrorism and violence. Their research project was funded by a grant from the UK Commission for Countering Extremism, set up by Theresa May's government in 2017 in the wake of the Manchester bombing.

Their primary data generation took place with help from polling company YouGov's online panel of respondents – with those who self-identified as 'very left-wing' being of particular interest. They found that while people who self-identify as being very left-wing are more likely to be sympathetic to violent extremism in some shape or form than the general population, it was still only a view held by a minority (29 percent as opposed to 9 percent more generally). Most of the other results of the research are perhaps not generally surprising, including the estimate that an elderly woman in the very left-wing category is far less likely to show sympathy for any of the types of political violence listed than a young man in the same category (9 percent as opposed to 56 percent).

One of the more interesting questions they looked at was what respondents said

when asked to identify the countries they think are the 'greatest threat to world peace'. In the general population sample, Russia was top followed by North Korea and the United States. In the very left-wing sample, the US was top, followed by Russia and then Israel. The placement of Russia in the top three was clearly less expected by the researchers as it doesn't slot as neatly into the traditional left-wing pantheon of 'imperialist' states, and presumably features largely because it is both authoritarian and aggressive about this in ways that would not find favour on the left (including attitudes to women, gay rights, etc).

In carrying out this research, the writers needed a good understanding of what might be termed the ideological components of the far left, in particular Leninism. Indeed, the first chapter is a deconstruction of Leninist theory that is very accurate in the main, including its identification of why Leninists of various stripes historically take 'anti-imperialist' positions that end up leading them towards either open or tacit support for terrorist organisations like the Provisional IRA, Hamas, etc.

There is one minor caveat to this though, in that given the current media coverage of anti-semitism and anti-zionism on the left, the writers seem keen to integrate this into their analysis – and perhaps a little too keen. There can be little doubt that the rise of the internet and the conspiracy theories promulgated there has led the far right and the far left to borrow ideas and 'tropes' from one another, often with some of their perhaps less sophisticated and more naive advocates not always realising their origin. Nevertheless, it is historically accurate to say that anti-semitism emanates from the political far right as it is a theory of racial supremacy, whereas anti-zionism emanates from the far left as part of its 'anti-imperialist' perspective, with Israel effectively being seen as the aircraft-carrier in the Middle East for the world's dominant imperialist power (the US).

This paper does not make the distinction between the two clear enough and seems to imply that Leninists are often anti-semites without actually realising they are, simply because of the association they make between imperialism and 'finance capital', with the connotations the latter sometimes has with supposed Jewish cabals. But to be fair, we could add that what is often forgotten is that so many

founders of Leninism were themselves of Jewish origin (Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, etc) that the Bolshevik revolution was denounced by countless numbers – including Churchill – as a Jewish plot of some sort. In the UK since, many of the leading figures in the Communist Party of Great Britain have been Jewish, as were the leaders of what became the SWP, Tony Cliff (Ygael Gluckstein) and Militant, Ted Grant (Isaac Blanc), among a great many others.

Irrespective of this issue, though, we would contend that their illogical belief as Leninists that an enemy of an enemy must be a friend as well as their inherent authoritarianism make them unfit enough to be genuine advocates of 'power to the people'.

DAP



Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett: The Inner Level. Penguin £9.99.

Top to Bottom

A decade ago the authors wrote *The Spirit Level* (discussed in the *Socialist Standard* for June 2009 and December 2010). There they showed how countries with higher levels of inequality also had more problems such as shorter life expectancy, more obese people and less social mobility. In this new book they extend their analysis to mental and psychological issues (see their website www.equalitytrust.org.uk for more information).

The main claim is that problems with a social gradient (those which are more common as you go down the social hierarchy, e.g. in terms of income) are more severe in more unequal societies. Thus the incidence of schizophrenia per head of population is higher in

REVIEWS

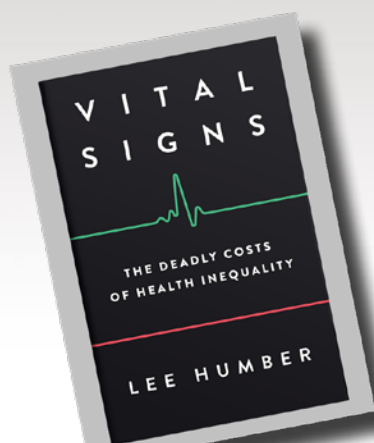
countries that exhibit greater inequality (almost three times as high in Brazil as in France, for instance). The more unequal US states have higher levels of depression. Generally, a greater degree of inequality can result in more social anxiety, which may itself be responsible for more problem gambling and risky alcohol consumption. Higher inequality can also make people more narcissistic, with an exaggeratedly positive view of themselves, which may again be related to social anxiety. More unequal countries show more bullying by children, fewer visits to art galleries and museums, and less civic participation (belonging to clubs of various kinds).

Inequality, then, is a bad thing, but it has not been a permanent feature of society: 'throughout most of our specifically human prehistory, we lived in extraordinarily egalitarian hunting and gathering societies, in which food was shared and goods were passed between people'. Hunter-gatherers had no dominance hierarchy, and there were social constraints on alpha-male tendencies. It was the rise of agriculture that was probably responsible for the development of inequality. The social hierarchy which exists today is not the result of natural differences in people's abilities; rather, any such differences are a product of this hierarchy since, for instance, the number of years spent in poverty can affect a child's intellectual development.

As in *The Spirit Level*, Wilkinson and Pickett argue for a more egalitarian social system, or at least one where the degree of inequality roughly corresponds to that in the currently less unequal countries, where the incomes of the richest fifth are 'only' about four times higher than those of the poorest fifth. They argue that co-operatives and employee-owned companies can contribute to this and to the aim of a more environmentally sustainable society, with the challenge being 'to improve well-being without growth'. There would be an end to consumerism, which is itself driven by status insecurity, and to wasteful consumption. The demands of work would be reduced, with greater leisure and so better health, both mental and physical.

The book is very informative about the extent and consequences of inequality, but achieving all that the authors envisage in a society still based on employment and production for profit would be a real pipedream.

PB



Lee Humber: Vital Signs: The Deadly Costs of Health Inequality. Pluto Press £17.99.

Life Support

What determines the health of an individual or of a whole population? Is it the healthcare they receive, or is it more to do with the conditions in which they live? Humber's answer is that it is very much the 'social determinants of health' that affect a person's wellbeing and life expectancy. Biomedical models focus on a person's relationship with disease and the expertise of the medical profession, but a more multifaceted approach also looks at factors such as polluted air, overcrowded households, diet, and the pressures of employment.

Of course this does not mean that the kind of healthcare received is beside the point. One claim is that cuts in UK government health spending resulted in 45,000 more deaths among those over sixty between 2010 and 2014. In the US almost twice as much as a proportion of GDP is spent on healthcare than in the UK, yet life expectancy is several years less. About half of Americans can only afford the most basic health insurance, and 45,000 die each year because they lack health coverage. In spite of the importance of diet, GPs rarely ask patients about it.

One chapter is a critique of the 'inequality thesis' as set out by various authors. Humber claims that they rely too much on subjective notions such as status and social trust, and pay insufficient attention to social factors such as the quality of food. This overlooks the fact that Wilkinson and Pickett in particular rely on inequality of income as the

crucial point, and there is no reason why an inequality-based approach and one looking at other societal factors cannot be combined.

It lacks an overall theme, and does not emphasis inequality as much as the subtitle might suggest, but Humber's book gives a good picture of the deleterious effects of what others have termed the 'medical-industrial complex'.

PB



50 Years Ago

The Failure of Civil Rights

Few people with an ear to the ground in Northern Ireland could have escaped the growing evidence of murder, well organised and equipped, lingering in the political shadows. Yet when the murder guns added their fury to the flying stones, bottles and petrol bombs during the mid-August days of terror, most people were struck with a condition of profound shock beyond the limits of anything they had previously experienced.

It was not simply the fact that eight people had died and hundreds of others had been injured. Rather was it the realisation that the agents of death, people consciously organised to extend the more-or-less usual stone-throwing into an orgy of killing, were so many. Even more were people stunned by the absolute assault on their illusion of physical security; huge buildings and rows of working class houses burned fiercely, often without the attendance of a single fireman and the cherished notion of the ubiquitous power of 'law and order', whether hated or admired, was dispelled — for its admirers by its impotency and for its haters, by identification with the mob.



In a violent society eight human lives are but a week-end road accident statistic and people in the familiar role of fleeing refugees are constant T.V. fare that merely plucks the conscience to offhanded sympathy. But the dead were not Jews or Arabs; the queues of terrified refugees, whose homes had provided illumination for the carnage, were not Vietnamese, Biafrans or any of those 'foreigners' usually engaged in the practice. They were Belfast people: people who spoke as we do . . .

walked the same streets . . . knew the same problems.

The strife was confined to working class areas. The back-to-back houses of Derry's Bogside—among the most miserable slums in Europe — Belfast's Falls Road, Shankill Road and Ardoyne area. Those who died, those who were wounded, those who were burned or terrified out of their homes were members of the working class. It was members of the working class, too, that did the killing, wounding and burning. No upper class casualties were reported.

(Socialist Standard, October 1969)

The tragedy of the planet

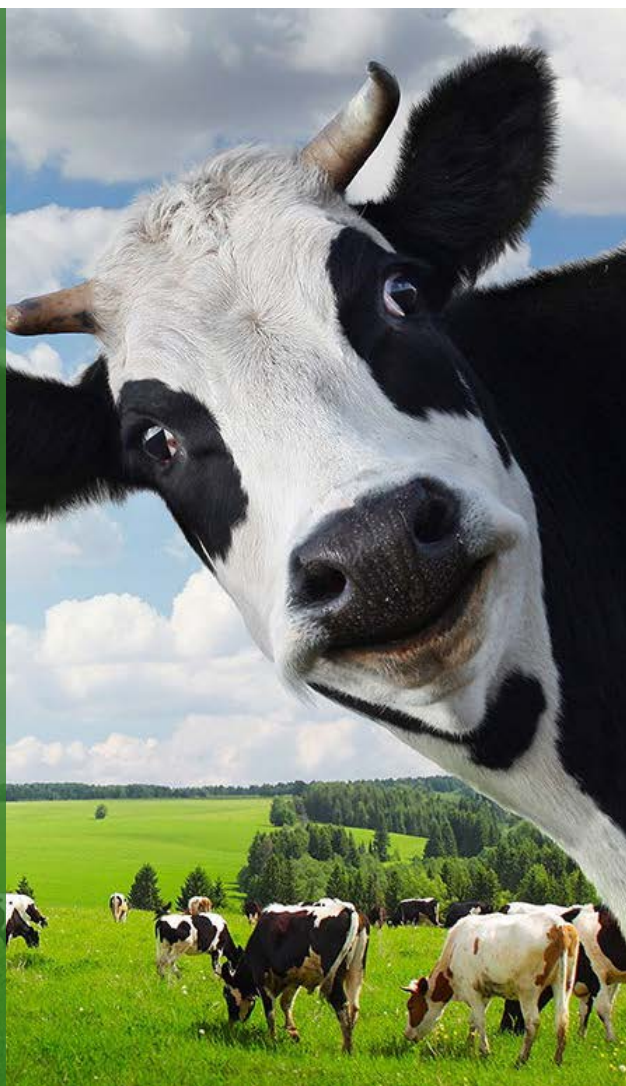
What we are looking at with respect to tackling climate change is reminiscent of what the biologist Garret Hardin wrote about in his famous essay in the 1960s on the 'Tragedy of the Commons'. Hardin's basic thesis was seriously flawed. In practice, actually existing commons do not generally result in serious environmental degradation since they are often quite closely monitored and subject to stringent rules to prevent overuse and destructive exploitation.

More to the point, Hardin's diagnosis of the problem was misplaced. It was not the fact that there was a commons to which the herders could gain free access that was the root cause of the problem of overgrazing. Rather it was the fact that the cattle herds were privately owned by herders in competition with each other that locked them into the destructive logic whereby each herder benefitted exclusively from the addition of one more head of cattle to his/her herd but where the environmental costs of each additional head of cattle were externalised and shared by all the commoners.

The same kind of logic applies in the case of how capitalism is dealing with climate change. The trillions of dollars needed to tackle it may well be less than the costs of inaction but as long as each capitalist state is seeking to externalise the costs of tackling climate change — get others to bear more of the burden of these costs so as not to impair its own economic prospects in its competition with others — inaction will result. States will only be dragged kicking and screaming into action as things get generally worse and the action they take will probably be too little too late.

That is the tendency of capitalism — to get away with what is minimally required.

ROBIN COX



Meetings:

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
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

NOVEMBER 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

LONDON

Saturday 9 November,
11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
DAY SCHOOL ON CLIMATE CHANGE
Details of speakers to follow
Venue: May Day Rooms, 88 Fleet Street
EC1 (close to City Thameslink overground)

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

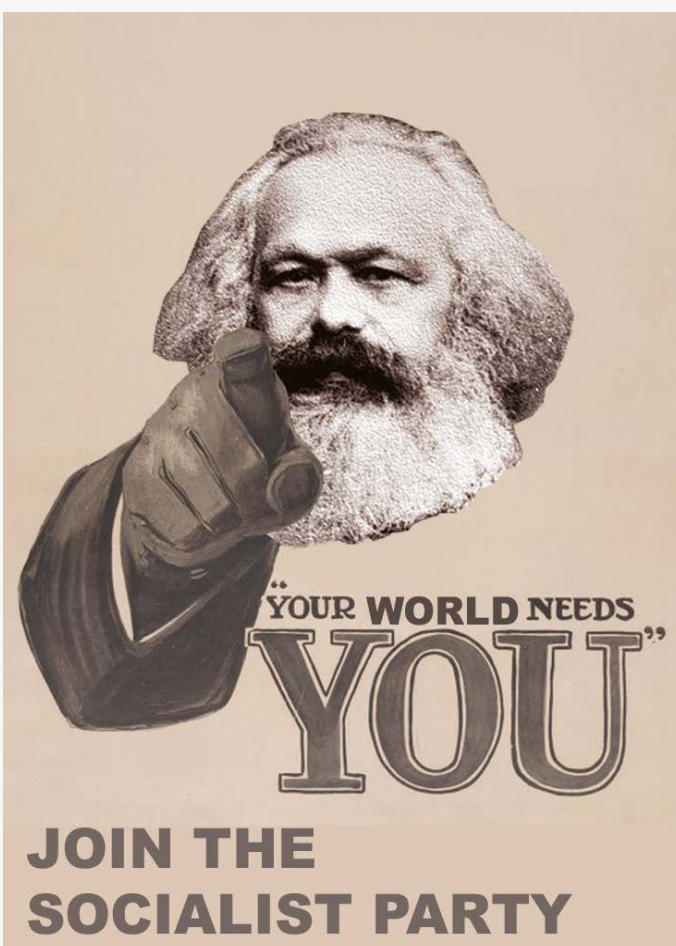
The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

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.



Oh No, Not Again!

'Colombia was on edge on Thursday as the top peace negotiator for the country's Marxist guerrillas announced that he was resuming armed conflict, promising to re-start the Western hemisphere's longest-running civil war three years after a peace deal was signed' (telegraph.co.uk, 29 August). Socialists welcomed the end of the five-decade-long war, which killed more than 220,000 and displaced millions, as well as the mendacious mass media calling FARC Marxist. But, bringing an end to one such conflict in a capitalist world where war and misinformation are endemic is like a murderous game of Whack-A-Mole. 'Farc was formed in 1964 as a Che Guevara-inspired Marxist group claiming peasant land rights' (op. cit.). FARC declare themselves to be Bolivarian and call for 'Colombia for Colombians, with equality of opportunities and equitable distribution of wealth and where among us all we can build peace with social equality and sovereignty', rather than for Marx's call for workers of all lands to unite for the overthrow of all existing social conditions. Marx during his lifetime was implacably opposed to political terrorism. Marxist socialists oppose terrorism, individual, group or state, guerrilla 'armies' and so-called national liberation struggles. Instead we organise for and propagate worldwide common ownership, democratic administration, control of the land, means of production and transportation and the abolition of the wages system.

Fighting the wrong war

'Of course, there are other reasons why the West cannot get any of its adversaries to kneel. One is – that the toughest ones are left. Russia, Cuba, China, North Korea (DPRK), Iran, Syria and Venezuela are not going to run away from the battlefield' (Suddenly, Western "Regime"

Changes Keep Failing, off-guardian.org, 28 August). Andre Vltchek's and others of his ilk continuing support for one group of capitalist countries is no doubt of great comfort to the imprisoned trade unionists in Iran, for example. Sadly it comes too late for the many thousands who have already been executed, including minors, under a theocratic dictatorship where those convicted of adultery, alcohol consumption, blasphemy, burglary, homosexuality, pornography and prostitution, along with, of course, political dissidence, as well as many other 'crimes', can pay the ultimate price. We must not forget the state sanctioned use of juveniles as troops during the mass slaughter that was the Iran-Iraq war or oppression of women. Add chronic corruption plus obvious class division and we can say the 99 percent certainly did not vote for this. No war but the class war!

In Space as on Earth

'Donald Trump: New Space Command will "ensure US dominance" of final frontier. Space has become a focus for the Trump administration due to concerns over the vulnerability of US satellites to China and Russia' (news.sky.com, 30 August). Long before the first aeroplane

flew or mining the Moon's riches left the realm of science fiction, British politician Joseph Chamberlain made this candid comment with regard to war and its economic causes: 'All the great offices of State are occupied with commercial affairs. The Foreign Office and the Colonial Office are chiefly engaged in finding new markets and in defending old ones. The War Office and the Admiralty are mostly occupied in preparations for the defence of these markets and for the protection of our commerce' (from a speech to the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce in 1890). Time and time again evidence has demonstrated that war stems from capitalist struggles for markets, trade routes, sources of raw materials, and places of strategic importance.

Ferengi -free future

If we want a future that is more Star Trek than Star Wars, we must first replace capitalism with socialism and bring about a world where war, wages and want have been eradicated. Given this it is somewhat surprising to find a *Financial Times* journalist describing *Star Trek: The Next Generation* as '...optimistic, moving and wise' (ft.com, 28 August). Whether or not you prefer the post-capitalist society of Trek or Iain Banks' *Culture* over the bucolic, craft-industry-based utopia of William Morris' *News from Nowhere* (1890), our first concern should be the making of socialists. Morris put it well: 'one man with an idea in his head is in danger of being considered a madman; two men with the same idea in common may be foolish, but can hardly be mad; ten men sharing an idea begin to act, a hundred draw attention as fanatics, a thousand and society begins to tremble, a hundred thousand and there is war abroad, and the cause has victories tangible and real; and why only a hundred thousand?' (Art Under Plutocracy, 1883).



FREE LUNCH

