

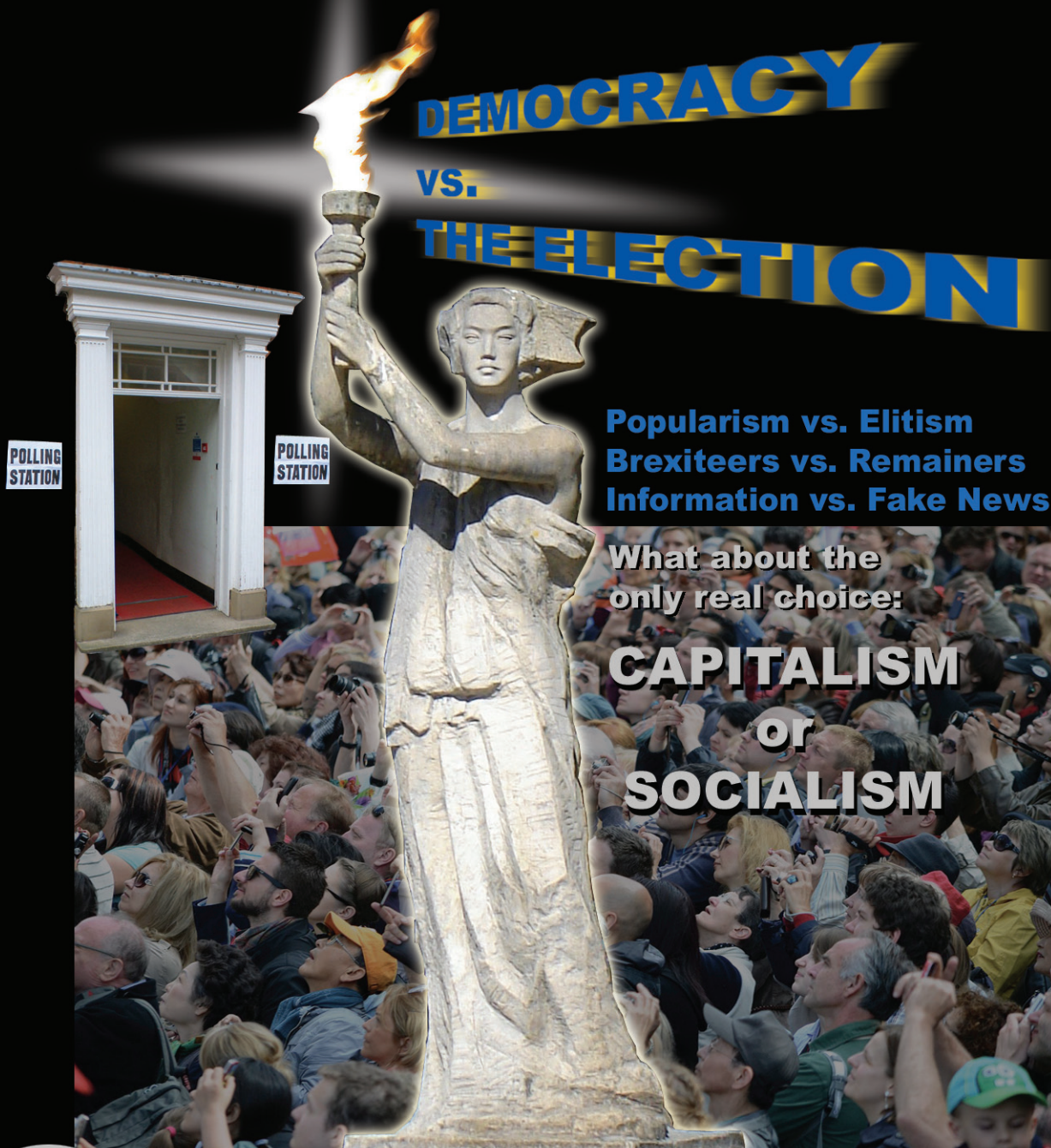
socialist standard

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



also:
China
The Lexiteers
Neo-Liberalism



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Introducing the Socialist Party

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

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

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

Gradualist reformers like the Labour Party believed that capitalism could be



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

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

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

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Editorial

What elections mean

By the time this issue of the *Socialist Standard* comes out, we will be halfway through a general election campaign. We will all have had leaflets through our letter boxes full of vote-catching promises and extolling the merits of some candidate. The media will have been concentrating, day after day, on the claims and counter-claims of the groups of career politicians known as 'parties'.

But it's a charade. People know from experience that 'changing governments changes nothing' and that their daily life of going to work, paying the bills and bringing up their family continues much the same whichever group of politicians forms the government. They listen to the politicians' promises without really believing them and vote for one or other of them without illusions. They don't consider this central to their lives; it's something they do because they have been asked to.

However, there is a more serious side to elections. They are a time when groups of politicians compete against each other for a chance to run the capitalist state. This state is there to uphold the capitalist system, based on the ownership and

control of productive resources by a few who are thereby enabled to enjoy a privileged lifestyle. Due to past pressure from the excluded many and splits in the ruling class, those who run the capitalist state have to pass via winning an election where almost the whole electorate is made up of the many. Winning an election gives them -- and the capitalist system -- the legitimacy of popular endorsement.

This means that elections are a time when the many are being asked to endorse capitalism by voting for politicians who, if and when they get into office, will uphold the capitalist system, even if to try to improve people's lives. But, as capitalism is a profit-making system that can only run in the interest of the few who own society's productive resources, no government can make it work for the many who don't. This is why all reformist governments have failed, and will fail. From the point of view of improving people's life, elections are irrelevant as, while governments propose, it is capitalism, via its relentless economic law of 'profits first' imposed by the market, that disposes.

This is why socialists refuse to

participate in the charade of pretending to believe in the politicians' promises and voting for one or other of them without illusions or as a 'lesser evil'. We won't vote for any of them as that is to give the legitimacy of popular approval to the continuation of capitalism. Which we refuse.

To show that we think that voting could and should be part of the process of replacing capitalism with socialism we do go to the polling station and cast a write-in vote for 'WORLD SOCIALISM'. Where we can, we also put up candidates standing for socialism and nothing but -- in this election there are two, whose election addresses can be found in this issue. There, those who want socialism can vote directly for it.



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PATHFINDERS

GETTING OUT OF THE FAST LANE

IF YOU'RE a driver, you probably know that it's a bad idea to put Meatloaf's *Bat Out Of Hell* on your car stereo when driving down the motorway. Before you know it, you will be ramming pedal to the metal in the fast lane with a crazed 'death or glory' look on your face, earning yourself a speeding ticket at best and a funeral at worst.

You will often have asked yourself why they bother to make cars that can do 120mph when there's nowhere apart from racetracks or the German autobahn that you're allowed to drive at that speed. Because speed is a selling point, even if you can't use it. We take it for granted that speed is good, and that the need for speed is limitless. The UK government is spending around £90-100bn on a new high-speed rail link between London and Birmingham because the old Victorian coastal lines are so winding and serpentine that they seriously limit the speed of even the modern tilting Pendolino trains. A century of urban development and infrastructure is built around these lines so straightening them out would involve demolishing and rebuilding half the country, and is thus unthinkable.

But why does anyone need to get to Birmingham so fast anyway? So we can have 200-mile commutes in 90 minutes? So Birmingham can become a dormitory province of North London? The government claims it's to regenerate the North, but the BBC barely ever mentions the North and most politicians probably don't even know where it is.

But never mind all that. The rail link is *fast*, and everyone knows fast is good.

Just like Just In Time delivery. Who wants to pay for expensive warehousing space when you can order tomorrow's supplies at close of business today and get it hefted up the motorway overnight for delivery at 9am? Magic capitalist solution! Who cares about the petrol costs, the customer will pay those. Environmental costs? Bugger them, they're just externalities we don't need to worry about. JIT is the key to online shopping success too. But what about all that new inner-city congestion and traffic fumes from all those fleets of competing delivery vans all parking illegally because

minimum-wage drivers have to do 80 deliveries a day and don't have time to find proper parking spaces? Not to worry, that's just their choice to work in the gig economy, and it looks great for the government's employment figures too.

And then there's Just Eat. Who wants to go to the tedious labour of cooking one's own food, or even going out of the house to get a takeaway, when you can get someone to drive it right to your door? Environmental/social objections? Nonsense, see above.

Speed is good, it created the modern world. And what can we do with the time we save? Work harder, buy faster, die quicker, and make the rich richer!



But wait, let's all take a chill pill and consider this idea. What if socialism was all about *slow*? Once we've abolished the anarchic casino of the market system, which periodically lurches from slump into boom and then into slump again, we can have a sensible, steady-state economy. Without capitalism's endless speculator frenzy there's no reason for demand to go up and down like a demented yo-yo, so production can be smooth, sustainable, predictable and largely automated.

So where's the rush? Speed is just stress. Speed is unnecessary accidents. Speed is not looking at anything as you pass by, not appreciating what is around you. All the really good things in life are better if you take time over them, so why not life itself?

With predictable production comes predictable supply. There's no need

to rush things up the motorway by juggernaut at the last minute. An expanded rail service would make better sense, or even, dare we suggest such a steampunk notion, a rebuilt canal system? It doesn't matter if materials only move at 6 miles an hour if they arrive at the factory every day, as they did in the eighteenth century when the UK's canals, laid end to end, would have spanned the Atlantic to America.

If you don't mind contemplating slow, you can easily think of other slow examples. As with everything else in socialism, transport and travelling would be free. But does it have to be fast? Why hurry, why not just take your time and enjoy the sights? Don't laugh, but many companies right now are working on new safety technologies for airships, which don't use dangerous hydrogen but perfectly-safe helium ('How airships could return to our crowded skies', BBC, 8 November - bbc.in/36XN7D). There are many advantages to airships over jet planes, notably safety, fuel economy and heavy freight haulage. And even though they're slow, they'll still outrun a Maserati in top gear, believe it or not. If capitalism is contemplating bringing back this 1930s technology, it's not at all preposterous for socialists to consider it too.

In socialism you won't want, or have to, zoom up the motorway or HS2 link for 200 miles to get to work. As work will be voluntary anyway, you'll find something you can do in your local area, within comfortable walking distance, or work online. If you can't, you can move somewhere else without the worry of rents, mortgages or desirable catchment areas for your kids. You probably won't need to cook very often because it makes no sense to waste collective time and resources cooking separately when you could take turns cooking together in free community kitchens.

Life is meant to be enjoyed, not endured, and that is best done slowly and at leisure. The only need for speed that socialism has is right now, in capitalism, which we urgently need to kill off before it finally spins out of the fast lane and kills us all in the burning wreckage of the planet.

PJS

CREDIT AND CONTROL IN CHINA

One consequence of new technology has been a vast increase in the extent of surveillance of people, whether by the state or private companies. CCTV, facial recognition, tracking the use of debit and credit cards, having access to phone records, cookies and other ways of recording a person's use of social networks and the rest of the internet: all this shows how much information (often using big data and processed by artificial intelligence) is held about people. The ways in which this information can be used vary enormously, but nearly all relate to controlling behaviour or influencing opinions or making profits. The term 'surveillance capitalism' has been used by some to describe the way people are observed and tracked.

Hardly anywhere, though, is the extent of information and the degree of control greater than in China, where the 'social credit' system is widely used. In a sense this is rather like the idea of credit scores in the UK and elsewhere, which provide a numerical statement of how likely a person is to repay money they owe. If you have a low score, you will probably find it difficult to borrow money, take out a credit card or have a mortgage; and even if you are able to do these things, you are likely to be charged a higher interest rate. Providing credit scores has become an industry in its own right.

Part of what happens in China is rather similar, with people being given a social credit score by various private companies. There are also some local government schemes which rely on 'good deeds' such as donating to charity or giving blood and on bad ones such as going through a red light, and increase or reduce your score as a result. But there are also much grander plans for a system run at national and governmental level, though this is not planned to come into existence until some time in 2020, and it is not even clear if that deadline will be met. A Chinese State Council document from 2014 described the social credit system as 'an important component of the Socialist market economic system and the social governance system ... its reward and punishment mechanisms are incentivizing trustworthiness and restricting untrustworthiness'. Despite what is sometimes claimed, though, social credit is not as yet an all-pervasive system that intrudes into everyone's daily life to snoop on what they've been up to.

People can be blacklisted in a number of ways. For instance, the journalist Liu Hu writes about censorship and government corruption. Apart from being fined, he was banned from flying and using some train lines, without being informed in advance. A similar ban on travel by plane or train affects several million people. It is possible to pay the fine or whatever the court

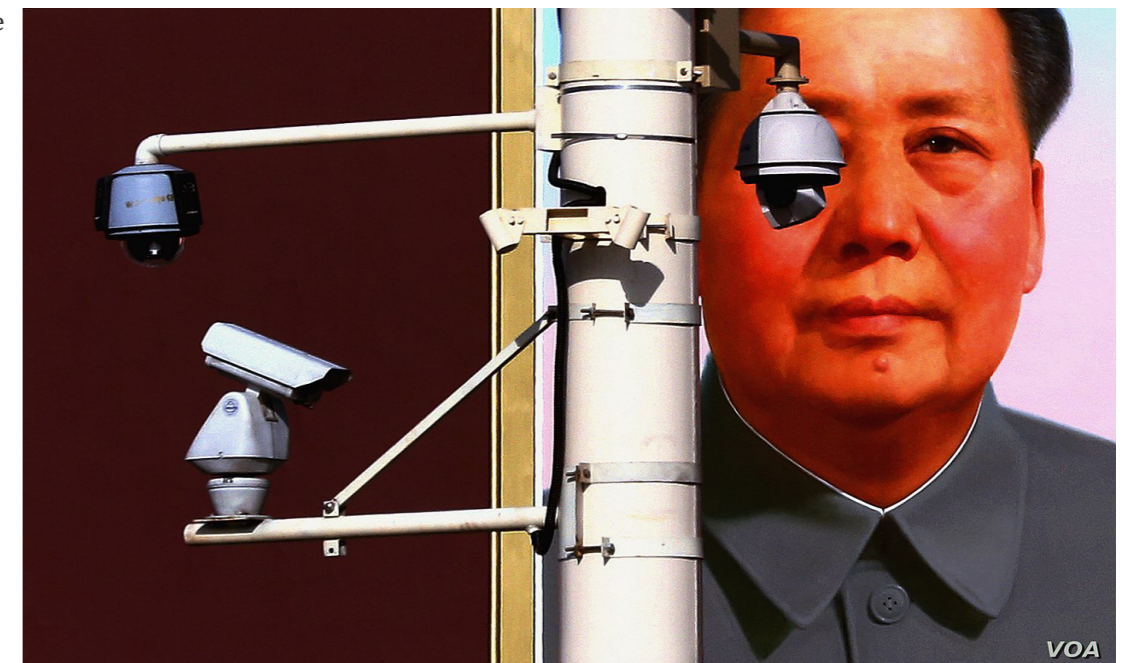
demands in such cases, and so theoretically be removed from any blacklist, but this does not always happen in practice, especially as there is little supervision of the Chinese legal system.

Various kinds of infraction, many of them pretty trivial, are covered, such as smoking in a no-smoking part of a train, spending too much time playing video games, posting fake news, quarrelling with neighbours or walking your dog without a lead. In contrast, being a 'good citizen' can earn you discounts on energy bills and even boost your profile on a dating site. The supposed intention is to combat corruption and fraud, but of course what is done goes well beyond anything that could be relevant to that. For instance, people's mobile phone usage is closely tracked. And there are supposedly 200 million surveillance cameras in China, which can snoop on people's activities.

The system is part of a much wider move towards greater repression, such as those against Uighurs in Xinjiang, Tibetans and the protests in Hong Kong. Xi Jinping has removed limits on the terms of office of the president, so could in theory remain in charge for life. Human Rights Watch has recently referred to 'increasing repression under Xi's rule', including the jailing of journalists, academics, religious teachers, protestors against sexual harassment and others. In addition to keeping tabs on individuals, there are also mechanisms for tracking what companies do, supposedly to cut down on fraud and ensure compliance with the law. Overseas companies operating in China may have to conform to even more governmental requirements too.

Overall, and however much it is fully implemented in the future, the social credit system is designed to keep Chinese workers on the straight and narrow, penalising anyone who steps out of line. Any resistance to the rule of the 'Communist' Party and the ruling capitalist class will be one of many actions that lead to being penalised in one way or another.

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COOKING THE BOOKS

Fantasy politics (and economics)

You can tell it's election time. The parties are making all sorts of extravagant promises. The Tories are promising to spend an extra £20 billion a year on hospitals, schools and other infrastructure. Labour is promising an extra £55 billion. The Greens are promising £100 billion but, as they have no prospect of being put in a position to honour this, they can promise what they like.

It is not that the physical resources don't exist to improve hospitals, schools, transport or to do what is needed to combat climate change. They do but, under capitalism, mobilising them has to be paid for, so it's legitimate to ask where the money will come from.

The Tories say it's going to come from the government borrowing it. Labour and the Greens say it will come from borrowing and also from increasing direct taxes on the profits of businesses. Neither of these two is suggesting conjuring the money out of thin air – which they might have done given that Richard Murphy, once one of Corbyn's economic advisers, adheres to so-called 'modern money theory' which, in his words, 'says governments can make money out of thin air'. And the Green Party is on record as wanting the power to create money out of thin air (that they believe the

banks possess) to be transferred to a public body that will issue 'debt-free' money. The government could, as these theories in effect advocate, simply print the promised amounts of money but, as most people know this would cause roaring inflation, the leaders of these two parties don't see this as a vote-catcher.

The Tories know well that capitalism runs on profits and that anything that impedes this risks provoking an economic downturn. While Labour and the Greens are saying that most of the extra money will come from borrowing, the Tories say that all of it will.

When a government borrows – and given the amounts involved here, it will have to be from capitalists – the interest payable has to come from taxes. This is not a problem as long as the economy is expanding; if this is the case even an increase in the interest rate won't cause a problem as the increased revenue from taxes will be enough to cover this without requiring a reduction in other government spending. If, on the other hand, the economy is not expanding, as regularly happens from time to time, interest payments will eat into other spending.

The Tory and Labour spending promises both assume a continuously expanding economy; Labour's is even supposed to bring this about. When, as proposed, a government spends money

on infrastructure there will be some initial economic expansion through construction firms and other contractors having money to extend their business and take on workers. However, there is no guarantee that this will be sustained as the capitalist economy is not driven by government or consumer spending, but by capitalist investment in profitable productive activity. This is not something governments can control as, among many others, the last Labour government discovered.

Because the economy happened to be expanding, Gordon Brown assumed that this would continue indefinitely. He even proclaimed the end of the boom/slump cycle. He was wrong and, when the boom inevitably ended, his and subsequent governments found themselves in financial difficulty and, to protect profits, had to cut back their spending.

Aware of how capitalism works and of past experience of how it has worked, we can confidently predict that neither the Tories nor Labour will be able to honour their election promises. Eventually, for reasons beyond their control, the capitalist economy will stall and they will be forced to renege on them. History will repeat itself.

WOOD FOR THE TREES

The stable doors of instability

VERY OCCASIONALLY an outrage occurs within the capitalist system that even the ruling class cannot ignore. In the wake of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry perhaps it's time to look at the history of British public inquiries and assess their place within the body politic of this country. Let's look at the origin, motivation, reality and effectiveness of this very British institution.

Having its origins in the 1920s the PI was initially set up to deal with public unease concerning natural or technical disasters such as train crashes and floods etc. but in 1957 there was a great scandal involving corrupt dealers making fortunes out of 'inside information' concerning bank rates. A public tribunal was set up and successfully managed to assure the public that it would not happen again – which, of course, it did and continues to do so. This probably gave the elite the confidence that this was a way of seeming to do something about political scandals while also covering up any major implications for themselves and the capitalist system as a whole.

However when the next great scandal exploded (the Profumo Affair) they chose the wrong 'pair of safe hands' in the form of Lord Denning. Although not initially a public inquiry the wide-ranging nature of his investigation shone a light on the meaningless and decadent lifestyles of the parasite class that fed the increasingly prurient 1960s media. The establishment, in its haste to cover the thing up, had chosen a moral crusader who lifted the veil on the reality of class society that helped accelerate the 'end of deference'.

In 1972 on 'Bloody Sunday' 28 people were shot (14 fatally) by the British army during a peaceful demonstration against internment in Northern Ireland. Such was the level of outrage at the murders that the establishment was forced to hold an enquiry but this time, in the safe hands of Lord Widgery, it produced the expected whitewash and the army was exonerated. The story did not end there however as the bitterness lingered for decades leading to another inquiry headed by Lord Saville which began in 1998. This overturned

almost all of the conclusions of Lord Widgery and led to an apology from David Cameron in the House of Commons – however only one 'scapegoat' was ever prosecuted for murder.

In the wake of the race riots in 1981 Lord Scarman was called to head an investigation into their cause. He made several recommendations emphasising 'community' policing which were subsequently ignored and it took another

exasperation that trying to implement change within such an establishment was like 'attempting to herd cats'. In 2007 the terrible events at Stafford General Hospital resulted in a PI under Robert Francis but only after he had complained about the limited and restrictive nature of his former investigations. It is estimated that up to 1,200 patients died due to neglect between 2005 and 2008 at the hospital. Only two nurses were subsequently struck off the medical register.

Of all the disasters that have brought forth public enquiries none have been more shocking than that of the Iraq war of 2003. Sir John Chilcot chaired this investigation which centred on the fantasy that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. Although widely condemned as a whitewash the report did show many deficiencies in the quality of 'intelligence' and how it was used to support a war that had already been politically decided upon by Bush and Blair. The deaths of tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis represent one of the greatest crimes in British history and the failure of a Public Inquiry to bring anyone to justice for this underlines the true nature of such investigations.



report by Sir William Macpherson (as a result of the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence) to finally force an admission that a major cause of both racist violence and the subsequent cover-up was the institutional racism within the police. Investigations can drag on for years and even, as with the Hillsborough Disaster, for decades because of the tension between 'getting to the truth' and the desire to protect the integrity of institutions like the political establishment, army and police. Let us now turn to a very different type of institution – the NHS.

Two scandals were to shake the always beleaguered NHS in the early 2000s. Dr. Harold Shipman became Britain's worst serial killer whose victims numbered into the hundreds over many years. Dame Janet Smith was given the task of finding out why his crimes had gone undiscovered for so long. She was to recommend many changes to the protocols of death certification and drug prescription but as a result of dealing with endless bureaucratic 'red-tape' she was later to say, with

Although used primarily as a safety valve for public catharsis these inquiries always have a limited government remit and many are no longer content for members of the establishment to self-regulate. The Grenfell Tower investigation is already showing signs of being another establishment whitewash. Perhaps with its failure this public inquiry might be the last of its kind. Any investigation into major disasters within capitalism will usually fail to find the ultimate cause unless they become investigations of capitalism itself. From the perspective of our rulers the PI has been very successful in diverting attention from the capitalist system and finding scapegoats to blame. We are not suggesting that there will be no disasters within a socialist society but we can say with certainty that there will be no vested interests to protect, no corners cut to endanger safety and no protection of the guilty from being held responsible.

WEZ

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South London branch. Meets last Saturday in month, 2.30pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Contact: 020 7622 3811.
West London branch. Meets 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. spgb@worldsocialism.org

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MATERIAL WORLD

The Enclosure of the Sea

THE OCEANS remain the last unexplored region of the Earth. But the recent advances in technology and knowledge are pushing back the boundaries so that humans via capitalism are now within sight of opening up yet another part of the planet to exploit. However, the availability of resources has given rise to new international quarrels about how to divide up the spoils of the seas. Disputes over territorial limits of national waters are now commonplace.

We are accustomed to the concept of land-grabbing by corporations but now it has expanded to capturing the possession of the assets of the ocean, stealing resources and denying local fishing communities access. A report has been published (bit.ly/2Kank2d) by the Transnational Institute (TNI) which is a research and advocacy organisation.

It defines ocean grabbing as a ‘major process of enclosure of the world’s oceans and fisheries resources, including marine, coastal and inland fisheries. Ocean grabbing is occurring mainly through policies, laws, and practices that are (re)defining and (re) allocating access, use and control of fisheries resources away from small-scale fisher-folk and their communities, and often with little concern for the adverse environmental consequences... Another important driver of ocean grabbing is the increasing demand and the increasing scarcity of resources and new technologies that enable the extraction of resources in formerly inaccessible areas...’

Global fish stocks that feed hundreds of millions of people are dwindling and it is explained by some that ‘Overfishing is... an example of the ‘tragedy of the commons’. Advocates of this theory assume that because there is no owner and so resources are freely accessible to all, it leads to abuse of those resources in the

short term, disregarding the longer-term welfare. The ‘tragedy of the commons’ however takes place within the context of capitalism which is a system based on individual self-interest rather than the management of resources as the collective heritage of communities and this leaves the commons vulnerable to private

of mangrove areas in Ecuador to promote export-oriented shrimp aquaculture that has destroyed fishing habitats, and the dramatic rise of ‘Rights Based Fishery’ (RBF) policies that have handed over large tracts of ocean to industrial fishing companies in Europe, Canada and elsewhere.

India’s coastline is more than 7,500 km long, and about 3.5 million people make a living from fishing and related activities. There are more than 3,000 fishing villages along the coast. Changes to India’s Coastal Regulation Zone rules in 2017 have lifted the ban on land reclamation for commercial purposes. Fishers say the changes will lead to environmental damage, displace coastal communities and hurt the livelihoods of millions who depend on the sea for their survival. ‘The coastal lands are ours by tradition. The state plans to take them away with this law,’ said Rajhans Tapke, ‘Our land will be lost, our access to the sea will be affected, our catch will be affected. How will we live? ... We protect the sea, the coast, the marine life; now our lives, our livelihoods are threatened because they want to give our land to movie stars and wealthy

people who want sea views and beach sports’ (bit.ly/2QbdJ8T). Only when we reach a rational economic system where the wellbeing of all is the guiding principle and we are no longer subjected to the blind market forces of capitalism can the natural resources of the land and oceans be used to benefit all of humanity. Only socialism goes further than pious hopes and wishful thinking that our planet is not going to be abused in pursuit of profit.

ALO



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Brexit left?

We look at those on the left – the Lexiteers – who campaign for Britain to leave the EU.

In all the hullabaloo over whether workers in the United Kingdom should be exploited within the European Union or exploited outside of the European Union, it is often overlooked that it is not only right-wing cranks who are extolling the virtues of Brexit.

There was, and remains, a considerable 'Lexit' chorus, chipping their two pennyworth into the debate (and part of the reason they are overlooked is that the millionaires backing the right-wing version of Brexit chipped in their two millionworth).

Of course, they've been there since the beginning. When Harold Wilson's Labour government tried to take the UK into the EU (then the European Economic Community (EEC)), the Labour Party was substantially split.

Joining the EEC was seen as joining a rich man's club, with some leftists suggesting alignment with the former Empire (by then rebranded as the Commonwealth), and some even angling towards alignment with the state capitalist economies in COMECON. There was a recognition that capital concentration was being constrained within national boundaries.

Tony Benn voiced worries that membership of the EEC would disrupt the Whitehall departmental balance of power, giving undue prominence to the Foreign Office over others. However, behind all such concerns, there was ultimately a rump patriotism being expressed.

Basic nationalism

The New Left historian E.P. Thompson saw the move into Europe as an attempt to undermine and escape from the relatively unified working class in Britain. Even such a class line, though, was often tinged with a basic nationalism. Indeed, Ted Grant writing for the Militant Tendency was a shining example of this:

'On capitalist policies and methods there can only be suffering and privation for the working class. 'No to the EEC' must be linked with the struggle for a socialist plan of production in Britain. The taking over of the 250 monopolies, banks and insurance companies, with compensation on the basis of need only would be the first step. Then a monopoly of foreign trade would be established. On this basis the road would be cleared for an appeal to the workers of Europe and the world. A continental plan of production, with a democratic socialist Britain, ending the scarecrow of Stalinist Totalitarianism would open the road to the underdeveloped world. *A Socialist United States of Europe would be the first step to a Socialist World*' (bit.ly/2qKVL2A).

Arguably, part of this is developed from a reading of one line in the *Communist Manifesto* 'Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself *the* nation, it is so far, itself national' perhaps neglecting the continuation 'though not in the bourgeois sense of the word'.

Such positioning was also helped by the fact that it was the Tories that first mooted joining the EEC, it would be natural for the left to reflexively shy away from a project associated with their brand rivals. This became an article of faith for the Labour left, especially within the Campaign Group (hence Corbyn's basic oppositional position to the EU). The converse was also true, and in the Blair years, support for the EU became a position Blairites could use to position themselves against the left in their own party and against what was then known as the Eurosceptic right. It even had the virtue of presenting itself as an intrinsically internationalist position. Hence the Labour Party became a predominantly pro-EU party, such that whatever 'Lexiteers' took part in the Brexit referendum, they were drowned out.

It should be noted that in the 2016 referendum campaign, it was the slightly strange Kate Hoey, far, far from being a Labour leftist who was the face and vote of Labour within the official Leave campaign, allowing herself to be pictured sailing down the Thames with Nigel Farage. The Labour Leave group itself was largely made up of the old Labour right, rather than its left.

Brexit noises

That didn't mean that the likes of Arthur Scargill's rump 'Socialist Labour Party' weren't out in the woods making Brexit screeching noises. 'Left leave' were supported by the Communist Party, SWP and the SWP break-away *Counterfire*. Their propaganda focussed on the EU as an undemocratic neo-liberal club. The same could be said of the UK by groups campaigning for independence for Yorkshire and Cornwall, but logical consistency is not the point. As usual, doubtless, such an organisation was more about building recruits for their own parties than a consistent position. All their complaints about the EU would still exist if the UK leaves, and walking away would be abandoning fellow workers who are in the continuity EU.

The most prominent Lexiteer has been Len McCluskey. As the general secretary of Unite he has been the biggest voice for Leave in the Labour movement, and the one with the most clout. Calling for 'Brexit on our terms', these terms amount to what has become the Labour Party position, to leave with retention of protected guaranteed workers' rights, a customs



union and access to the single market and 'For the ending of austerity, and a proactive strategy of investment in public services to mitigate the impact of Brexit. The principle of well-funded, publicly owned and freely accessible public services must be central to this strategy' (bit.ly/2X2yXHz).

It is perhaps unsurprising that the culmination of the left's flirtation with Brexit was the various leftists who have joined the Brexit Party, as instanced in particular by Claire Fox, now an MEP for the party. This is less surprising than it first sounds. Fox is one of the members of the former 'Revolutionary Communist Party' clustered around *Spiked!* magazine, that in the 80s turned away from traditional leftism and towards a form of libertarianism and contrarianism (a path also trod by the late unlamented Christopher Hitchens).

It has proved an effective way of getting attention as pundits, since their left pose gets them through the balance door, to eventually talk right. In 2018, the *Guardian* journalist George Monbiot uncovered that *Spiked!* had received \$300,000 from the Koch brothers foundation (7 December, 2018 - bit.ly/2q41RuF). The Koch brothers' money is notoriously used to further oligarchic billionaire ends in US politics. The *Spiked!* crowd maintain the money was for 'free speech' events (and opposing no-platform and defending free speech is a core part of the *Spiked!* libertarianism).

Fox maintains that she stood as 'a democrat, a supporter of liberty, agency and sovereignty,' (spiked-online.com/2019/05/31/the-brexit-party-is-the-start-of-a-new-politics/) noting the RCP was a long time ago. She also maintains the core of her vote was 'solid Labour voters' including trade union officials. We can only take at face value her claims that her positions are genuine and not providing pinkwash to the Brexit Party (though that is hard to reconcile with the known public positions of the Party's founder and leader Nigel Farage).

Fantasies

There remains an anti-establishment kick to the Brexit movement, a reflex that says if only we stood alone, things could be so much different. Into that void are projected all sorts of fantasies of an authentic British democracy, freed from the binding rules of treaties. Left and right alike see opportunity in that space. The reality is that the integration in practice of the UK with the EU means the scope for independent action will be constrained for the foreseeable future.

The lesson of Ireland is obvious, which broke away politically from the UK, but which still found itself economically close to Britain for decades. Even today, it is the part of the EU most threatened by Brexit. The fantasy that a breakaway country can rework itself and spread to the world is pernicious and persistent: any real change can only come from a movement that is international in form and practice.

To refuse to deal with the reality of the need for an international perspective leaves the workers at the mercy of the patriotic pretenders who will cloak the failings in the flag. **PIK SMEET**

Strange political 'bed-fellows' union leader Len McCluskey (top left) and billionaire oligarch David Koch (below).



SOCIALIST PARTY

CARDIFF

ELECTION MANIFESTOS

FOLKESTONE

What is this election about?

The wide view

Our world contains massive resources – raw materials, systems of manufacture, communications technology, sophisticated transport. Enough to give everyone a comfortable and fulfilling life.

It's also beset by perennial problems – wars, never-ending poverty, economic and other kinds of insecurity. The profit motive of society means that life is becoming more and more commercialised and people are increasingly isolated from one another with drug abuse and mental illness on the increase. Capitalism – and governments – are proving incapable of dealing with climate change and other threats to the environment. The standard of living may have risen for some but the quality of life deteriorates.

Why don't we change our world so that we can have the benefit of the resources without the problems?

How can we do that?

We can do that by holding the world's resources in common and using them directly to serve everyone's needs instead of just producing ad nauseam to create ever greater profits for a tiny minority. This is genuine socialism – a moneyless society of free access to goods and services. Forget about the other uses of the word.

So, we vote you in and you create this wonderful world for us. How can we trust you to do that?

You can't and neither can we. The new society we're putting forward can only be created when a majority of people like you actively decide to do it. You can use us, the Socialist Party, as an instrument of the democratic revolution we are advocating, but you yourselves must be in control of what happens.

But isn't this all fantasy politics? People are too selfish to put everything at risk for the sake of pie in the sky?

Stick to the case you know best – yourself. Are you too selfish to realise that your own interests (as well as those of the people around you) can be advanced by making an alliance with others and pursuing joint interests? Are you sufficiently open-minded to consider alternatives to our present social arrangements? If you want to prove you can do this, one way is to take advantage of the free subscription to our journal, the Socialist Standard, offered on this leaflet.

Hasn't socialism been tried and shown not to work?

No. Small political minorities have tried concentrating resources in the hands of the state, but that has just continued the profit system in another, often more oppressive, form. That isn't socialism. Instead we are talking about a world where we all democratically decide how to use those resources directly for our own mutual benefit and in a way which minimises the impact on the environment.

This is all a long-way off. In the meantime shouldn't 'progressive' organisations sink their differences, defend working people against attacks on their living standards and eventually work towards a socialist society?

It's true that we all have to live in the here and now, but how far off the socialist society we advocate is depends on when people are prepared to take democratic action (i.e. vote) to establish it. More than a century of attempts to reform capitalism have shown that none of its major problems can be removed. So it's clear that if we do nothing about socialism 'in the meantime', the meantime lasts forever. And we are putting off perhaps for all time the greatest advance that human society could ever make.

So does this election matter? Does Brexit matter?

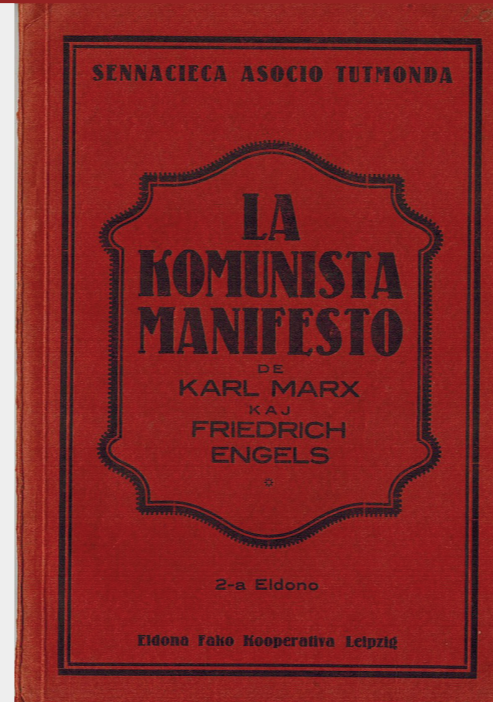
This election is about one way or another of organising the profit system, capitalism, so it doesn't matter which of the major parties is elected. Nothing will change. Brexit is a small detail in that system, so it doesn't matter that an arrangement has been made to manipulate that detail in the interests of the tiny minority who hold most of the wealth. What does matter is how many voters understand the case we are putting for a real social upgrade – a world community without states or frontiers based on participatory democracy – and show their preference for that by casting their vote for the Socialist Party candidate, Brian Johnson.

We are talking about a society of material abundance, without buying and selling, where everyone has access to what they need without the rationing system called money.

We are talking about a rational and sustainable society where people are the Earth's custodians, not its destroyers, where they contribute the knowledge, skills and effort to maintain it.

This is a system that will make 21st century capitalism look like the Dark Ages. Hardly anyone dares conceive of a society after capitalism, so powerful is its hold on the collective mind. But we do and that is why we are putting the debate out into the open.

Capitalism will do all it can to discredit the idea of world socialism. Don't let it succeed. Take a first step by voting for our candidate in Cardiff Central, Brian Johnson.



Profit or Needs, not Leave or Remain, is the real issue

This election, we're told, is about Brexit. Whether 'we' will be richer or poorer, freer or more subservient if we stay in or leave the European Union, with or without a deal.

But does anyone seriously expect that Leaving or Remaining will end child poverty? Homelessness and food banks? Collapsing health and social services? Unemployment – or the mass insecurity of zero-hour-contracts? War and forced migration? The destruction of the Earth's wildlife and natural resources? The threat of disastrous climate change?

The Brexit 'debate' simply obscures the real issue: a failed economic system where nothing is produced unless a profit can be made from it. Where human needs are everywhere subject to the inhuman demands of market forces. And this system will continue to rule our lives whether our new leaders are based in Brussels or London, Belfast or Edinburgh.

The Socialist Party stands for putting an end to this profit system. For replacing it with a society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the world's natural and industrial resources.

We live in a world of potential plenty, where we could meet our needs by freely cooperating on the basis of 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs.' There is no need for anyone anywhere in the world to go without what they need to live a happy, healthy and fulfilled life. What prevents this is the ownership of resources today by a privileged few and production for sale with the aim of making a profit.

The parties committed to running the market system – and that includes the Labour Party and the Greens – are making empty promises. A vote for them is a wasted vote as this system operates on the basis that making profits must always come before meeting needs, whatever those in government might want or have promised.

We are standing here to give you a chance to show that you reject the profit-driven market system and want a classless society of equal men and women geared to directly satisfying people's needs.

To show this, vote for the **SOCIALIST PARTY CANDIDATE, ANDY THOMAS**, and then come and join us, not to mend the present system but to bring a movement strong enough to end it.

How you can help

South Wales branch will be holding an election stall on Saturday 7 December from 1 pm to 3pm in Queen Street (Newport road end) in central Cardiff. There will also be leafletting elsewhere in the constituency. More information and offers of help contact Richard Botterill, election agent, at botterill@gmail.com

Kent and Sussex branch will be meeting on Sunday 1 December from 2pm in The Muggleton Inn (Wetherspoon), 8 High Street, Maidstone, ME14 1 HJ (first floor) to discuss the campaign. Offers of help with leafletting and other activities in Folkestone: email spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org or write to The Socialist Party, 74 Linden Crescent, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5SB.

The Socialist Party also has leaflets for distribution outside the two constituencies saying that socialists will be casting a write-in vote for «World Socialism». Copies for distribution available from spgb@worldsocialism.org or write to the Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN or phone 020 7622 3811.



It's not neo-liberalism that's to blame - it's capitalism

In Marx's day the doctrine that the government should not interfere in the operation of the capitalist economy was known as 'Manchesterism' after the city in the north of England where capitalist industry was then most developed and whose capitalists wanted to be free to pursue profits as they thought fit.

Its advocates preached 'free trade' (the abolition of tariffs on imported goods and bounties on exported goods) and letting market forces operate freely. They even opposed laws against adulteration and to limit the hours of work of those they employed. Also known as 'economic liberalism', it had roots in the eighteenth century in French manufacturers and merchants who told the royal bureaucracy to leave them alone and let them get on with their business ('laissez faire') and in Adam Smith's curious theory that behind market forces was some 'invisible hand' ensuring that these operated for the common good.

However, a practical problem soon arose over industries and services which all capitalist businesses had to make use of, such as transport (roads, canals, railways) and communications (post, telegraph). Capitalists did not want these to be in the hands of any one group of their number who would thereby be in a position to hold the rest of them to ransom and charge monopoly prices. This was why in Britain, as early as 1844, a Railways Act contained a clause providing, if need be, for state ownership, so-called 'nationalisation.' In Europe railways had been in the hands of the state almost from the beginning because of their strategic importance for transporting troops in times of war. In the event Britain settled for price regulation by the government, which was also a violation of *laissez faire*.

Economic liberalism never caught on in its entirety outside Britain as 'free trade' was seen, not without justification, by rival capitalists in other countries as a means of giving British capitalists a competitive advantage. They demanded that their governments 'protect' them from such competition through tariffs on imported British goods. Beyond that, however, they embraced the doctrine that governments should not interfere with their pursuit of profits.

Enter Keynes

Between the two world wars of the last century even Britain abandoned free trade and the gold standard. An era of government-created fiat money opened up, in which

governments had to pursue an interventionist policy to manage their currency. With the financial crash of 1929 and the big slump in production that followed, governments also came under pressure to intervene in the capitalist economy to try to get it expanding again. 'Public works' programmes were initiated, such as Roosevelt's New Deal in the USA and Hitler's rearmament in Germany. In his 1936 *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Income* the British economist John Maynard Keynes provided a theoretical justification for such ad-hoc schemes. He argued that left to itself – *laissez faire* – capitalism would not necessarily recover from a slump of its own accord, as economists had preached till then, but that government intervention, in the form of a tax policy to

stimulate demand was required. In the event of a boom, this could be prevented from ending in a slump, as booms had previously always done, by the government pursuing the opposite policy of using taxes to discourage consumption. Thanks to government intervention, steady capitalist expansion could be engineered.

Naturally this theory, especially stimulating demand in a slump by redistributing purchasing power from the rich to the

non-rich, was acclaimed by reformists as a justification for the reforms they already favoured. Those that had still regarded themselves as in the Marxist tradition abandoned Marx for Keynes.

Keynesianism was not consciously pursued as a government policy till the beginning of the Second World War. When that war was not followed by a slump, as the end of the First World War had been, but by a 25-year period of capitalist expansion with only minor 'recessions,' many open supporters of capitalism hailed Keynes for having saved capitalism.

But this was an illusion. Put to the test when the post-war boom came to an end in the 1970s, Keynesian policies resulted in what was called 'stagflation' – a rise in the general price level while the economy remained stagnant. The post-war boom had been caused by other factors such as reconstruction and the spontaneous expansion of internal and world markets.

Exit Keynes

The end of the post-war boom led to what was called a 'fiscal crisis of the capitalist state'. Governments depend for what they spend on levying taxes, which ultimately fall on capitalist profits, and on borrowing money from those who have it.

With less profit being made, there was less to tax and less to borrow. Government had no alternative but to cut their spending rather than increasing it as Keynes had advocated they should do to get out of a slump. Another economic theory was required to replace Keynesianism and justify this.

The new theory, popularised by the American economist Milton Friedman, called itself 'monetarism' as it advocated a tight monetary policy, i.e. cutting government spending, and letting market forces revive the capitalist economy by restoring profitability of its own accord as asset prices and real wages fell. This was not really a new theory but a revival of pre-Keynesian economic liberalism.

There is some justification, then, for calling this replacement policy 'neo-liberalism.' What is not justified is seeing its

application as a free choice on the part of governments. It was something imposed on them by the workings of the capitalist economy, given the situation it was in. Governments had no choice but to apply it. In other words, capitalism was the cause, with neo-liberalism merely the political and ideological justification.

What the capitalist conditions imposed was that governments should cut their spending or, rather, cut taxing profits with the result that they had less to spend. With less to spend, 'austerity' was the order of the day in all countries irrespective of the political colour of their government. It was not just Reagan and Thatcher in the USA and Britain but also Mitterrand in France. Public services were cut back. 'Welfare' and 'benefits' were slashed, especially for those who for one reason or another were not able to find a job. Since the economists preached that there was a so-called 'natural rate of unemployment,' which could be as high as 6 percent, millions of already poor people had their standard of living reduced even further. Other reforms enacted during the post-war boom were whittled away or rolled back.

To reduce their borrowing, governments sold off state assets to private capitalist firms, who were granted the right to make profits from them in return for themselves raising the capital to finance them.

As a policy of trying to ensure steady sustained capitalist development, neo-liberalism has been just as much a failure as Keynesianism was, as spectacularly shown by the Crash of 2008 and the Great Recession that followed. What this showed is that, no matter what policy governments adopt, capitalism goes relentlessly on its way, repeatedly going through the boom/slump cycle that it has done since the 1820s. The fact is that governments do not – cannot – control the way the

capitalist economy works. It is the other way round. It is the operation of capitalism that constrains what governments do; all they can do is little more than react to what capitalism throws at them. There is a sense in which they do have a choice. They could choose to try to defy what capitalism's economic forces dictate but, if they do, they will make matters worse. As Marx pointed out with regard to banking legislation, while governments cannot make things better, they can make things worse:

'Ignorant and confused banking laws, such as those of 1844-5, may intensify the monetary crisis. But no bank legislation can abolish crises themselves' (*Capital*, Volume 3, Chapter 30, Penguin Books edition, p. 621).

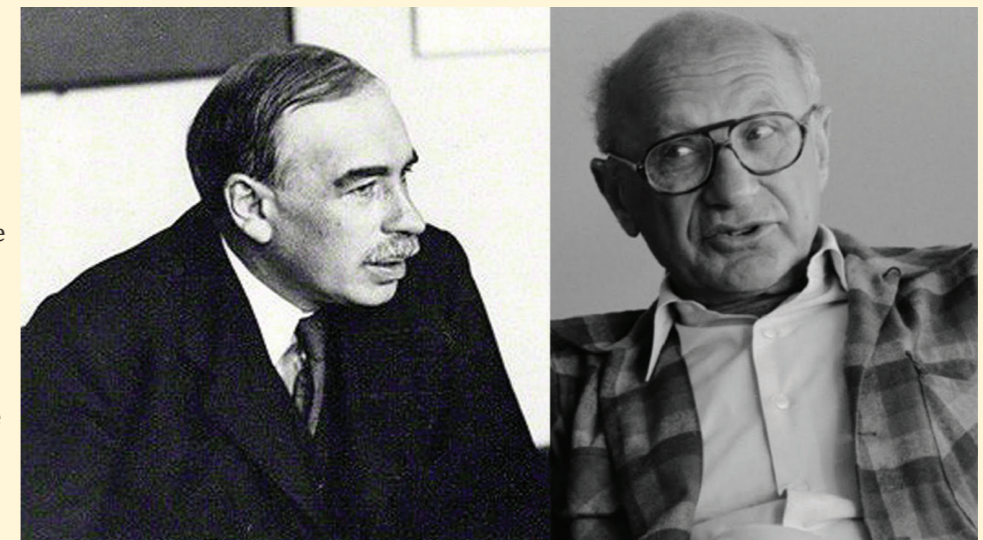
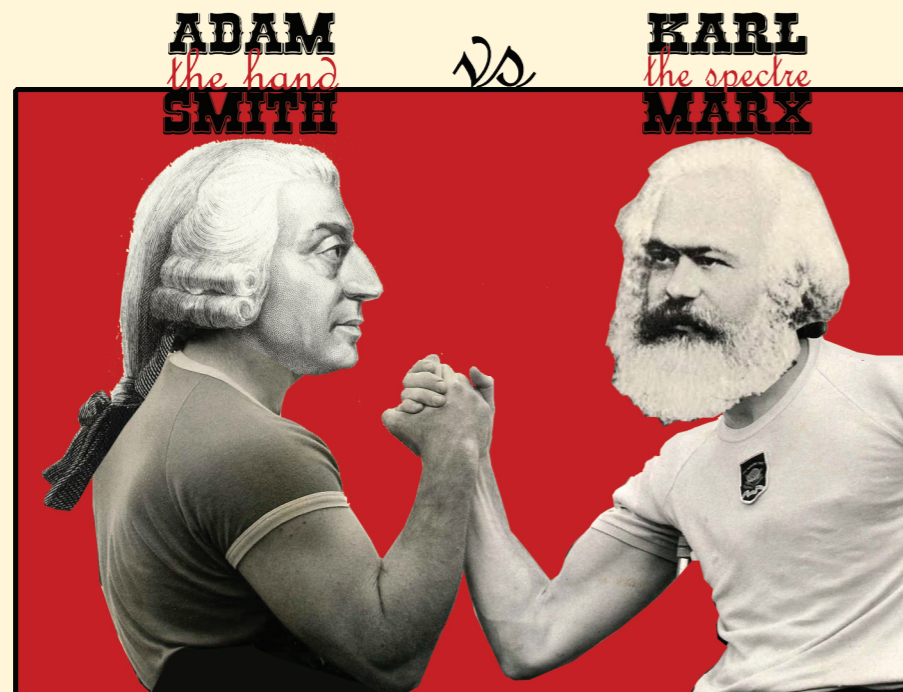
This warning is apt because left-wing populists are calling

for neo-liberalism to be replaced by government intervention to spend money to end austerity and get capitalism expanding again – a revival of Keynes's discredited idea that could be called 'neo-Keynesianism.' As Marxists know, both from the past experience of such attempts and from a knowledge of how capitalism

works, this is doomed to fail and would make things worse.

It is not neo-liberalism that is the problem, but capitalism. It is not a change of policy that is required, but a change of socio-economic system.

ADAM BUICK



Keynes vs. Friedman





The time of street revolutions is over. Socialism's future lies in class-conscious workers expressing themselves through collective action and the ballot. How, then, has the ruling class been able to prevent the working class up to now from achieving this goal? There are two obvious possible answers. The first is to skew the vote against the workers, privileging the elite. The second is to entice the workers into voting against their class interests.

The first was suggested by the radical liberal John Stuart Mill, who suggested in his *Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform* (1859) that 'every person should have one vote, but that every well-educated person in the community should have more than one, on a scale corresponding as far as practicable to their amount of education'. The second was put succinctly by David Hume:

'Nothing appears more surprising to those who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye, than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and the implicit submission, with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. When

we enquire by what means this wonder is effected, we shall find, that, as Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. It is, therefore, on opinion only that government is founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular.' (*First Principles of Government*)

Both stalwart classical liberals had, then, a deep scepticism when it came to democracy, and sought ways to restrict it.

More recently Jan Fleischhauer wrote in the *Guardian* (9 April) that: 'Democracy is overrated anyway. The truth is, it only works reasonably well if the number of voters who have no idea (or perhaps worse: are convinced they do) are not too big on the day.' We ask ourselves: how might people have an idea? Surely, the answer is the media, reporting on the facts and showing how to criticise the government, along the lines of Jeremy Browne, the then Foreign Office Minister, set out during a speech in April 2011 in Hanoi: 'In democracies, the media is fundamental to political life. It provides facts to allow us to be better informed about the issues that matter to us. It provides criticism and debate to ensure that that information is tested and examined from all points of view. And it provides investigation and examination to ensure that power is checked and decision-makers are held accountable' (www.gov.uk/government/news/role-of-media-in-society). Let us, perhaps without justification, take this as true. Why does the situation outlined by Fleischhauer arise then? The answer is clear – the media does not do what it claims to.

Least trusted

In fact, the British press is the least trusted in Europe, according to a 2017 survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre. The British Social Attitudes Survey found in 2014 that a majority did not think the media provided them with adequate tools to criticise the government. This majority has most likely increased in the last five years.

In 2017, BSA found that two-thirds of the population think there is 'quite a lot of poverty' in Britain, and 78 percent said that the gap between high earners and low earners is too large. This is strikingly different to what the previous chancellor, Philip Hammond, said on BBC's *Newsnight* on 3 June when he rejected 'the idea that there are vast numbers of people living in poverty in this country.' He claimed that the suggestion was 'a nonsense', and his reasoning for such a bold claim was 'Look around you, that is not what we see in this country.' This was in response to Philip Alston, a UN Rapporteur, whose statement in November 2018 following a visit to the UK was damning. He wrote in his conclusion that 'Thomas Hobbes, [...] memorably claimed that without a social contract, life outside society would be 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.' The risk is that if current policies do not change, this is the direction in which low-income earners and the poor are headed.' An even more biting conclusion he drew was that 'Austerity could easily have spared the poor, if the political will had existed to do so. Resources were available to the Treasury at the last budget that could have transformed the situation of millions of people living in poverty, but the political choice was made to fund tax cuts for the wealthy instead.'

What do these simple facts show? Firstly, that Hume and Mill were both right, simply on the wrong side. Their conclusions were absolutely correct. The rich being more privileged and public opinion being restricted are the most effective mechanisms for restricting democracy. The media, now that it is election season, are diverting their efforts to

whichever horse they have in the race. The *Guardian* remains on the centre-left, and is the closest thing to representation of the left-wing in the mainstream – but that is a far cry from any considerable change to capitalism. The *Times* has devoted columns and columns to spelling out the disastrous consequences of Labour in power, etc, etc. Public opinion is confined to such narrow boundaries that renationalising the railways seems like something out of Marx's *Capital*.

There are a number of reasons for this, the foremost being that the media are profit-seeking corporations and are subject to business interests. It is not in their interest to suggest that there is an alternative to the profit system. The public are not so easily duped, as shown by their dissatisfaction with capitalism above, as well as their scepticism with respect to the media. Melanie Phillips in an article in the *Times* (12 November) wrote: 'Few British or American students are told about the evils of communism in the same way as they are told about the evils of Nazism. [...] Few are taught that capitalism is the precondition for freedom and prosperity.' It is hard to see a more ironic statement than an organ of propaganda claiming that freedom cannot exist without capitalism, and socialists are wrong because they do not allow freedom. George Orwell wrote in his essay *The Freedom of the Press* (1944), 'the English intelligentsia have plenty of reason for their timidity and dishonesty, indeed I know by heart the arguments by which they justify themselves. But at least let us have no more nonsense about defending liberty against Fascism. If liberty means anything at all it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.'

Matthew Goodwin, in another recent article in the *Times* (3 November), wrote of 'angry, divisive populism that is eroding everything once considered essential to our culture of consensus.' By this populism, he meant the 'belief in a corrupt, self-serving and neglectful elite that undermines the interests of the 'pure' people.' It doesn't take much to work out why such a view is so quickly disparaged by the capitalist press. Indeed this 'civic culture' he extolled might be seen as a society in which the elite do as they will and those below are docile and humble enough to submit to this rule. Though, he isn't stupid, and he knows that the public is not either. He knows that this view will 'resonate with voters', even though 'Britain will drift further from the civic culture that was considered to be one of its most valuable features.' But 'valuable to whom?' Clearly not valuable to the majority, who are beginning to shake off the neoliberal denial of class altogether.

A genuine alternative is obviously needed. Discontent with the status quo is growing. Of course, the alternative is not, as the capitalist press have it, Jeremy 'class war' Corbyn, but socialism. Obviously, this is totally against the interests of the ruling class and therefore not something they want the public to hear. What are the majority then to do? Now seems an appropriate time to make the case for socialism and show that the poverty of many and greed of some is not the only way. The extension of democracy to all aspects of life, including work, is the foundation of socialism, and it is hard to think of something more apt to our times. The challenge is to overcome an anti-democratic media that seeks to restrict opinion and to keep the majority obedient.

MP SHAH

...and the Liberal Democrats

A former Lib Dem member writes.

The enlightenment idea of Liberalism is based on equality before the law, consent of the population, and on liberty. 'Liberalism sought to replace the norms of hereditary privilege, state religion, absolute monarchy, the divine right of kings and traditional conservatism with representative democracy and the rule of law.' (Wikipedia)

The foremost exponent of liberalism historically is John Stuart Mill who was a British contemporary of Karl Marx. Mill rejected the labour theory of value of Karl Marx (and economists Adam Smith and David Ricardo) and the class struggle. The class struggle aspect was elucidated in our 1911 pamphlet 'The Socialist Party versus the Liberal Party' (www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/pamphlet/should-working-class-support-liberal-party) where we also said 'society today, with its rules and regulations, is shaped by those who are in possession of political power, and ... Parliament. It is here the crux of the situation lies ... The control, therefore, of political power means the control of society'.

The Liberal Democrat Party today adopts the mantle of liberalism. In theory party policy is made democratically by conference, but in reality, by the Federal Policy Committee chaired by the leader. If that seems cynical, readers are invited to recall the Lib-Dem-Tory coalition government between 2010 and 2015 and their abandonment of their pledge to abolish student tuition fees. The Socialist Party is committed to hostility to all other political parties and the fullest democracy, and this is important because without it, backroom-deals are made behind the backs of ordinary members. Expect the current Lib Dem leader Jo Swinson (who was former leader Nick Clegg's Private Parliamentary Secretary and later a junior minister in the Coalition government), despite her denials, to politically trade principles for power too. We will not.

DJW



Jo Swinson, just another run-of-the-mill political opportunist

The fall of Rojava

Amid the horror of the Syrian civil war it had seemed that there was one shining beacon of hope. In the north of Syria Kurdish militants, inspired by the political thought of imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, filled the vacuum when the Assadist forces abandoned most of the Kurdish regions, and were combatting and defeating the seemingly unstoppable Islamic State.

The nature of the new regime being created under the protection of the YPG/PYG was greatly attractive to leftists and anarchists. Ocalan in prison had been influenced by the writing of Murray Bookchin and other anarchist-inspired writers and this had shifted the PKK and its allied Kurdish parties away from a rigid and military Stalinism towards a polity which stressed mutualism and participatory democracy.

The vision of this communitarian experiment becoming flesh in the villages and towns of Syrian Kurdistan in the teeth of Islamist obscurantism and Turkish militarist assault galvanised solidarity. Recruits came from all over the world to embattled 'Rojava' (the Kurdish word for 'west' as the western part of the wider region, spanning several countries, inhabited by Kurds). One volunteer unit renamed themselves the Bob Crow Brigade after the British rail union leader.

At the time voices urging a certain caution tended to be drowned out or were silenced by the sheer enormity and barbarity of the opposition that the Kurdish forces faced. For socialists, as long as the capitalist world system exists, there can be no 'islands of socialism'. No matter what the wishes or intentions or, no matter how sincere the participants are,

eventually the logic and demands of the capitalist state system will prevail.

Rojava, trapped within a spider web of competing Great Powers and local powers, either faced extinction or acceded to this logic and took its own place as a junior partner to one or other of the great military powers. Becoming the armed fist of the US effort against ISIS must have seemed a sure bet; arms, advisors and money poured in, at a time when the democratic Syrian opposition was being starved of support and the rebel cities were being pounded into rubble by Assad and his Russian allies.

The abandonment of Rojava to Turkey by Trump's Twitter diplomacy led to an almost ritualised 'changing of the guard', as Russian troops took over on patrol where US special forces had been just days before. But this masked a more brutal exchange as Kurdish forces abandoned Syrian villages to Assadist forces and the brutal Mukhabarat secret police.

With America's betrayal and Turkey threatening its very existence, it is unsurprising that the nascent state of Rojava would be drawn to the siren call of Putin's Russia. The alliance with Assad may shock a few of their Western cheerleaders, but nationalism, however it justifies itself ideologically, will always be first and foremost a movement for the establishment and defence of a nation within a capitalist world system; Rojava's principles would always take a second place to this.

D.W.

COOKING THE BOOKS

A capitalist own goal

In July we drew attention to an article by George Monbiot in the *Guardian* (25 April) in which he announced that he had come to the conclusion that capitalism as such – as a profit-driven system geared to the endless accumulation of capital – and not any particular variety of capitalism, was the root cause of environmental damage.

We were not the only ones to comment on this. Apologists for capitalism sprang to its defence. Robert P. Murphy wrote an article (1 October) for the Institute of Energy Research entitled 'No, Capitalism Doesn't Threaten Humanity' (<http://bit.ly/3204I5y>). He picked on Monbiot's rather daring statement, in the subtitle of his article, that 'the economic system is incompatible with the survival of life on Earth'.

Over-interpreting this to mean that 'capitalism, left unchecked, will cause the literal extinction of humanity', Murphy did not have too much difficulty in refuting such a claim.

Monbiot's statement was not based, as is Extinction Rebellion's, on global warming eventually making the Earth uninhabitable, but on resources eventually running out due to capitalism's imperative to pursue endless growth. We have heard this argument before as when in 1972

the Club of Rome predicted that the world would run out of gold by 1981, mercury and silver by 1985, tin by 1987, zinc by 1990, oil by 1992, and copper, lead and natural gas by 1993 (<https://wattsupwiththat.com/2013/01/19/great-moments-in-failed-predictions>).

None of this happened as there is a distinction between 'exploitable' resources and physical resources. The physical resources are there in the ground, but what under capitalism is exploitable depends on whether or not it is profitable, which in turn depends on the cost of extraction and the price that the particular resource can command on the market. As a resource becomes more difficult to extract and the paying demand for it continues, its price rises and it becomes profitable to extract it from places where previously it wasn't.

What is extracted is, as Murphy pointed out, 'only a small fraction of the physical stockpile' in the ground because 'at any given time, it's only sensible to have located the precise deposits of a healthy margin of such depletable resources.'

This is why there is no danger even under capitalism of material resources becoming exhausted. Capitalism threatens humanity in all sorts of way, but this is not one of them.

So, Murphy marks a point against Monbiot but he goes on to score an own goal when he writes:

'Even if we imagine a scenario—contrary to reality—where humanity *did* run into a crisis because of natural resource crunch, the best way to deal with the situation would be reliance on private property and market prices'.

But academic economics argues in effect that there is, and always will be, a 'natural resource crunch.' Because human needs are (absurdly) assumed to be infinite, its textbooks teach that resources can never be enough to satisfy people's needs and that therefore they have to be rationed through being 'private property' and people having to pay for what they need.

In refuting Monbiot's claim that if capitalism continues resources will eventually run out, Murphy is also refuting the basic tenet of economics textbooks. If only a 'small fraction' of resources in the ground are used – and so there is no 'natural resource crunch' – this means that 'private property and market prices' are not imposed by nature and that humanity can make other arrangements to satisfy its material needs, namely, the common ownership of resources and their use to directly meet people's needs without the intervention of the market and money.

PROPER GANDER

'You've Had It, Ain't Ya?'

SO SAID a bloke in a flat cap when asked by a 1980s film crew about what preparations could and should be made for nuclear war. It's hard now to empathise with the grim expectation that the bomb would drop which coloured life through the Cold War; even current worries about climate change don't carry the same dread, somehow. The mood of the time was conveyed well in BBC4's recent *Arena* documentary *A British Guide To The End Of The World*, which also brought home how those with their finger on the button felt about the rest of us.

The programme covers two aspects of the possibility of nuclear war: the provisions for 'civil defence' in Britain from the 1950s onwards, bookended by footage of soldiers who took part in nuclear bomb tests. The documentary is made from archive film and narration from the soldiers and civil defence staff, including excerpts from earlier programmes, such as a 1980 edition of *Panorama* called *If The Bomb Drops*.

In 1957, groups of British soldiers went on a four-week cruise across the Pacific Ocean to the tropical paradise of Christmas Island. The soldiers made the most of free time spent swimming among the fish around the beautiful reefs, while above them soared flocks of guillemots and gannets.

'It was everything you could have dreamed of, but nobody knew anything at all about why we were there'. Between exploring the island and partying, the soldiers worked on building a runway and hangars. When they learned they were there to test nuclear weapons, they were told they weren't in any danger, even though the scientists and senior staff had been issued protective clothing and the indigenous people had been shipped out. The soldiers sat on the ground and waited, while loudspeakers played upbeat music. The bombs, a thousand times stronger than those used on Japan, were dropped from planes and exploded as few as 23 miles away from the camp. 'The flash seems to come through the back of your head. You could see the bones in your fingers through your closed eyes, bearing in mind the light was not in front of you, it was behind you'. They were then ordered to

watch the explosion, 'like the creation of another sun', an 'angry, evil-looking thing'. The loudspeaker voice ordered them to find cover for when the 'pressure wave' blasted across the island. The bomb had sucked the sea up into the sky, which then fell down as blackened rain. Flocks of birds were also caught in the blast, and hundreds of burning guillemots and gannets landed around the island. Later, the soldiers were sent to collect the bodies, which had formed a 'floating crust' washed up on the beach. The soldiers didn't talk about what they had experienced: 'it happened, and that was that'. The film ends by detailing the longer-term effects on the soldiers, such as cancer and infertility. One man thinks that not being able to have children might be for the best, as other veterans' sons and daughters had health problems linked to radiation poisoning. Unearthed documents show that the soldiers, and their children, were being used as part of an experiment to see what effects the bomb would have on people.

So it was with this information that governments through the Cold War

in the pub in Monyash, Derbyshire, was often switched off as the bleeps soon became annoying. And as the village didn't have a siren, the pub's landlord would instead give the four-minute warning by cycling through the village shouting 'the Russians are coming'. A man in a parka was designated to be responsible for law and order in a post-apocalyptic Monyash, meaning that he would get a few lads together to see off any radioactive refugees from elsewhere. How to deal with people 'wandering around' was also tackled by the civil servants shown acting out attack scenarios. 'They're going to die anyway, so what's the point of bringing them under cover?' says one of them, nonchalantly. These practice scenarios were played out in secret underground local government shelters, which in a war would co-ordinate reports from other monitoring stations. These bunkers were luxurious compared with the shelters recommended for the rest of us: under a table or a lean-to made from doors, shielded by bags of clothes and boxes of books, or in a shored-up trench in the garden. Anyone with several thousand

pounds to spare could splash out on a swankier underground shelter, complete with hand-cranked air filter, although if the bomb dropped, would this just be a more upmarket coffin?

As the documentary shows, any provisions which might have looked good on paper would likely have had ridiculously little practical worth in a nuclear holocaust. One of the civil servants featured says that the plans were largely just to persuade people that what they were doing was a worthwhile exercise. The risks and dire consequences

of nuclear weapons were downplayed by the authorities, both to the soldiers on Christmas Island and the people who would have to rely on makeshift shelters and local militias. The civil defence plans and the soldiers' stories have in common a contempt for those lower down the social ladder from the government and senior military. Behind the threat of nuclear war, the class war was the real conflict taking place.

MIKE FOSTER

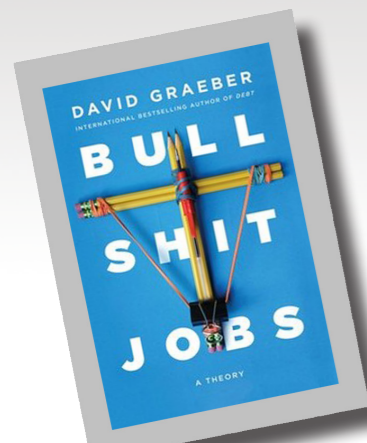


years made preparations for how Britain would cope with a nuclear attack, although 'preparations' is probably an overstatement. At the time, it was widely accepted that the recommendations of how we could 'protect and survive' would be woefully inadequate.

Any advance notice of nuclear war would have come through hundreds of smallish boxes distributed to community hubs around the country. These early warning systems would make constant bleeping noises, which would stop when the bombs were on their way. The one

REVIEWS

Pointless Work



David Graeber: **Bullshit Jobs**. Penguin £9.99.

Socialists often refer to the fact that so many jobs under capitalism are useless in terms of satisfying people's needs. Everything to do with banks, insurance and accounting falls into this category, as do the armed forces, courts and prisons, bailiffs, advertising and so on.

But here David Graeber takes this idea much further, with the idea of a bullshit job: 'a form of paid employment that is so completely pointless, unnecessary, or pernicious that even the employee cannot justify its existence even though, as part of the conditions of employment, the employee feels obliged to pretend that this is not the case.' Such jobs are mostly white collar, and one survey showed that 37 per cent of workers felt that their job did not 'make a meaningful contribution to the world'. Jobs which are unpleasant and badly paid, but which need to be done, are not bullshit jobs but rather are characterised as 'shit jobs'.

Much of Graeber's evidence is taken from email and other responses to his requests for examples of bullshit jobs from workers performing them, and he quotes at length from these accounts. The jobs themselves are of various kinds, including flunky jobs (designed to make someone else feel important), duct tapers (who solve problems that should not really exist) and box tickers (who allow an organisation to claim it is doing something which in fact it is not). Such jobs often lead to increased stress and anxiety, while more meaningful work may be done in a more collaborative way. Moreover, the more a job benefits others, the less the worker is likely to be paid (though of course there are many

exceptions to this).

Although it is hard to quantify, the number and proportion of bullshit jobs appears to be increasing, and Graeber attributes this primarily to what he terms 'managerial feudalism', a concept which seems to mean that managers want more power and so more underlings to make them feel and appear important. He also cites a remark made by Barack Obama, that rationalising the US health care system would lead to the problem of what to do with the millions who work for medical insurance companies: in effect admitting that they are not doing useful work at all, but then wondering how they would otherwise be employed.

The final chapter contains a proposal for a universal basic income, but the book's interest lies in the earlier chapters, where a great deal is said about the reality for so many of employment under capitalism. One worker in a bullshit job is quoted as follows: 'I consider a worthwhile job to be one that fulfills a preexisting need, or creates a product or service that people hadn't thought of, that somehow enhances and improves their lives. I believe we passed the point where most jobs were these type of jobs a long time ago.' Indeed, and it would be straightforward to make work more satisfying and to reduce working hours, while still producing enough to meet human need.

PB

Free Transport



Free Public Transit and Why We Don't Pay to Ride Escalators.
Ed. Judith Dellheim and Jason Price. Black Rose Books. 2018.
274 pages

As the subtitle suggests, it is not the idea that people should be able to travel for free from one part of a city or town to

another that is odd but that they should have to pay to do this. They wouldn't have to in socialism but in a number of places this is not the case under capitalism either. Fares-free public transport for all users exists, we are told, 'in as many as 97 cities and towns worldwide' (56 in Europe, 27 in the US, 11 in Brazil, 2 in China and 1 in Australia). Partial free transport, where a section of the population such as pensioners can travel without paying is much more widespread.

The book, made up of articles by various authors, covers the subject comprehensively, both past struggles and current arrangements. It begins with the free transport policy introduced in Bologna, in Italy, for a while in the 1970s and covers failures, as in Montreal and Toronto, as well as successes, including Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, the biggest place to have introduced it.

The authors approach the subject from an ideological point of view, seeing free transport not just as an answer to the pollution and congestion caused by private cars, but as a move towards a change of society, writing of 'socio-ecological transformation' and 'decommodifying public services.' However, where it has been introduced, this has been more for more pragmatic reasons. In the US the driving force has often been 'downtown' businesses wanting to encourage customers to visit their stores. In France schemes are partly financed by a tax on employers, who benefit from not having to include an element for travel to and from work in the wages they pay. In some small towns it has been a cost-saving exercise as, given the relatively small number of users, it has proved cheaper to subsidise the service from local taxes than to erect a superstructure to charge and collect fares.

Since under capitalism money has to be found to pay for everything, how free transport is funded is a big issue. Various ways have been advocated or implemented – national or regional subsidies from general taxation, local taxes, one author here suggests a tax on land values near stations and bus stops.

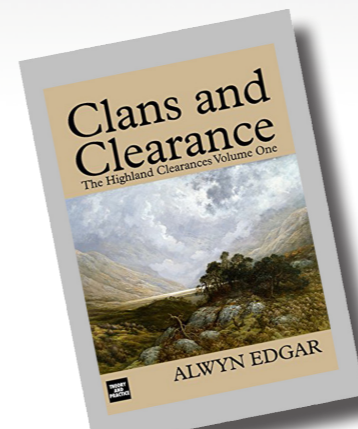
The ideologically-motivated campaigners have often ended up relegating free transport for all (let alone socialism) to a long-term aim and concentrating on obtaining it only for disadvantaged groups as 'transport justice', clearly a reform to capitalism's poor law system rather than a step towards a change of society. As reforms go, not having to pay for local public transport is unobjectionable, even of benefit to workers, but it's not a step towards free access for all, although it does show that there is nothing unfeasible

REVIEWS

about this given the common ownership and democratic control of the means of life.

ALB

Highland Clearing



Clans and Clearance. The Highland Clearances Volume One. By Alwyn Edgar. Theory and Practice. 2019.

In his introduction to this 700-page tome, Alwyn Edgar explains that he first became interested over fifty years ago in the Scottish Highlands and how they came to be depopulated but that he has only now got round to turning his research and notes into a book. Four more volumes are to follow.

In this volume he examines the origin and nature of the clan system as it existed up until 1750 and exposes some of the popular misconceptions about it, for instance that it was overpopulation that led to the later mass emigration from the area to the slums and industries of Glasgow and to North America and New Zealand and that the highlanders were Catholics (he produces figures to show that they were 96 percent Protestant).

We will have to wait for Volume Three to see his analysis of the clearances in the first half of the nineteenth-century by the Duchess of Sutherland, notorious throughout the world thanks to Marx's mention of them in chapter 27 of *Capital* on 'The Expropriation of the Agricultural Population' as an example of what was required to allow capitalist development to take off.

Courting Popularity

POPULIST! This is the political vogue word of the moment, a pejorative term presently in common use especially in the media. President Trump, the Brexit vote, both are cited examples of what is being cast as a growing tendency.

Yet the word has a more honourable past. Originally, it referred to members of the US People's Party, founded in 1891. It had a social agenda, championing public ownership of public services and graduated income tax.

It was a manifestation in the USA of the then emerging social democratic trend represented in Britain by the Labour Representation Committee and the Independent Labour Party, leading to the founding of the Labour Party.

This social democratic tendency was a working-class response to capitalism in the same way as – and emerging from – trade unions. An attempt to seek radical ways of reforming capitalism to favour the majority, to use democracy to improve the lot of working people.

The subsequent history of social democrats being elected to government has demonstrated that such populism, however heartfelt and well intentioned, is no match for the power of capitalism. Reforms conceded can be all too easily clawed back when the profit motive demands it.

However, while socialists must continue, as they did in the 1890s-1900s, to point out that reformism is a doomed strategy, being a populist was not deserving of the opprobrium associated with the word today. Indeed, the basic populist principle was advocating the right and ability of the common people to govern themselves.

Indeed, replace the phrase 'common people' with working class and there is the essential element of socialism, the working class acting politically for itself.

So what has happened to turn populism into a reactionary tendency? The problem lies not in any particular manifesto, but in the actual principle of courting popular support. This is a denial of the working class acting for itself.

Instead, it relies on the 'common people' playing a passive role, even encourages such passivity. Political programmes, radical or otherwise, are concocted by parties standing apart from the people they purport to represent. There may indeed be working people involved in that party, but it is a small self-selected group presuming to know what's best for the masses.

The aim is to elicit widespread support for a pre-formed programme exclusive of popular input. The only role for the electorate is to vote for it and trust the party will act on their behalf. In this sense, all parties putting themselves forward for election are populist.

A current example is the Scottish Nationalist Party seizing on the EU referendum vote in Scotland running counter to the overall British vote. Popular discontent is to be exploited for the sectional interests of the SNP, turning the voters' gaze away from rather more pressing economic and social problems to which the SNP do not have answers.

Other parties in Scotland, seeing an opportunity to raise their profiles, tail along behind the SNP, hoping to gain some popular kudos, or pose a contrary British nationalism. This is where the populist motivation is problematic. Whatever its intent, it serves the political interests of capitalism by limiting the political interests of the working class.

Issues become binary: for or against independence, leaving or staying in the EU, Labour or Conservative and so on and on ... And the only role for the working class, the electorate, is to choose one of the other. Proportional representation or transferable vote systems are merely variations on this essentially passive process.

Parties will even compromise their own programmes to court popular support, as the Liberal Democrats and The Green Party are presently doing as a 'Remainer' coalition. What none of the Westminster parties are doing, or can do for that matter, is to engage with the one fundamental issue: in or out of the EU the problem(s) of capitalism continue unaddressed.

A true working class populism must involve the working class organising itself through its own political institutions to determine how its best interests can be served. Democracy requires the popular acceptance of responsibility for playing an active part.

Otherwise it's merely grumbling about, yet voting for, selected performers strutting about the parliamentary stage in 'Westminster's Got Talent', a popular show for the moment – until those merely watching in the audience realise they could take the stage for themselves.

DAVE ALTON

50 Years Ago

Hippies: An abortion of Socialist Understanding

Ever since the explosion of “Flower Power” in Summer 67, the world’s working-class has been aware of the Hippy movement, or as it is now more frequently called, “The Underground”. Attitudes to the hippies have varied from amused fascination to angry revulsion. Many people have grown more hostile to them over the past two years, as their emphasis on such harmless-sounding words as “Love” and “Beautiful People” has declined, and their tendency to smoke pot has become more widely publicised.

In Britain the occupation of 144 Piccadilly confirmed the hippies’ bad reputation—though the occupiers were not typical of the Underground by any means. TV news announcers put on their frowns for this item, were careful to identify the occupation with soccer hooliganism (both were “violence to property”), and equally careful to avoid dragging in irrelevant details like the fact of empty houses alongside homeless people.

A wave of horror swept the country at the realisation that there were people who not only wore long hair (and obviously smelt foul, as anyone could see by looking at their TV screens), but actually believed they had a right to live without working. In one television programme, David Frost, Hughie Green and Robert Maxwell—those highly productive labourers who toil so usefully to justify their existence—led an attack on the hippies for their conscientious objection

to work. When Richard Neville (editor of the Underground magazine Oz) suggested that the idea of work as a duty hadn’t a very ancient historical pedigree, that work in the modern world was “really a form of slavery,” and that with today’s productive techniques there could easily be more than enough wealth for everyone, he was devastated by Frost’s crisply intelligent retorts: “Very high- flown I’m sure” and “I really am an old fuddy-duddy you know.”

The hippy phenomenon is a movement, a set of attitudes, a subculture or a nuisance, according to your point of view. It consists of several hundred thousand people, drawn mostly from the working class, in the advanced regions of Capitalism. It is vaguely defined, fuzzy-edged—no one can draw up a hippy manifesto; no one can specify who is a hippy and who isn’t.

(*Socialist Standard*, December 1969)



SOCIALIST PARTY OFFICIAL LOGO T-SHIRTS £12 Including UK P&P*

Printed on 100% cotton and available in black, purple or red with the official Party logo and short web address in white. Available in M/L/XL/XXL (while stocks last). £10 if collected from Head Office.



To order: Send £12 per shirt payable to The Socialist Party of Great Britain, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN (or Paypal as email address below) stating colour and size required with your name, address and phone number.

*Overseas orders (and enquires): Please email for a price first with ‘T-Shirt Order’ in the subject line to spgb@worldsocialism.org

Mailing bags recycle with supermarket carrier bags

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

Meetings:

DECEMBER 2019

MAIDSTONE

Sunday 1 December, 2.00 p.m.
Kent and Sussex Regional Branch branch meeting

Venue: The Muggleton Inn (Wetherspoon), 8 High Street, Maidstone, ME14 1 HJ (first floor)

Please note that this meeting is a week earlier than usual in December

CARDIFF

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

Street Stall

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

BOLTON

Friday 13 December, 8.30 p.m.
Manchester Branch Social
Venue: Sweet Green Tavern, 127 Crook Street, Bolton, BL3 6DD

JANUARY 2020

CARDIFF

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

Street Stall

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

Seasonal Social

Saturday 7 December commences 2pm
Venue: The Athol Arms Pub, Glasgow
All Welcome
Contact: Paul Edwards Tel: 074847 17893



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.





'A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of Communism.'

This is the famous opening sentence of *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. The original *Manifesto* of 1848 listed some progressive reforms, but ceased advocating them by 1872. The measures – ranging from nationalisation to a heavy progressive or graduated income tax – may have had merit in 1848 but not today. Indeed, Marx and Engels in their joint preface to the 1872 edition stated: 'No special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures proposed at the end of Section II. That passage would, in many respects, be differently worded today.' Yet this does not stop our opponents, particularly on the Right, from resurrecting ideas, long dead and buried, to besmirch socialism/communism. The Mises Institute, for example, has used them to suggest that socialism is to blame for the suffering of our class in state capitalist Venezuela. More recently, in an article titled '*How the Presidential candidates rehash failed communist ideas*' (thedailybell.com, 15 October), Joe Jarvis writes 'Marx would fit right in running for President amongst the current crowded field of "democratic socialists" clamoring to one-up each other with the most communist platform. For instance, Bernie Sanders' platform includes a top estate tax—aka inheritance or death tax—of 77%.' Later, for good measure, he adds the failings of Bolsheviks and state capitalist China to the mix. Pure nonsense of course because, as Rosa Luxemburg said succinctly, 'without the conscious will and action of the majority of the proletariat, there can be no Socialism

'Social democracy is nothing but a stinking corpse'

This is Rosa Luxemburg again, in a speech to the founding conference of the KPD (German Communist Party). This, like Marx and Engel's spectre, was rather premature. Even Jarvis in his article notes: 'This list included things like free public

education, a progressive income tax, and a state-owned central banking monopoly. That's all been accomplished of course.' Socialists acknowledge that certain reforms won by our class have helped to improve general living and working conditions. Examples are to be found in fields such as education, housing, child employment, work conditions and social security. However, such 'successes' have in reality done little more than keep workers and their families functioning as the fundamental relationship between worker and capitalist remains unchanged. 'Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the



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more, the more labour it sucks. The time during which the labourer works, is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has purchased of him' (Karl Marx, *Capital*, Chapter 10, The Working Day). The reforms which today's Social Democrats and others pursue will not end war ('Americans want an end to forever wars. But that's not what Trump offers' (theguardian.com, 18 October) and poverty ('Essex lorry deaths: All 39 migrants found dead were Vietnamese nationals, police say', mirror.co.uk, 1 November).

Gravediggers unite!

The Communist Manifesto: 'What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above

all, is its own gravediggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.' Don't despair! One Dr. Rogers, researching into early societies, was once quoted in the *Guardian* (17 December, 1980) as saying: 'I do not think aggression is innate. I think aggression is something that man learns. Aggression comes as soon as you get possessions'. More recently (29 October, 2017) in the same paper there is a fascinating report on the Ju/'hoansi people of the Kalahari. 'They have always been fiercely egalitarian. They hate inequality or showing off, and shun formal leadership institutions. It's what made them part of the most successful, sustainable civilisation in human history.' 'The internet was brought about by widespread voluntary cooperation, open standards and freely-produced software. Capitalism only made it unbearable and unusable with pop-up ads, overlay ads, full-page ads, prevideo ads, autoplay videos, firewalls, data regulations and malware' (@OfficialSPGB, 31 October). We also agree with author Arundhati Roy that 'Flags are bits of colored cloth that governments use first to shrink-wrap people's minds and then as ceremonial shrouds to bury the dead' (socialist-courier.blogspot.com, 2 November).

Learning from the dead

Socialism, as originally expressed by the followers of Robert Owen, appeared for the first time in their *Co-operative Magazine* of November 1827 and meant common ownership (not nationalisation or state capitalism). Later, in 1875, at the first meeting of the German Social Democratic Party, Eduard Bernstein and others claimed that capitalism could be reformed to meet working class interests. By championing gradual, ethically-inspired reforms they rejected socialism's revolutionary and materialist foundations and paved the way for the likes of the UK Labour Party.

FREE LUNCH

