

socialist standard

January 2020
Vol.116 No.1385
£1.50

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



Demagogue's
Delight

Also:
Las Vegas
Disability
Fascism



socialist standard

Contents January 2020

Features

- 5 Football Rights**
TV Turf War
- 10 The Election**
Analysis
- 11 Nativism**
Covert Racism
- 12 Fascism**
Avoiding Anachronism
- 14 Las Vegas**
Everyone's a Loser
- 16 Disability**
Models of Meaning
- 20 Zerosum**
Pies & Lies



Regulars

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

Introducing the Socialist Party

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

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

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

Gradualist reformers like the Labour Party believed that capitalism could be



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

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

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

All original material is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-ND 2.0 UK) licence.

Brexit done, back to capitalism as usual

Forget climate change, forget the NHS, the general election turned out to be a proxy second Brexit referendum. Despite Labour's (and indeed our) efforts to highlight the social problems generated by capitalism and how to solve them, the result reflected the 2016 referendum. Leave-voting areas in the North, the Midlands and North Wales returned a majority of pro-Brexit, Tories – giving the Tory party a comfortable majority in the House of Commons – while Remain-voting London, Scotland and Northern Ireland returned a majority of pro-Remain MPs.

We saw previously solid Labour seats, even in ex-mining areas, return Tory MPs. In fact, the first result – and the first Tory gain – was in Blyth where the Northumberland NUM used to have its offices. It is true that, in quite a few of these seats, the Tories won because the Brexit Party took votes from Labour. The reason for this change can't be that those who switched really thought that Brexit would make any difference to their lives, but will more have been resentment that, having been asked a question and given an answer, that answer was being ignored.

What people vote for is of course

routinely ignored, but this is due to the fact that the workings of the capitalist economy, which require that priority be given to profit-making, prevent the improvements in health care, housing, education, transport and the rest that people vote for from being implemented. Brexit is different. It might not make sense from a capitalist point of view but it is something that could be delivered. However, it was being thwarted, with a view to not implementing it, by opposition MPs. Insofar as the Labour Party was seen as part of this they were punished for, in effect, not respecting a democratically-made decision.

So, Brexit will now happen. The United Kingdom will formally leave the European Union on the 31st of this month. That will satisfy most Leave-voters. Of course that will not be the end of the story – negotiations over trade and tariffs will go on for years – but, a democratic vote having been satisfied, the resentment of those who voted for this can be expected to die down, as the particular trading arrangements British capitalism makes with the rest of the capitalist world is not their concern anyway.

Economic reality and capitalist interests might compel Johnson and his government to negotiate a 'softer' Brexit than their rhetoric has been suggesting but that's unlikely to get people jumping up and down. Given the nationalist vote in Scotland and even in Northern Ireland (for the first time there have been more Nationalists than Unionists elected there), there could be big problems ahead for those in charge of the British state.

Those who voted for Brexit via the Tory party are going to be more interested in the Tory promises to end austerity and to improve health care and education. And that is no more likely to happen than it would have if the Labour Party had won. Capitalism is an economic system driven by the imperative to make and accumulate profits and it is this that has to come first, not improving the conditions of the wage-working majority.

Knowing this, we confidently predict that the Johnson government will fail to honour its promises here. Not because they necessarily don't want to – though they are still the nasty party – but because they cannot. No government can.

FREE
3-month trial
subscription
to the
**socialist
standard**



For a 3-month trial subscription to the **socialist standard**, or to request more details about the Socialist Party, complete and return this form to **52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN**.



Please send me an info pack



Please send me a trial subscription to the **socialist standard**



Name

Address

Postcode

Subscription Orders should be sent to the address above. **Rates:** One year subscription (normal rate) £15. One year subscription (low/unwaged) £10. Europe rate £20 (Air mail). Rest of world £25 (Air mail). Voluntary supporters subscription £20 or more. Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

PATHFINDERS

Fake news? Go and boil your bread

'I'VE told every candidate that I'm voting for them,' says the voter in a *Telegraph* cartoon just before polling day in December, 'this election is all about honesty and trust'. Well indeed. As polling fever mounted people were saying this was the most important election in a generation, and all manner of other hyperbolic claims, but what really was different this time was the hot shooting war between fake news and fact checking.

It's axiomatic that politicians lie. Sometimes they are so blatant they take your breath away, as in the infamous 2016 'Boris and the Brexit bus' affair. Lies by the Vote Leave campaign led to a public outcry and a large number of complaints to the Advertising Standards Agency, but the ASA had no jurisdiction over political campaigns and besides, the Remain lobby was also at it (bit.ly/36oh5u1).

In September it emerged that the Tories had posted a BBC article on proposed school spending to their Facebook page but altered the headline and changed the numbers involved (bbc.co.uk/news/uk-49690325). Facebook removed the page but argued that it wasn't their job to 'fact check or judge the veracity of what politicians say' (bbc.co.uk/news/technology-49827375). This despite Mark Zuckerberg himself being spoofed on Facebook by Democrat candidate Elizabeth Warren, who planted a fake ad to see if Facebook would run it (*New Scientist*, 16 November).

Then in November a row blew up after the Tories were caught blue-handed in the act of rebranding their press office Twitter account from CCHQPress to factcheckUK. The independent charity Full Fact (fullfact.org), itself founded by a Tory, was furious: 'It is inappropriate and misleading for the Conservative press office to rename their Twitter account factcheckUK during this debate.' With astonishing chutzpah the foreign secretary Dominic Raab justified the con as a legitimate stunt, telling BBC Breakfast that 'no one gives a toss about the social media cut and thrust' (bit.ly/35d3vcw).

With just days to go before the polls, a new storm gathered over the four-year-old boy forced to sleep on a hospital waiting room floor because there was no bed for him. Footage went viral of Boris Johnson showing no interest in the boy and in fact pocketing the journalist's phone so he didn't have to look at the picture. But within hours a new story broke that the

whole thing was fake news, on the say-so of an alleged senior nursing sister at the hospital. The hoax claim was swiftly endorsed by *Daily Telegraph* columnist Allison Pearson ('Stage a photo. Cause outrage.... Jesus.') and aptly-named Tory politician Michael Fabricant, yet within hours came the refutation, as Full Fact along with the hospital and even the Health Secretary confirmed that this senior nurse did not exist, that the Facebook account which launched the post had been hijacked, and that the original story was true in every particular.

The whole election campaign was as usual awash with dodgy claims and counter-claims, but this time the fact-checking process began almost as soon as the words were out of politicians' mouths. All parties were predictably found wanting and not even the Greens were spared from the shredder, although it's fair to say that Labour generally stuck closer to the truth while the Tories were the most shameless and shambolic liars.



Given the outcry over the 2016 Brexit campaign, it was perhaps predictable that similar protests would be made over the conduct of this election campaign. According to the Coalition for Reform in Political Advertising, this was the 'fake news and disinformation general election' in which 'at least 31 campaigns across the party spectrum have been indecent, dishonest or untruthful' (BBC, 10 December - bbc.co.uk/news/technology-50726500). The Coalition is demanding that fact-checking of political advertising become a legal requirement and quotes a YouGov poll to argue that 87 percent of voters would be in favour. Many eyebrows must have launched skywards at the news that this Coalition is made up of advertising professionals, who insist that politics should be like retail advertising, in which a 'founding principle' is the requirement to be 'legal, decent, honest and truthful'.

Er, come again? This must be what

happens to marketing people eventually – they swallow their own hype, become delusional and think they are doing the public a service. Advertising has no such founding principle, in fact no principles at all, that's why there's so much legislation to keep it in line.

Will they get their way though? Will political parties be legally bound to tell the truth? Theoretically it could happen, but the ASA are afraid of becoming embroiled in political disputes and thereby bringing the regulatory process itself into disrepute (asa.org.uk/news/why-we-dont-cover-political-ads.html). Ultimately it's a philosophical conundrum. What is 'truth', and would voters really accept the ASA, or any other body, as the ultimate arbiter of it? Anyway, it's unlikely that any government is going to see fit to enact legislation that holds it hostage.

It's no good expecting technology to come up with a fix either. Last year *New Scientist* ran a story about an AI system that could generate convincing fake news

stories and that therefore might, in a kind of 'It takes a thief to catch a thief' way, be able to spot other fake news stories. 'Grover', the fake news AI, produced a story about how eating bread makes your hair curly. Here's an excerpt to show how convincing it was: 'Many people cook a bowl of fresh bread the morning after a hard night of tossing and turning on the sofa. With little thought, people add the crust of the bread to the mix of water and flour... [H]is team found that in European girls, one third of girls had curly hair after eating the leftover crusts of fried or boiled bread and sandwiches' (15 June, 2019). Think AI is about to take over the world? Not on this evidence.

You probably saw the brilliant 'deep fake' video of Corbyn and Johnson endorsing each other's electoral campaigns (bbc.in/2PcQ5YK). Nobody can be in any doubt now about how good the technology of fakery is. There is an arms race between the misinformation industry and its fact-checking nemesis. Now campaigners can micro-target political ads to Facebook users based on their individual data profiles, circumventing the fact-checkers. The only thing you can do is beware of and be equally sceptical of far-fetched stories supporting your own view as well as those which contradict it. Or get off Facebook. Or at least use your loaf, preferably without boiling it.

PJS

LETTERS

Dear Editors,

Workers produce and distribute the means to live. They plant and harvest all the food. They mine, and gather all the materials for buildings, and the things we use. They build and assemble and make all the buildings and appliances and things we use.

The workers produce all the wealth in the world. And they distribute all the wealth in the world. They produce and distribute all the world's wealth not to meet the needs of the human race but instead for a wage. Workers are dependent on a wage directly or indirectly to live.

This dependency, which leads to insecurity, stress, fear, mental illness, a bad back and many other unpleasant things, is because of the current world system – capitalism.

Workers, fighting as individuals, or groups, or even a majority of the population of a given country, for improvements to working/living conditions, may win some of their battles.

Reforms under capitalism that are beneficial to workers are always in danger of being reversed. Or new conditions may arise that turn once 'good reforms' into things that cause the workers harm. Also, reforms that are good for workers are only ever a sop to keep them pacified, to give them a false sense of control. To make them think that the politicians love them and are working on their behalf.

Many workers – due to capitalist conditioning – blame migrants for their problems. Men blame women and women blame men for their problems. People of one skin colour blame people of a different skin colour for problems.

Workers blame the government. They blame religion. They blame lack of religion. They blame their problems on people believing in the wrong god. They blame aliens. They blame Masons. They blame drugs. They blame the weak, the stupid, the lazy. Workers blame their problems on all sorts of shit.

I blame capitalism. The workers of the world can solve all their problems, win all their battles, if they identify what's really to blame; unite, and fight the right war of ideas.

If the workers can find a way to act/work as one – plans can

be drawn up and discussed on the internet and the radio and the TV – then we can organise and go ahead and establish a system that works in our best interest – a world social system of common ownership.

Common ownership means the human race will own the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth. It also implies the democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth, for if everyone owns, then everyone must have equal right to control the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth.

Common ownership is not state ownership. State capitalism is merely the ownership by the owning class as a whole, instead of by individuals, and the government then runs the state enterprises to serve the owning class. In the self-proclaimed 'socialist' or 'communist' states the state enterprises serve those who control the party/state apparatus. The workers do not own or control. They produce/work for a privileged minority.

Workers under socialism will no longer be working for a wage. People will 'do their bit' for the common good. Life will be organised in such a way that people can enjoy as much leisure time as they want.

Computer-machines (or robots) will be programmed to do as much of the mundane work as possible. All the jobs which only have a value under capitalism – till work, guarding money, advertising and many more – will cease to exist.

Common ownership by the human race, and democratic control of the means to live by the human race, will allow the human race to meet the needs of the human race. Indeed the aim of the human race will be to do what is in the best interest of the human race: The best infrastructure the world can offer. The best health care the world can offer. And so on.

A world without poverty. Without wars. With little or no crime. And no pollution – or a sustainable level of pollution, which amounts to the same thing.

LEE HEATH

Football TV rights: Amazon joins the game

By the time you read this, ten English football clubs will have played seven competitive games stretching from 3 December to 27 December. The TV rights for showing these fixtures were purchased by Amazon Prime in a three-year deal struck in June 2018. According to *CityAM* (3 December), if Amazon, the biggest company ever to have bought English Premier League TV rights, is to make its mark it will have to sign up plenty of new customers to its Prime membership.

At present, this intervention does not threaten the current status quo, under which Sky Sports and BT Sports dominate the current televising of Premier League fixtures, with a few smaller competitors including DNZA who are interested in the procurement of streaming rights, etc. Having dipped their toes in the water, Amazon Prime will surely consider increasing their investment by procuring more broadcasting rights in the near future. However, there is so much money sloshing around in the EPL at the moment that there will definitely be a future feeding frenzy in which all of the competitors will attempt to grab what they can.

If we liken the current EPL to a large cake – we can say that there will be plenty of cake to go round but not sufficient for everyone's wants or needs. So there will be losers as well as winners. Capitalism will separate the rich from the not so rich, rewarding as ever those that pay the most, by allocating them a place at the table. The unfortunates who were unable to bid enough for inclusion will just have to sit out on the bench. Like the working class have to all the time under capitalism.

KEVIN



NOW ON SALE

SOCIALIST PARTY OFFICIAL LOGO BRASS BADGE

This full colour enamel-type badge is made on brass with a secure pin fastening. It measures 25mm in diameter



Price £4 each with inland postage & packing or £3 each if collected from Head Office

To order: write to The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. Please make remittances payable to The Socialist Party of Great Britain or buy online at: <https://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/product/party-enamel-badges/>

Other merchandise and our extensive range of literature is also available from: <https://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/store/>

For prices for overseas or wholesale orders please email spgb@worldsocialism.org with badges as the subject or telephone 020 7622 3811

COOKING THE BOOKS

The Labour Party Marxist? Pull the other one!

The Sun (5 December) denounced the prospect of 'a Marxist-run coalition with Corbyn in No 10.' This strange view that the Labour Party under Corbyn is Marxist had been repeated for months by Tory politicians. A headline in the *Daily Express* (30 March) proclaimed 'Iain Duncan Smith issues warning over "Marxist threat" from Jeremy Corbyn premiership,' while in July, in his bid to become Tory leader, Boris Johnson spoke of Corbyn as 'the leader of a cabal of superannuated Marxists.'

This claim goes even further back, to Prime Minister's Question Time in 2013, when according to a *Daily Mail* headline (9 October 2013) 'Miliband wants to live in a 'Marxist universe', Cameron claims as leaders clash over Labour 'gimmick' to freeze energy bills', while 'Chancellor George Osborne claimed that the Labour leader had put forward the same argument that "Karl Marx made in *Das Kapital*". Cameron's case was that Marxists want to control prices while world market prices are beyond the control of governments; which, ironically, is the Marxist view.

But what is a 'Marxist'? Marx himself didn't like the term and would have

preferred his theories to have been called 'communist theory.' Nevertheless, after his death, 'Marxism' came to be the term used even by those who agreed with his views to describe the body of his theory: the materialist conception of history, with technology and class struggles as the driving forces; his analysis of the economic workings of capitalism as a system of uncontrollable capital accumulation in fits and starts; and his insistence on the need for the working class to win control of political power in order to establish a communist (or, the same thing, a socialist) society based on the common ownership of productive resources and production to directly meet people's needs rather than for sale with a view to profit.

The Labour Party falls at the first hurdle. It does not stand for socialism as Marx did, even though at times it has claimed to be socialist. The first time it did this was in 1918. Before that, it saw itself as merely a trade union pressure group in parliament. But what it called socialism was nationalisation, or production for profit organised by state enterprises, the correct term for which is 'state capitalism'.

The present Labour Party has abandoned even this, accepting that the commanding heights of the economy should be in the hands of profit-seeking private enterprises.

It talks now of an 'entrepreneurial state,' which is just another form of state capitalism.

The Labour Party has never understood how the capitalist economy works. It has never accepted Marxian economics, preferring Keynes who taught that capitalism can be controlled by state intervention and made to work in everybody's interest.

A previous Labour Party general secretary, Morgan Phillips, famously said that 'the Labour Party owes more to Methodism than to Marxism', which is true. Its philosophy, insofar as it has one, is do-goodism rather than Marx's view 'the emancipation of the working class has to be the work of the working class itself.'

One, more intelligent Tory, Robert Halfon, newly re-elected MP for Harlow, warned them to 'stop calling Corbyn a Marxist' as 'such terminology means very little to most ordinary folk' (www.conservativehome.com/thecolumnists/2019/04/robert-halfon-stop-calling-corbyn-a-marxist.html). It doesn't, but there might be an upside to this – more people seeking to find out what it does mean.

WOOD FOR THE TREES

History as Drama

THE RECENT film *Le Mans '66* represents an addition to the long tradition of transforming historical events into entertaining dramatic film narratives. Given that its centrepiece is one of the many famous races held at the Le Mans motor racing circuit it already has a built in dramatic edge but the film focuses mainly on the relationships between the people who had the imagination, power, courage and knowledge to change motor racing history.

For decades the Ferrari motor company was dominant in this form of motor racing where performance has to be matched by engineering consistency and endurance. These were thoroughbred cars where no expense was spared – both on the track and in its road cars. They were the cars for the rich elite to show off their wealth, and status and success at the race track was seen as essential in maintaining this image. In contrast to this the American car industry specialised in the 'mass production' that would bring down prices and so make cars accessible to most everyone. Primary among these was the Ford motor company and Henry Ford himself is usually identified as having instigated the alienated assembly line manufacturing process.

The film opens with Henry Ford's son expressing a frustrated desire to give his cars a much more performance-oriented sexy image. To acquire such engineering credibility he was advised that winning the world's most prestigious motor race (Le Mans 24hr race) would be the most assured way of entering the performance market. To do this Ford initially attempts to buy the cash-strapped Ferrari Company but its owner Enzo Ferrari finds a better deal with Fiat and in refusing Ford's offer he insults the American company and

its CEO. Furious at this Ford instructs his employees to construct their own car to win the Le Mans race. The film follows the technological and social implications of such hubris in terms of the antagonism between the personalities that were essential to its realisation. The conflicting traditions of capitalist production in America and Italy and their respective corporate hierarchies together with maverick designers and drivers, their egos and comradeship combined with the aesthetic of speed all converge to make this movie entertaining and informative.

The result was the famous Ford GT40 racing car which was a winning combination of British design (Lola) and Ford's 427 racing engine tuned by Carroll Shelby and driven by hot-tempered Brit Ken Miles. The traditional trope of the soulless big corporation trying to keep control of the free spirits of the drivers and engineers is used to entertaining effect by emphasising that the only way to achieve their goal was somehow to synthesise the incompatible realities of capitalism and freedom. We can only speculate as to the number of examples of other such attempts in numerous walks of life that have failed to hold together under similar inherent contradictions – but then nobody would want to make a film about failure.

This is, of course, one of the flaws in any attempt to make drama out of history. Not that history is without drama but to condense events into a story with structure and meaning must always involve being selective, depending on who's telling the story as much as with its subject. Homer, Shakespeare, Tolstoy and countless other authors have not been inhibited in using historical events as the background to the stories that they wish

to tell. It has become the job of many historians and archaeologists to try to unravel the myths and legends that have become so inextricably linked with our understanding of the past. Indeed many within these professions were themselves initially attracted to history by those same legends and myths.

Most of us enjoy a story where the 'underdog' or 'maverick' individual overcomes the conditioning and control of the powerful. Many are unaware of the political implications of this desire to escape the dead alienating prison of capitalism and can only express it by vicariously enjoying the escapism provided by drama. The heroes of the past express our anger in a positive way rather than the everyday negativity of conforming to tribalism, prejudice and competitiveness because of fear and political ignorance. Humankind has always loved to discover and/or impose patterns on existence. Dramatic stories provide meaning and structure to the chaos of life but this need we all possess must not be allowed to eclipse or disguise other more uncomfortable perspectives. We are all aware of such travesties of history in films like: *Birth of a Nation*, *Quo Vadis*, *Braveheart* and *Kingdom of Heaven*. Such movies emphasise the danger of conflating history and drama especially because they are aesthetically pleasing with a good story, good acting and great scripts. Stories are used to obfuscate historical truths as often as they can illuminate them -- the next time you read the legend 'what follows is based on real events' at the beginning of a film always bear this in mind.

WEZ



UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

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

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

West London branch. Meets 1st Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. spgb@worldsocialism.org

MIDLANDS

West Midlands regional branch. Meets last Sun. 3pm (check before attending). Contact: Stephen Shapton. 01543 821180. Email: stephenshapton@yahoo.co.uk.

NORTH

North East Regional branch.

Contact: P. Kilgallon, c/o Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UN.

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

Manchester branch. Contact: Paul Bennett, 6 Burleigh Mews, Hardy Lane, M21 7LB. 0161 860 7189.

Bolton. Contact: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589.

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

Doncaster. Contact: Fredi Edwards, fredie.edwards@hotmail.co.uk

Liverpool. Contact: D. Whitehead, liverpool.spgb@gmail.com

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Kent and Sussex regional branch. Meets 2nd Sun. 2pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ. Contact: spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org.

South West regional branch. Meets 3rd Sat. 2pm at the Railway Tavern, 131 South Western Road, Salisbury SP2 7RR. Contact: Ray Carr, Flat 1, 99 Princess Rd, Poole, BH12 1BQ. 01202 257556 or 07929627689.

Brighton. Contact: Anton Pruden, anton@pruden.me

Canterbury. Contact: Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB.

Luton. Contact: Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive,

LU2 7LP.

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

East Anglia. Contact: David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccleson-on-Sea, NR12 0SF. 01692 582533. Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD. 01603 814343.

Essex. Contact: Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billericay, CM12 0EX. patdeutz@gmail.com. **Cambridge.** Contact: Andrew Westley, wezelecta007@gmail.com. 07890343044.

IRELAND

Cork. Contact: Kevin Cronin, 5 Curragh Woods, Frankfield, Cork. 021 4896427.

mariekev@eircom.net

NORTHERN IRELAND

Belfast Contact: Nigel McCullough. 02890 930002

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh branch. Meets 1st Thurs. 7-9pm.

The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh. Contact: J. Moir. 0131 440 0995. jimmyjmoir73@gmail.com

Branch website:

<http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>

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

peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk.

Dundee. Contact: Ian Ratcliffe, 12 Finlow Terrace, Dundee, DD4 9NA. 01382 698297.

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

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

WALES

South Wales Branch (Swansea)

Meets 2nd Mon, 7.30pm (except January, April, July and October), Unitarian Church, High Street, SA1 1NZ. Contact: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. 01792 643624.

South Wales Branch (Cardiff)

Meets 2nd Saturday 12 noon (January, April, July and October) Cafe Nero, Capitol Shopping Centre, Queens Street, Cardiff. Contact: Richard Botterill, 21 Pen-Y-Bryn Rd,

Gabalra, Cardiff, CF14 3LG. 02920-615826. botterillr@gmail.com

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

LATIN AMERICA

Contact: J.M. Morel, Calle 7 edif 45 apto 102, Multis nuevo La loteria, La Vega, Rep. Dominicana.

AFRICA

Kenya. Contact: Patrick Ndege, PO Box 13627-00100, GPO, Nairobi

Zambia. Contact: Kephass Mulenga, PO Box 280168, Kitwe.

ASIA

Japan. Contact: Michael. japan.wsm@gmail.com

AUSTRALIA

Contact: Trevor Clarke, wspa.info@yahoo.com.au

EUROPE

Denmark. Contact: Graham Taylor, Kjaerslund 9, Floor 2 (middle), DK-8260 Viby J.

Germany. Contact: Norbert.

weltsozialismus@gmx.net

Norway. Contact: Robert Stafford.

hallblithe@yahoo.com

Italy. Contact: Gian Maria Freddi,

Via Poiano n. 137, 37142 Verona.

Spain. Contact: Alberto Gordillo, Avenida del Parque. 2/2/3 Puerta A, 13200 Manzanares.

COMPANION PARTIES OVERSEAS

Socialist Party of Canada/Parti Socialiste du Canada. Box 31024, Victoria B.C. V8N 6J3 Canada. SPC@iname.com

World Socialist Party (India) 257 Baghajatin 'E' Block (East), Kolkata - 700086, 033- 2425-0208. wspindia@hotmail.com

World Socialist Party (New Zealand) P.O. Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New Zealand.

World Socialist Party of the United States. P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 USA. boston@wspus.org

PUBLICATIONS

PAMPHLETS (£4.00 each unless stated otherwise)

What's Wrong With Using Parliament? (£2.50)

Ecology and Socialism

From Capitalism to Socialism (£3.50)

Africa: A Marxian Analysis

Socialism as a Practical Alternative

Some Aspects of Marxian Economics (£5.50)

How the Gods Were Made by John Keracher

Marxism and Darwinism by Anton Pannekoek

Art, Labour and Socialism by William Morris

How We Live and How We Might Live by William Morris

The Right to be Lazy by Paul Lafargue

Socialist Principles Explained (£2.50)

The State and the Socialist Revolution by Julius Martov

An Inconvenient Question

Sylvia Pankhurst on Socialism (£3.00)

Why Socialists Oppose Zionism & Anti-Semitism (£3.50)

Rosa Luxemburg on Socialism

The Magic Money Myth

BOOKS

Strange Meeting: Socialism & World War One: £4.50

Are We Prisoners of Our Genes? £5.50

Socialism or Your Money Back: £4.00

Centenary of the Russian Revolution: £8.00

All of the above books (25% discount) £16.00

DVD

Capitalism and Other Kid's Stuff: £5.75

Poles Apart? Capitalism or socialism as the planet heats up: £5.75

All prices include postage and packing. For six or more of any publication, reduce the price by one third.

Return this form along with your cheque or money order to:
The Socialist Party, Clapham High St., London SW4 7UN

NAME:

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE:

MATERIAL WORLD

The vote in Hong Kong



MOMENTOUS events are taking place around the world where many discontented workers – Chile, Iran, Lebanon and Iraq, to name a few – are now confronting the status quo governments and demanding change. One of those protest movements because of the importance it has to the world economy and global politics is what taking place in Hong Kong, where there has been a sustained campaign for more democracy, although such calls are now being supplanted with more radical demands. Some consider that the Chinese authorities are acting with restraint considering their past history in the brutal and bloody suppression of the 1989 Tiananmen Square democracy encampment or the totalitarian internment of the Uighurs. But Hong Kong's importance is a vital financial centre for the Chinese economy and the justified fear of causing a deeper recession deters any military intervention.

After weeks of street demonstrations, which at times escalated into violence against the police and symbols of the state authorities, routine district council elections in November offered an opportunity for people to express their views and attitudes. Unlike Hong Kong's Legislative Council which is composed of 70 members not all elected by the public, headed by Carrie Lam, who also is not elected by a popular vote but a form of electoral college, which appoints her 29-strong Executive Council to run Hong

Kong as a Special Administrative Region of the Republic of China, under the 'one country, two systems' constitution where it is in charge of Hong Kong's internal affairs.

The territory's district councils in the past have held little political power and mainly deal with neighbourhood issues such as bus routes, no parking laws and rubbish collection. Previously they were not organs of political power, but more like administrative parish councils, allocating budgets for local projects. This all changed when people sought to express their democratic will.

Pro-democracy candidates won close to 60 percent of the total vote, but achieved a landslide in terms of seats – 347 of the 452 (76 percent of the seats) – because of the first-past-the-post system, taking control of at least 17 of the city's 18 district councils. A record 71 percent of Hong Kong's 4.1 million registered voters cast their ballot, well exceeding the 47 percent turnout in the district council elections four years ago. Pro-Beijing candidates won 60 seats (13 percent seats with 40 percent vote), losing all but one of the 298 seats they won in the previous election of four years ago. Chinese state media blame the losses upon violence and intimidation by the pro-democracy activists rather than a genuine reflection of people dissatisfaction with the current political system they live under.

When the Industrial Workers of the World chose to drop its commitment to

the political electoral process in 1908, James Connolly, at that time a Socialist Labor Party of America speaker, remarked that it would not be possible to stop workers from exercising their vote. Connolly later explained: 'He fights, and he votes; he votes and he fights. He may not always, he does not always, vote right; nor yet does he always fight when and as he should...'

Although the Socialist Party has irreconcilable differences with Connolly on his nationalism, on this point we share a similar sentiment. The electoral victory of the pro-democracy candidates in Hong Kong is confirmation of his and our contention that, when a mass movement mobilises and where the opportunity to vote exists, the movement will use the ballot box. The sensible strategy for the social change to socialism can be expected to similar: mass organization and mobilisation outside parliament plus the vote. We say that elections can, and should be, transformed into a means of emancipation

Those pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong who are resorting to violence can't win against the armed might of the Chinese State and will be crushed. The only chance of winning they had was mass demonstrations backed by public opinion. If they abandon that strategy, the Hong Kong democracy movement is doomed. The overwhelming solidarity vote for them legitimises the will of the people who no longer can be dismissed as an unrepresentative minority of hooligans and rioters.

When the time comes the socialist majority can be expected to use the ballot box since it will be the obvious thing to do, and nobody will be able to prevent them or persuade them not to. At that time it will be the anti-electoralists who will be irrelevant. As socialists, we do not regard the vote in itself as sufficient to emancipate humanity. But we do recognise that it provides by far the best conditions for the development and success of the socialist movement. It can be used to legitimise the revolutionary act by signalling that a majority of ordinary people fully understand and want to effect that change.

ALJO

Turkeys Voting For Christmas



April 2013, and on bonfires in mining villages in South Yorkshire Margaret Thatcher was burnt in effigy to celebrate her death. 'The wicked witch was dead!' Around six and a half years later, in many of those villages, a significant number of the residents vote for her party, the party that actively pursued their economic destruction.

How do those who just four years ago were holding events to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the miner's strike, where bitterness against the scabs and the authorities is still evident, come to favour Conservative candidates in the general election?

It is not for socialists to bemoan the sorry state of the Labour Party, but there are aspects that are of concern. On the next day's local lunchtime news a resident of Maltby forcefully stated that Labour under Corbyn had become a far-left Marxist party and wouldn't get his vote until it represented the working man again.

For a Marxist watching this there was initial incredulity, followed by a grim realisation that if the moderate welfare reforms Labour had advocated could be portrayed as Marxist, then Marxists have a problem. All the more so when the word Marxist has become just shorthand for high-handed, intolerant, extremist politics. It does not make actual Marxist advocacy any easier.

What became apparent from a whole series of vox pops in the broadcast was that the underlying issue remains Brexit. 'Get Brexit done' is a slogan that has resonated in the consciousness of so many who live in economically blighted areas. There the Leave vote was highest and the Labour Party made itself vulnerable by promising to honour that vote, then seeming to renege on it.

A general trend emerging from the election is the advance of nationalism. Whatever else it may be, Brexit is fundamentally an expression of English nationalism. In some vague way it's felt that if only the country was free of interference by Europe in particular, perhaps foreigners in general, then the country would be better off.

It is because there is a lack of Marxism in the public political consciousness that the actual cause of economic blight, capitalism, is not widely recognised. The promise of freedom, of lucrative trade deals boosting local as well as the national

economy, has proved seductive.

What is not recognised in all this is that any such trade deals would be with foreign powers who would demand binding agreements similar to those of the EU. People could well be voting for the loss of the few benefits capitalism presently allows: whatever the denials, the US would want the NHS for example.

Corbyn has proved to be useful in that he has become *Worzel Gummidge*, the straw man the media can knock down again and again, constantly drip-feeding fallacious notions into the popular consciousness. Once the Soviet Union was the exemplar of nasty 'Marxism', now it's a benign social reformer who fills the role. Even better, from the media's point of view, is that he does occasionally claim to be a socialist.

The damnation of Corbyn was furthered by the frequent assertion, often by members of his own party as well as the media, that his opposition to Zionism was really anti-semitism. Whether that was directly an issue for many Brexit supporters in the Labour heartlands is open to question. However, it did feed into the extremist narrative. And again, that could serve a purpose in so branding socialism, by inference at least. Left wingers are just not to be trusted.

The left-right political contest was born in the assembly of the French Revolution that brought the emerging capitalist class to power. It continues in being the two poles of the present capitalist state, while actual socialism, as yet not realised anywhere, is not left wing as often portrayed, but transcends capitalism and its political arrangements.

Workers need to become aware of the actual causes of their difficulties as lying inevitably within capitalism. In the end whichever of the main Westminster parties, or even the fringe ones like the Green party or the Brexit Party, are voted into power, the election winner is capitalism.

The Marxist analysis remains the best way for workers to understand their predicament and how to resolve it in their own best interests. A society of the common ownership of the means of wealth production, democratically organised to produce goods to supply needs not profits is possible. It is certainly not extreme. How, though, to persuade the voter in Maltby. There's the rub.

DAVE ALTON

There are prominent politicians around the world who propagate a fallacious theory on immigration and, when extremists embrace such ideas, those politicians wash their hands of any culpability. The fear of immigrants is magnified by lies and language. Fear of migrants brings in votes for politicians. Politicians feed on the fear. Fear of migrants brings in viewers and readers for the media. Yet multiple studies have found that people who have direct contact with immigrants have much more positive views about their work ethic and supposed reliance on welfare, and are much more open to increased immigration.



Conspiracy theory

There is a conspiracy theory pervading the far right. It is centered on the idea of white genocide with the belief that 'Western, Christian' culture is under siege by immigration from non-white countries, resulting in a replacement of white people via demographics, i. e. foreign-born out-breeding the native-born. This is despite numerous studies dismissing such paranoia. The Great Replacement Theory claims that a white Christian European population is being systematically replaced by non-European, non-white, Muslim immigrants. Renaud Camus, credited as the originator of this pernicious theory, cites Enoch Powell's 1968 'rivers of blood' speech as an influence on his thinking.

Hungary recently hosted an international summit on demography attended by delegations from dozens of countries. The fear of rising populations in other parts of the world was the dominant theme during the summit. Boosting native birthrates was a priority for the long-term development of their countries. Procreate or face extinction was the message concerning their shrinking population.

Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, said it was conceivable that his country, due to low birthrates and emigration of Hungarians to EU states further west, could simply disappear, explaining to the conference: 'If Europe is not going to be populated by Europeans in the future and we take this as given, then we are speaking about an exchange of populations, to replace the population of Europeans with others. There are political forces in Europe who want a replacement of population for ideological or other reasons'.

His minister for family, youth and international affairs, Katalin Novák, said 'Europe has become the continent of the empty crib whereas in Asia and Africa they face demographic challenges of the opposite type.' The Hungarian government doubled family spending between 2010 and 2019, with the goal of achieving 'a lasting turn in demographic processes by 2030'. Fertility rates have gone up from 1.2 to 1.5 children per woman, according to government figures. This is still far from the 2.1 figure the UN says is the number required for a sustainable population. This year the Hungarian government introduced a 10m forint (£27,000) interest-free loan for families, which does not have to be paid back if the couple has three children.

Former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott saluted the Hungarian leader for having 'the political courage to defy political correctness'. Abbott said dying populations, not climate change, were the biggest threat to western civilization.

Shooters

The manifesto of the Australia-born Christchurch shooter

in New Zealand was entitled 'The Great Replacement' and began with: 'It's the birthrates. It's the birthrates. It's the birthrates.'

The El Paso shooter said in his text, 'This attack is a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas. They are the instigators, not me. I am simply defending my country from cultural and ethnic replacement brought on by an invasion'.

In the Pittsburgh synagogue massacre, the shooter's social media posts revealed he was punishing Jews for, as he saw it, inducing the death of whiteness by orchestrating immigration.

Six weeks later another shooter murdered a woman and wounded several more at a synagogue in Poway, California, leaving a manifesto that blamed Jews for 'funding politicians and organisations who use mass immigration to displace the European race'.

Fear of the 'great replacement' was echoed in the chants of 'You will not replace us,' and 'Jews will not replace us!' in the white supremacist march in Charlottesville.

In the USA, Fox News airs reports about Hispanic immigration at the Mexican border in terms of 'invasion' or as Fox TV host Laura Ingraham put it, 'replacing the current American population, or swamping the current American population, with a new population of people.' In the UK, that media demagogue Katie Hopkins expresses much the same sentiments. 'Do you think that happened by chance or by design to keep the London mayor in Muslim hands. Our capital city, *our* capital city, *your* capital city is run by a Muslim mayor who has a Muslim police association, a Muslim housing association'.

This view is also reflected by *Spectator* associate editor, Douglas Murray, who claims that 'Europe is committing suicide' by allowing Muslim immigration. He warns of 'white Britons' becoming a minority in 'their own capital city' and claims London has become a 'foreign country' because of so many black, Asian and mixed-race Brits – no matter if they're born there – living there, arguing: 'London is now less than 50 per cent white British. It is not healthy for the native population to be a minority in their own capital'.

Racism and nationalism exists because capitalism produces endemic problems in employment, housing, and welfare. The working class suffer the misery of these problems but they do not understand their cause. They are, therefore, ready to be persuaded to blame the problems onto scapegoats, whether immigrants or any other minority that can be readily identifiable. Racism and nationalism are issues which working people must deal with as an obstacle to their progress to a sane social system.

Socialists sympathise with the suffering of our fellow-workers of whichever ethnicity and we ask them all to set aside their nationalism, their religious bigotry, their ethnic hatred and racism and to join together to put an end to the real problem – capitalism. The Socialist Party appeals to our fellow workers to unite, irrespective of nationality or colour, to defeat racism and nationalism. We are opposed to all restrictions on the free expression of ideas and do not support suppression of opinion, no matter how false or distasteful we believe that opinion to be. In our view, the way to counter irrational racist conspiracy theories is in the open unfettered discussion.

ALJO



Anti-Fascism & Fascism



What is fascism? Or, more pertinently, what was fascism, since the ideology and movement of that name developed in the specific historical conditions of the period between the last century's two world wars.

The word itself originated in Italy as the name given itself by an ultra-nationalist group opposed both to parliamentary democracy and to left-wing parties and which employed direct physical force on the streets as a deliberate tactic against its opponents. But it was not through street fighting that the *fascisti* came to power. They did so constitutionally when in 1922 the King, with the support of a section of the ruling class and its political representatives, appointed Mussolini Prime Minister. Once in control of political power the *fascisti* were able to consolidate their rule with Mussolini as dictator by dissolving parliament and banning other parties.

In Germany the similar ultra-nationalist, anti-democratic movement called itself the 'National Socialist German Workers Party', or Nazis, but were also conventionally called fascists at the time. They were able to gain considerable popular and electoral support (over one-third of voters) as a result of the failure of the democratic and reformist parties to solve the problems caused by capitalism, in particular the mass unemployment in the slump that followed the Wall Street Crash of 1929. They too came to power constitutionally when the German President, with the approval of other politicians, appointed Hitler as Chancellor in 1933. From this position of control of state power, the Nazis were able to ban all other parties and the trade unions and install Hitler as dictator.

One thing that Italy and Germany had in common was that they were relatively recent unified states, in 1870 and 1871 respectively. As a result, feelings of national unity were not as strong as in longer-established states such as Britain and France. The more virulent nationalism there reflected the ruling class's need for a stronger central state that could overcome the remaining regionalist loyalties.

In the case of Germany, its attempt in 1914 to get a place in the sun commensurate with its industrial and trading strength, inevitably at the expense of Britain and France which had carved out substantial colonial empires for themselves, had failed. But the problem remained for their capitalist class and any second attempt was going to be more aggressive because more desperate.

Fascism, then, in its proper sense was an inter-world-war historical phenomenon which is not going to repeat

itself because the conditions of that time are not going to. In this sense classical fascism is not a threat. So why 'anti-fascism' today?

Anti-fascism

Anti-fascism was the ideology under which Britain and France, aided later by the US, fought the Second World War to see off Germany's second attempt to find a place in the sun at their expense (they succeeded but only to see the US take their place as the dominating world power). Somewhat ironically, it was also the ideology under which their ally, Russia, fought its war over which power – Germany or Russia – should dominate eastern Europe; ironically because, apart from the institutionalised anti-semitism, the Russian dictatorship was the mirror-image of the German one (leader-worship, mass rallies, concentration camps, etc).

As a result there have been two kinds of anti-fascism, one in defence of political democracy, the other in defence of the Russian dictatorship. The situation has been confused by the fact that the latter hypocritically employed the language of the former. So some anti-fascists have not really been 'anti-fascist' if this is defined as opposition to one-party dictatorships. But who isn't opposed to these?

Who today wants to replace political democracy by a one-party or a one-man dictatorship? Not even most far-right parties do. There are still some classical fascist groups around but their support is negligible. All political parties with any degree of electoral support now favour governments being chosen through parliamentary and/or presidential elections.

It is an historical anachronism to describe today's far-right parties which do have considerable support as fascist. Their ideas are still objectionable and dangerous, but they need to be opposed on some other basis than being fascist. On what basis, then, and how should they be opposed?

Anti far-right

Far-right parties have grown in recent decades as a result of two things – their opposition to immigration into their countries and the failure of conservative, liberal and social-democratic parties to solve the problems people face.

As these problems are caused by the capitalist economic system's imperative to put profit-making ahead of meeting people's needs, governments formed by the conventional parties are doomed to fail and always do. The far-right parties

have been able to exploit this to convince considerable numbers of people that the reason the other parties fail is because they are incompetent, self-seeking and corrupt, in much the same way as the classical fascists in the inter-world-war period were able to convince people that their problems were caused by democracy not capitalism.

The main reason, however, why these parties have attracted support is their opposition to immigration. They are xenophobic, racist, nationalist parties. That's the basis on which they should be challenged. But how?

No platform no way

Basically, what's involved is a battle of ideas. Such battles can only be fought through discussion – and with leaflets, pamphlets, books, meetings and, nowadays, websites, podcasts and social media. That's the only way to change ideas, not by physically fighting with those who hold them nor by taking action, legal or extra-legal, to stop people expressing or promoting them.

That is why 'no platforming' far-right organisations is not the way, and is even counter-productive. Stopping them holding meetings, breaking them up, and refusing to let others debate with them, are not going to change their ideas. In fact they are more likely to reinforce them. Physically confronting far-rightists, turning their demonstrations into street brawls or beating up their members is even less effective and, besides, reduces politics generally to the more primitive level of settling disagreements by fisticuffs rather than voting.

Of course, in so far as there are fringe gangs and deranged individuals who physically attack immigrants, as happens from time to time, nobody is going to object to self-defence groups, but this is a different issue to combating the broader ideology of far-right parties which don't engage in such attacks.

So, no, the way to combat xenophobia and racism is not direct action to stop these views being expressed but to challenge and confront them as mistaken and dangerous, even in public debate with groups that advocate them. In fact refuting their mistaken and dangerous views in a public debate can be very effective.

Anti-capitalism and anti-nationalism

What should be the content of the case against far-right ideas? This has to be more than just the general case that all humans are members of the same species with the same range of abilities and should be treated equally. This has to be an essential part of course but it is not enough on its own. Opposing these ideas cannot avoid bringing up the cause of the problems ordinary people face and which the far-right wrongly identifies and to which they offer a mistaken solution. Capitalism has to be mentioned and it has to be explained that the way-out is to establish a world of common ownership, democratic control, production to directly meet people's needs and not for profit, and distribution of goods and services in accordance of the principle 'from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs'. In short, socialism properly understood.

The trouble is that most 'anti-fascists', even those calling themselves socialists (some are supporters of third-world

dictatorships), are not anti-capitalism. They think that the problems ordinary people face *can* be solved within the profits-wages-money system that is capitalism. This is a serious weakness when it comes to making a case against the far-right since it rules out making the point that one reason for its rise in recent years is precisely the failure – impossibility in fact – of the conventional parties to solve these problems because they seek solutions within the framework of capitalism, so contributing to a situation which the far-right can benefit from. It goes without saying that of course the far-right can't solve them either.

The other weakness is that most 'anti-fascists' are nationalists, that is, they accept that the world is, and should be, divided into separate national groups entitled to inhabit a part of the globe and whose members share a common interest. Nations are in fact 'imagined communities' whose members are divided into two antagonistic classes – the capitalists who own the means of production and who are the ruling class and the rest who work for them for wages. Nationalism is the ideology through which a national ruling class obtains and maintains the support and acquiescence of those they rule over. The 'national interest' is their interest.

This is a misconception that 'anti-fascists' share with the far-right. It means that nationalist 'anti-fascists' are combating the ideas of the far-right on the far right's territory, as when it comes to arguing whether or not immigration is in the 'national interest'. Since the national interest is that of the capitalist class within each supposed nation in some cases the far-right is able to show that immigration controls and discrimination against 'foreigners' are in the national capitalist interest,

Conclusion

Any campaign against the far-right views has to be waged on the level of ideas, not physical attacks or legal or extra-legal bans. It has to be based on recognising that capitalism is the cause of the problems such parties exploit to gain support and so a cause of their existence, and on a rejection of all nationalism of which xenophobia is just one end of the same spectrum. In short, the struggle against racist and xenophobic views should not be separated from the struggle for socialism as a world community without frontiers.

ADAM BUICK





Las Vegas is Spanish for *The Meadows*. A settlement was established there in 1905. Before that it was just an oasis in the Mojave Desert.

Nothing strange about an oasis in the desert. A well with water for the weary traveller and his camels. Trees to shade them from the hot sun while they rest. I see it in my mind's eye.

'Hold on there, mate *Camels?*'

Joe Zentner tells us that 'Bactrian camels were imported from Manchuria to San Francisco in 1860 and put to work as pack animals in Nevada' ('The Desert Camel Experiment: Camels in America's Southwest' at <https://www.desertusa.com/animals/desert-camel-experiment.html>).

True, the experiment was not a great success. Camels are suited to soft sandy terrain. Much of the Mojave consists of 'desert pavement' with sharp-edged rocks that cut the poor creatures' feet. Camels are not long-suffering beasts of burden. When in pain they kick you and spit at you. The camel drivers didn't like that.

Anyway, those days are long gone. By 2018 the Las Vegas Metropolitan Area was home to 2,227,000 people. It also had over 42 million visitors. In the middle of the desert.

Local aquifers provide a mere tenth of the metropolitan area's drinking water. The rest is taken from Lake Mead, which even though fed by the Colorado River is shrinking fast. The city government wants to build a pipeline to pump in water from three valleys in Utah. Opponents of the scheme say that the pipeline would turn the valleys into dustbowls.

As for the sun, it is hotter than ever. Las Vegas has a few trees, but the cooling effect of their shade is outweighed by the 'heat island' effect of its concrete and asphalt. Daytime temperatures remain above 100°Fahrenheit (38C) throughout the summer. On some days the thermometer goes over 110° (43C), the official record being 117° (47C) reached on June 20, 2017.

All temperatures higher than that of human blood (98.4°F/36.8C) endanger human life and health. Most people are able to live in Las Vegas only thanks to air conditioning, which gives further impetus to global warming.

But what about building workers and others who have to work outdoors? Starting shifts at the crack of dawn and ending by noon provides only partial protection. How do the homeless cope? Residents of homeless shelters, pushed out into the heat for most of the day? Where do they get the large amount of fluid they need to drink every hour so that they can perspire, cool their bodies, and survive? The hotels and restaurants don't want them hanging around.

The fastest-warming city

And it gets hotter every year. Las Vegas is the fastest-warming city in the United States. Its average temperature has risen by

5.8°F since 1970. The corresponding figure for the country as a whole is 2.5°F.

What are the sources of the livelihood of these 2.2 million people in the middle of the desert? How do they pay for all the goods that have to be shipped in for their consumption?

Agriculture? In the middle of the desert? What would they farm? Cacti?

Fishing? Forestry? In the middle of the desert?

Mining? Are there valuable minerals in the desert?

Gold and silver used to be mined in the area, but that came to an end long ago. The Techatticup mine in Eldorado Canyon closed in 1942.

Manufacturing? Do they make anything?

No.

Curiouser and curiouser, as Alice said on her journey through Wonderland.

Their livelihood comes from gambling, tourism, and entertainment. That explains why they get so many visitors.

But the tourists come mainly for the gambling. Without the gambling there would be few tourists to pack into hotels, restaurants, museums, bars, and brothels or entertain with shows and concerts.

The pivot of Las Vegas' economy is gambling. The city has over 100 of the largest casinos in the United States.

What is gambling? Without delving into technical details, we can say that gambling is a set of deceptive games of chance used to transfer money from a large number of 'losers' to a much smaller number of 'winners' – the main winner by far always being the owner of the gambling establishment. In 2013, according to a study conducted at the University of Las Vegas, the 23 largest casinos (the study ignored the others) pocketed over \$5 billion of their visitors' money.

Sinister ways

Why do people gamble so much?

Julian Crowley has detailed 'ten sinister ways casinos keep you gambling' (at <http://www.businesspundit.com/10-most-sinister-ways-casinos-keep-you-gambling/>). They include:

additional oxygen pumped in to keep you awake;
'psychedelic' carpets with garish patterns and clashing colors, also to stop you dozing off;

'mild, looping' background music for its hypnotic effect;
food and drink served to you (often without charge) right at the gambling table;

no clocks to remind you of the passage of time;
no windows to remind you of the world outside;
slot machines that convey subliminal messages.

Last but not least, it is deliberately made difficult and time-consuming to exchange your remaining chips for cash and find the way out of the maze-like floor layout.

But the main reason why people gamble is that the casinos



encourage them to focus on the tiny chance of winning rather than on the much higher probability of losing. They are misled by frequent 'near wins' and paltry wins. Flashing lights 'give you the impression that winning is constant and all around you.' When someone is allowed to have a big win a huge fuss is made and there is lots of publicity, but security staff intervene if anyone tries to film people who are losing.

It is true that gamblers *may* enjoy the experience of gambling even when they are losing, even though there is photographic evidence of individuals in front of slot machines or at the gaming table who are clearly in great distress. It's also doubtful whether pleasure taken in the process of gambling, where it exists, often outweighs the distress felt later, when the gambler realises just how much money he or she has lost – money that could and should have been spent on other things. Gamblers risk loss of their homes, breakup of their families, bankruptcy, even suicide.

A social 'bad'

Gambling then makes no net contribution to human welfare. On balance, it is a social 'bad' rather than a social 'good.' As gambling is the *raison d'être* of Las Vegas – the only reason why this big city exists in the middle of the desert – it would be better for human well-being if Las Vegas were to become

once more what it was before 1905 – an unsettled green oasis.

In a socialist society the city of Las Vegas will in all likelihood be abandoned. Because it is in a place where it makes no sense for people to live. The local flora and fauna are adapted to the desert environment. People are not. In past ages no one would have dreamt of living here. It was a place to take refreshment, rest a while, and travel on.

The city of Las Vegas will be abandoned in a socialist society also because in such a society gambling will not exist. Gambling will not exist because people will feel no urge to gamble, for they will have free access to whatever they need. Money itself will not exist.

That does not, of course, mean that no one ever does anything worthwhile in Las Vegas. There is surely fantastic music being made there. Great tacos too. The music and the tacos will continue to be made in a socialist society. But not in the middle of the desert.

STEFAN



Disability Matters

Much has been made in the media in recent years about the growing costs associated with meeting the needs of elderly and disabled people under the current social system known as capitalism.

Politicians are never shy when it comes to declaring that 'we need to do something about the growing problem of an ageing and disabled population'

Disabled people, up until around the mid 1990s and the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) tended to be the poor relation of various other minority groups when it came to legal protection and making it unlawful to discriminate against someone on the grounds of their perceived 'identity'.

Up until the 1970s it was all too common for children born with disabilities to be either 'given-up' by their parents voluntarily, or worse still, have them forcibly removed by the authorities and placed into asylums for the 'insane' and given the title 'mental defectives'.

Lennox Castle 'Hospital' in North Lanarkshire, Scotland, was one such place where many of those went on to spend a lifetime 'employed' in the workhouse doing menial jobs, or alternatively spending their days doing nothing.

Lennox Castle was typical of large institutions built by local authorities in the 1930s and was the largest in the UK. Built to accommodate around 1300 people, it frequently exceeded those numbers by many more hundreds. Lennox Castle has become well known as an example of a particular type of provision characterised by its isolation and by a certain notoriety among members of the public and nursing professionals.

Lennox Castle represented a 'large investment' by the Corporation of Glasgow at the time, which bought the land and built the hospital. However 60 years after it opened, it was closed down.

It has been documented that some of the patients (perhaps more accurately described as inmates) went on to form relationships from which babies were produced, only for these to spend the rest of their lives within the walls of Lennox Castle too. Thankfully the social stigma and misunderstandings that surrounded people with disabilities at that moment in time is now pretty much a thing of that distant past.

Legislation

Prior to the DDA (1995), there was in place legislation that outlawed – for example – employers discriminating against someone on the grounds of their sex (Sex Discrimination Act 1975) and also the Race Relations Act of 1976, which made it unlawful to discriminate against someone on grounds of the colour of their skin, nationality or ethnic origin. Of course, that's not to say it stopped it from happening altogether.

In more recent times, any kind of discrimination against these minority groups have been outlawed together under the umbrella of The Equality Act (2010) and to facilitate same sex marriage, The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013.

All well and good you might think.

But are we really any closer to achieving anything like true equality under this grossly and inherently unequal social system known as capitalism?

As someone who is Registered Blind and depends on a Guide Dog to help me get around, this subject is of particular interest to me.

Medical Model v Social Model of Disability

Many people – mainly those who might find themselves in otherwise 'good health' – might be inclined to err towards the medical model of disability thesis. In broad terms this effectively says that people are disabled because of their impairments (legally defined as the limitation of a person's physical, mental or sensory function on a long-term basis) or differences.

Under the medical model, these impairments or differences should be somehow changed by medical interventions and other treatments, even when the impairment or difference does not cause pain or illness. The medical model looks at what is 'wrong' with the person and not what the person needs. It creates low expectations and leads to people losing independence, choice and control in their own lives.

The social model of disability, on the other hand, says that disability is caused by the way society is organised. In particular the built environment, rather than by a person's impairment or 'difference'. It looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people. When barriers are removed, disabled people can be independent and relatively equal in society, with some choice and control over their own lives.

Disabled people developed the social model of disability because the traditional medical model did not explain their personal experience of disability or help to develop more inclusive ways of living. Some examples might include a wheelchair user wants to get into a building with a step at the entrance. Within a social model solution, a ramp would be added to the entrance so that



the wheelchair user is free to go into the building immediately. Under the medical model, there are very few solutions to help wheelchair users to climb stairs, which all too often excludes them from many essential and leisure activities.

A teenager with a learning difficulty wants to work towards living independently in their own home but needs help with cooking, cleaning and quite probably money matters. Within the social model, the person would be supported by a carer (formal or informal) so that they are enabled to pay bills and live in their own home in the community. Under the medical model, the young person would be expected to live in a hospital or institution – most probably because it would have been the cheapest option.

A child with a visual impairment wants to read the latest best-selling book to chat about with their sighted friends. Under the medical model there are very few solutions, but a social model solution ensures full text audio-recordings are available when the book is first published. This means children with visual impairments can join in with such activities on an equal basis with everyone else.

Conflicting legislation

Of course, barriers are not just physical. Attitudes found in present day society, based on prejudice or stereotype, also disable people from having equal opportunities to be part of society.

I personally and frequently encounter access refusals when accompanied by my guide dog to private hire taxis, as well as in both Indian and Chinese restaurants, where culturally dogs are deemed to be 'unclean' and their saliva 'toxic', particularly within the Muslim faith. It is believed that should a

Muslim person come into contact with dog saliva, it will 'void them of their state of purity.'

This can be a particularly challenging situation when two competing pieces of legislation collide and compromise is hard to reach.

There was a difficult case that ended up in the courts several years ago, whereby a young Muslim man lost his sight and had to depend on a guide dog to help him get around. Not only did it take much persuasion for his parents to agree and allow their son to have the guide dog in the first instance; that it seemed was only the beginning of his problems. Unfortunately, the Imam of his local mosque refused him access on religious grounds. There was a stand-off and eventually the case had to be heard and decided by a judge, who eventually ruled that Disability Laws should trump Religious Beliefs and Laws, and so it was found that the boy had been discriminated against and must be allowed entry to the mosque along with his guide dog, as well as receiving substantial compensation.

Employment problems

It would be wrong to suggest that the rights and quality of life of the disabled have not improved considerably compared to the dark days of an institutional existence, with some now living relatively independent lives in supported accommodation.

But is there scope for all of our lives to be improved further? As a socialist and proud member of the disabled working class, the plain and simple answer is yes.

It is common knowledge that there exists a high proportion of disabled people both in the UK and elsewhere in the world who are denied fulfilling work opportunities because they are deemed to be a high liability by potential employers and likely to cost more in terms of days off and lost production and consequently lost profits, should their situation worsen.

For those who develop conditions while in employment, days off for treatment are frowned upon, and any production time lost invariably has to be 'made-up' by the employee in their 'own time'. There are very few employers out there who take a sympathetic view of a worker's health condition if it has a detrimental impact upon their profit margins. And more often than not, a ruthless capitalist will think nothing of ditching an unproductive worker.

Within a socialist society, on the other hand, where people will be the priority as there is no pursuit of profits, there will be no need to fear losing one's job and subsequent income, because wage earning and the selling of one's labour in order to survive will be destined to the annals of history, along with the irrational and insane relationship between the buying and selling of goods and services to one another.

Instead, we the working class will take control over our own destiny, with each and every one of us living a full and dignified life in accordance with our own unselfish needs, contributing to the welfare and common good of the whole of our communities in accordance with our own unique and individual abilities and skills.

Those who are fit, able and desire to work, will avail themselves of the tools necessary and free in order to enable them to do so. Those who cannot, can be assured of a decent quality of life without the insecurity of having to depend on government handouts that barely cover what is needed in order to sustain basic human needs and life itself.

PAUL EDWARDS



Zeroes of Capitalism

Many people point out the astonishing extent of inequality under capitalism. For instance, the twenty-six richest billionaires own as many assets as the 3.8 billion people who make up the poorest half of the planet's population. Supporters of the present system sometimes defend this by saying that capitalism is not a zero-sum game. By this is meant that it is not just a matter of a pie of a fixed size, so that if a small number of people get large slices, the majority each have to do with smaller helpings. Rather, they say, capitalism is a non-zero-sum game, where the size of the pie is not fixed and can be expanded. Thus a small minority become richer and richer, but each member of the majority can get a larger share too. So, in theory, everyone benefits, even if some benefit more than others. As another clichéd metaphor has it, a rising tide lifts all boats, both big and small.

One pro-capitalist writer put it as follows: 'wealth creation is not a zero-sum game. Those producing and trading goods and services for profit are not taking anything away from others – the producers and traders are creating material values that would not exist without their productivity' (capitalismmagazine.com, 27 November 2017). Except that by 'producers and traders' here was meant the capitalist class, so this is a completely twisted view of who produces the wealth. Further, the capitalists are indeed 'taking things away from others': the workers they employ and exploit.

It is certainly true that, in general terms, the amount of goods and services produced under capitalism does increase. But the profit motive means that capitalism actually restricts output and, if we want to talk in these terms, limits the size of the pie. Unprofitable goods and services are not produced, and much effort is put into useless or actually harmful industries: banking, armed forces and so on. It would be straightforward to provide enough food to feed the global population, but this



does not happen, as so many do not form a useful (from the viewpoint of profit) market.

And it is simply not the case that things continually get better over time: for instance, the number of children and pensioners in absolute poverty in the UK increased in 2017–18, including an extra 200,000 children. Last year, a report from the New Economics Foundation showed that, in terms of real living standards, people were worse off on average than they were in 2008. Life expectancies of children have been reduced by three years or so. Globally, the number of people with not enough to eat has risen for three years in a row. Meanwhile, the share of income going to the world's top one percent has nearly tripled in the last four decades: so their boats (superyachts, presumably) have risen much further in a tide which has benefited most people far, far less.

So talk of expanding pies and non-zero-sum games does not in any way justify a system that means unimaginable riches for a few in contrast with varying degrees of poverty, destitution and insecurity for so many, and that prevents a true effective abundance being produced.

PB

COOKING THE BOOKS

The LibDem vision for capitalism

During the election the Lib Dems tried to position themselves as 'the party of business', to replace the Tories as the main party of the dominant section of the British capitalist class. This would be a return to their heyday in the nineteenth century when this is what they were.

Their delusional leader (she thought she would be the next prime minister), Jo Swinson, told the annual conference of the bosses' union, the CBI, in November that the Lib Dems were the 'natural party of business' (*Liberal Democratic Voice*, 18 November) because they supported business's continued frictionless access to the EU single market. A few days earlier, the party's deputy leader, Sir Ed Davey, had said that 'a Lib Dem administration would be a "government of business"' (www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2019-50428044).

The Party's former leader, Sir Vince Cable, had already, while still leader, nailed the Lib Dems' yellow colours to the capitalist mast:

'Capitalism is being questioned in Britain more intensely than for decades.

Some want to destroy it. Others believe that it is the only economic system which works, but want to reform it. I am in the latter camp' (*City AM*, 14 May).

Davey, who was introducing the party's policy on climate change, said that the Lib Dems' policy on this was to 'decarbonise capitalism'; in other words, to keep capitalism and to try to solve the climate crisis within it and its investment in production for profit.

This was an idea he had announced earlier in the year in an article in *Liberal Democrat Voice* (28 May). It was a plan to persuade City of London speculators that investment in green measures could and would be profitable:

'Yet the great news is clean, high returning investments exist. (...) [B]y decarbonising capitalism, we won't be just solving the climate emergency, we will be helping pensioners switch out of increasingly risky carbon assets into much safer climate-friendly investments. Regrettably, the political leadership for this historic reform of capitalism is absent. Boggled down in climate unfriendly Brexit, the Conservatives are just making things worse. And Corbyn's Labour just wants to

destroy capitalism. (...) With a Coalition of the Willing in Parliament and the City – people who get the urgency, the risks of inaction and the sheer scale of the challenge – we could supercharge the switch into green capitalism and wind down the fossil fuel threat.'

In passing, he's being a bit unfair here in accusing Labour of wanting to destroy capitalism. They too, just want to reform it, only in a different way.

Davey went on to describe the Lib Dems' vision of a 'brighter future':

'There will of course be a maze of overly complex regulations to cut through – but it must not detract from this vision to rebuild the City as a global centre for sustainable capitalism, where the needs of the planet and people have to come first.'

Not just a 'green capitalism' but a green City of London! It makes you wonder what planet he's living on. But then, all reformists suffer from the delusion that capitalism can be reformed to have some other priority than profit, though not all of them think that the stock exchange could be.

PROPER GANDER

'All I Can Think About Is The Housing'

A RECENT edition of *Dispatches* (Channel 4) highlighted the difficulties faced by women facing homelessness while being pregnant. *Born Homeless* followed three expectant mothers living in London, and was narrated by one of these, Sam. She is about to be evicted from her room in a shared house because the property isn't set up for households with children. She approached Lambeth council for assistance months before, but didn't get much help, presumably because it has been swamped with homeless applications and there aren't enough affordable properties for people to move to. The day before her eviction is due, Sam returns to the council but can't see her case officer and so has to wait three hours to be seen by duty staff. A blunt, unhelpful housing officer arranges a placement in temporary accommodation, which turns out to be a dull, unhygienic room in a house shared with seven others.

Councils have a legal duty under the Housing Act 1996 to place homeless pregnant women or families with children in temporary accommodation. Sam is luckier than many others. Her placement is in the same area as she lived in before, whereas she could have been placed miles away from her support network or in a hotel room without cooking or laundry facilities. On moving day, Sam says 'what makes me emotional with it all is...if it's gonna affect the baby... You just don't want anything to interfere with the development... I do not want to put the baby in there, I myself don't even wanna go in there'. Her concerns aren't just with the poor physical condition of the accommodation, but also the strain of her situation. As Clare Livingstone, Professional Policy Advisor at The Royal College of Midwives says, 'we know that homelessness leads to stress and ill health in pregnancy and that there are potentially adverse effects for the babies of these vulnerable mothers' (tinyurl.com/qrrrgut).

Sam complains to the council about the shared house and gets moved to a more suitable self-contained (but still temporary) flat, acknowledging that having a camera crew with her probably helped make this happen. Guidelines say that homeless households containing children or pregnant women should only

be in a shared house or hotel for up to six weeks before being transferred to self-contained temporary accommodation. Sam says that when she was training to be a social worker, she was supposed to put the welfare of children first, but finds out first-hand that the practicalities of what the system can provide go against this.

The programme also follows Temi, who has been living in hostels and 'sofa surfing' with friends or relatives in London for three years. She says 'to be honest I haven't really felt the full joy that I'm actually gonna be a mum again, you know. I'm excited and all that but I'm just worried with the space... I'm supposed to



be resting and it's just all I can think about is the housing'. Temi and her two children are staying in sub-standard temporary accommodation with water dripping from the ceiling. She goes to Hackney council to ask about another placement, and is told that they won't be moved until after her baby is born. When she gives birth she refuses to leave the hospital to go back to the temporary accommodation which will now be even more overcrowded. The council places her somewhere larger, and again, would this have happened without her being with a camera crew?

There are no figures on how many women are pregnant and homeless. An indication of the extent of the problem comes from a survey of 300 midwives across the country carried out by the programme makers and the Royal College of Midwives. Virtually all the survey respondents said that they had seen a pregnant woman who was homeless or at risk of homelessness in the previous six months. Even more worrying, 81 percent had seen at least one pregnant woman who was sleeping rough. (ibid)

There are figures for the number of homeless households which include children. According to the Office of National Statistics, the number of families with children in temporary accommodation in England has rocketed from 37,190 in 2012 to 61,610 in 2018, with a reduction in numbers in Wales (1,250 to 798) and Scotland (3,487 to 3,349). Families with children comprise around 70 percent of the total number of households in temporary accommodation, 93,705 in 2018 (tinyurl.com/whg7rvk). But these figures only represent a fraction of those with housing difficulties, as they don't include single people in hostels or sleeping rough, nor those 'sofa surfing' or threatened with homelessness after receiving an eviction notice.

The third family appearing in the documentary is Kady and her two children, who are living in a cramped one bedroom flat provided as temporary accommodation. They have been there for 18 months, competing with 10,000 others on the council's waiting list for rehousing. Larger families requiring a three or four bedroom property are likely to be waiting particularly long to get social housing, probably years. There is less of a shortage

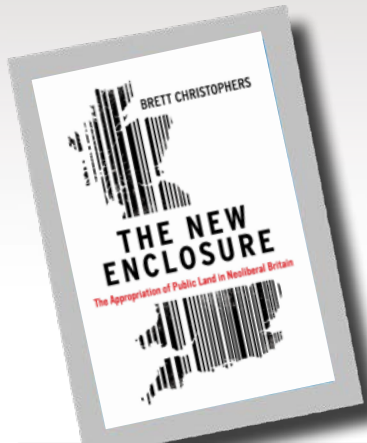
of bigger houses in the private sector, but many of these are owned by landlords who have realised they can make more money by renting rooms individually to students or through councils as temporary accommodation. Most remaining private sector properties are likely to be too expensive or refused to households reliant on benefits.

The families featured in *Born Homeless* need somewhere secure and comfortable to live even more than other people do, but whether they get this depends on what they can afford. On a low income and with a shortage of cheaper houses, they will face a long struggle to get out of temporary accommodation into somewhere better. The root of the problem is how housing is a commodity, and it can't be anything else under capitalism. The value of a property, whether in the private or social housing sector, is measured in pounds rather than by how well it satisfies people's needs.

MIKE FOSTER

REVIEWS

This Land Is Their Land



Brett Christophers: *The New Enclosure: the Appropriation of Public Land In Neoliberal Britain.*
Verso £11.99.

The original enclosures took place in England from around the sixteenth century and led to much agricultural land coming under the exclusive control of large landowners. Here Brett Christophers examines a process in some ways comparable, which has essentially happened since Thatcher came to power in 1979: public land (a terminology we will return to below) has been sold to private companies. This has resulted in remarkably little protest or press coverage, perhaps in part because it has been carried out piecemeal, unlike big privatisations such as British Gas or the railways.

It is difficult to be absolutely certain, given the poor quality of record-keeping, but perhaps as much as £400bn worth of land has been privatised. Most of this (roughly a million hectares) has been land owned by local government, such as council estates and school playing-fields. This constitutes around 60 percent of land owned by local authorities, about twice the proportion of central government land that has been sold; this latter includes land belonging to the NHS, the Forestry Commission and the Ministry of Defence.

The sell-offs provided funds for government coffers, of course, but privatisation was also justified on the basis that there was lots of supposedly surplus land in the hands of both local and central government. Selling this would make it available for private developers to build homes, offices and so on. But what counted as surplus was never properly defined, and the proportion of vacant land was probably even greater in the private sector. House-building corporations own plenty of developable land, but it is not always profitable for them to build on it. One

survey of a hundred sites that had been sold found that just two per cent of the homes planned to be built there had actually been completed. Instead, the companies go in for land-banking, hoarding land so as to keep house prices high.

Christophers provides a very thorough analysis of the history, motivations and consequences of land privatisation. He is aware that the concept of public land needs clarifying, and he defines it as 'land owned by public bodies'. It is not the same as common land, which implies right of public access and use, whoever owns it, and still forms about five per cent of the British land mass. But public land is emphatically not the people's land, any more than the National Coal Board or British Gas were owned by the people.

There are relatively few reformist proposals about land. The Labour Party manifesto for last year's election made no reference to land nationalisation, and only said it would review the possibility of a land value tax. Christophers ends by supporting the idea of community land trusts, involving community ownership on a non-profit basis, though these can still involve the private sector. Instead, the earth should be, as Gerrard Winstanley argued, 'a common treasury for all'.

PB

Business myths



The Mythology of Business.
David Whyte. IER in association with CLASS.

This short 40-page pamphlet, aimed at activist trade unionists, sets out to deal with some of the arguments put forward by pro-business lobbies and economists for allowing private enterprises as much freedom as possible to pursue their profit-making as they think fit. Arguments such

as the laughable 'trickle down' theory, that red tape hinders business activity, and that health and safety legislation has gone mad, are discussed and the facts presented.

The best part deals with the claim that 'businesses can be trusted to be responsible' where Whyte makes the point that the directors of a company have a legal obligation to the shareholders who own it. So 'even if Directors would rather be responsible, they are bound by law to pursue the success of the company and its members'. In any event, whatever the law says, 'the narrowly competitive and profit-oriented nature of business organisations means they can never prioritise broader social goals.'

Where the pamphlet falls down is in the conclusion that politicians do not have to 'put the interest of business first' but that they can choose to pursue policies 'to create a better, fairer and more sustainable society'. The fact is that, as long as production is in the hands of competing profit-seeking enterprises (state as well as private), politicians have to pursue a general pro-business policy.

This does not preclude governments introducing regulations that are in the longer term overall interest of the capitalist class as a whole and which do restrict the activity of individual businesses. This is still putting 'the interest of business first', but the interest of business in general, not necessarily that of particular businesses, in fact even against such interests. Politicians in charge if governments are in the same sort of position as Whyte points out that directors in charge of companies are: their 'obligations always translate[s] as the long-term profitability and/or economic viability of the company [or, in the case of politicians, of the capitalist economy]'.

For instance, even in the nineteenth-century laws were enacted limiting the hours of work that employers could impose on employees as overworking them risked the physical deterioration of the working class, so making it less efficient and productive of profit. Factory-owning capitalists opposed these laws (and used similar invalid and laughable arguments such as profits being made in the last hour of work) and so had to be forced by the state to act in the general capitalist interest.

Whyte's pamphlet shows that there are still business leaders and their apologists who put their particular immediate short-term interest before that of the capitalist class as a whole. But what else can be expected when production is in the hands of competing profit-seeking enterprises, each seeking to maximise their profits? Capitalism without the state to hold the ring just wouldn't work.

ALB

Liverpool Marxist Book Fair

On Saturday 23 November the first ever Marxist Book Fair was held in Liverpool, with various denizens of what the press likes to call the 'ultra-left' in attendance, by invite only. The venue was a largish back room in a fairly up-scale pub close to the University, and members of our Lancaster and Manchester branches turned up in the morning to crew a stall for the day. We were rather lucky to be given a large table in a good position in front of the band stage, which meant we were able to mount an SPGB banner on two speaker stands on the stage behind us. This formed an impressive backdrop to our display of literature, t-shirts, badges, and a laptop running the Party whiteboard video on permanent loop. Pretty groovy, we thought, except that the banner rather dominated the room while other stall displays were somewhat more modest, contrary to our expectations. What we also didn't realise was that when the scheduled talks began, people would be using the stage area, so every speaker had to deliver their talk in front of our SPGB banner. Oops, our bad. It looked uncomfortably like something the SWP would do. They are notorious for trying to hijack events, which may have been why they hadn't been invited.

There was a curiously eclectic mix of groups there, including the Merseyside Socialist Theory Study Group, Socialist Appeal, the CPGB, Liverpool's 'News from Nowhere' radical bookshop, the CWO, and ex-Militant (nowadays calling themselves Socialist Party of England and Wales – SPEW - with a kind of self-hating disregard for the power of acronyms). We had a nice long chat with the people on the IWW stall next to us. We couldn't really figure out the logic by which some groups were invited or not invited, but anyway it was a pleasant day and everyone was very civil and polite, which makes a nice change considering how left groups have been known to treat each other in the past.

The talks said much about the politics of the groups involved. Instead of giving a lecture we chose a bit of audience participation, and we were grilled on our parliamentary politics (left communists, like anarchists, tend to be very against using parliament as part of the revolutionary process, while the IWW – aka Wobblies – are syndicalists who are also sceptical). Quite why this is such a big issue for left groups is a bit of a mystery to us. Our Material World column this month (page 9), writing on Hong Kong, makes a very good point about whether or not people in revolutionary situations would use the ballot box – just you try and stop them!

Some of the other speakers talked in impassioned tones about the urgent need to 'get the Tories out'. We've been hearing this same rallying cry for decades and it's amazing that such groups have got the energy to keep banging that drum. Leaving aside the politics of favouring one capitalist party over another, there's something hugely dispiriting about such calls. It's bad enough when you can't get workers to consider the idea of taking the whole world into common ownership, without governments, frontiers, the rich, money, banks or bosses. But at least that's an ambitious goal. How much worse must it be when you can't get recruits for your group when the only thing you are asking them to agree with is 'get the Tories out'?

One or two other speakers talked about the need for socialist 'leadership', which made us feel slightly uncomfortable and reminded us we were in the presence of a lot of Leninists. The thing about people on the left who believe in this is that they're not necessarily in love with the idea of



having bosses and having to take orders, it's just that they can't imagine a group getting anywhere without leadership. The fact that we have no leaders and are also the second oldest political party in Britain may prove that it is possible to have a sustainable and long-lived leaderless group, but that's not the point as far as they're concerned. What is the point is that we haven't achieved our aim of world socialist revolution, so in their minds this proves that leaderless groups don't get anywhere. But in a classic case of confirmation bias, they tend to overlook the fact that they haven't got anywhere either! As we pointed out in our contribution to the gathering, we're all in the same back room of an obscure Liverpool boozer, not hosting rallies in football stadiums.

The only group which chose not to give a talk was SPEW. In fact they didn't look like they enjoyed being there at all. They didn't seem to talk to anyone at other stalls, pointedly carried on conversations between themselves when other people were giving talks, and then packed up abruptly and noisily in the middle of one of the talks. We wondered if they'd been getting bad hex vibes from the other stallholders. We tend to forget that, while we're not keen on Leninist ideas in general and we do have an enshrined commitment in our Declaration of Principles to be 'hostile to all other parties', in practice we're fairly easy-going and tolerant compared to Leninist groups themselves, who frequently hate each other with a vengeance.

There were a fair number of visitors, and quite a good crowd for the talks, considering that advertising for the event had probably been modest (there was no poster on the railings outside the pub, which seemed like an unfortunate oversight, or it may have been a pub prohibition). We sold a bit of stuff and made a few contacts. The general idea is to hold this Book Fair every November, and we'll be happy to go along again if asked. It'll be interesting to see how this plays out over the next few years, and whether groups who are historically so divided over their revolutionary approaches will remain enthusiastic about the idea of sharing an annual space, especially if the SWP get involved. Dislike of the SWP is probably the only thing all left groups have in common.

How to keep the event sustainable in the long term is a particularly relevant question given what's happened lately to the long-established London Anarchist Book Fair, which seems to have (perhaps temporarily) died a death. This event managed quite successfully for the most part and over many years to accommodate a variety of perspectives within the general anarchist movement. But then a catastrophic Trans-Terf confrontation in 2017 caused it to go into melt-down. The organisers, facing a barrage of unjust criticism and abuse (being called 'fascists', etc), understandably lost the will to organise a further event so there hasn't been one since, although some regional bookfairs have gone ahead. Let's hope the organisers of the Marxist event don't end up in a similar situation. As the saying goes, no good deed goes unpunished...
PJS

50 Years Ago

The Socialist Party and the Common Market

The Socialist Party of Great Britain is neither for nor against Britain's entry into Europe. We stand for world Socialism and regard the Common Market issue as irrelevant from a working class point of view.

Britain's joining the Common Market would amount to little more than a re-arrangement of tariff barriers. Which is a matter of no concern to workers, but of great concern to capitalists since it could affect their profits.

Most of Britain's biggest firms have long been convinced that joining the Common Market would allow them to make more profits. This is why the parties that most directly serve their interests, the Labour Party and the Tory Party are also in favour of entry. It is the task of these parties to work out policies that benefit capitalist industry in Britain and then to trick workers into backing these policies. Thus we are about to be subjected yet again to intense pro-Market propaganda in the

press and on the radio and television.

Some British capitalists, with investments mainly in farming and what used to be the British Empire, are opposed to entry as they reckon it would threaten their profits. Their direct political expression is through sections of the Tory Party but their anti-Market campaign is helped, no doubt inadvertently, by a section of the Labour Party, the National Front and the

so-called Communist Party.

It is because we know that the Common Market debate involves only the interests of these two sections of the British capitalist class and that, as we say in our declaration of principles, "the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class", that we refuse to take sides and warn workers not to be taken in by the political spokesmen of either section.

We repeat now what we said when this red herring first appeared in 1961:

"Whether the British government goes in or not, British workers should be looking to promote their own Socialist working class unity with workers everywhere, not just in Western Europe" (Socialist Standard, January 1962).

(Socialist Standard, January 1970)



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

Party News

Here are the results of the two seats we contested in last month's general election: **Cardiff North:** Lab 25605 (61.2%) Con 8426 LD 6298 Brexit 1006 Gwalad 280 Ind 119 Soc 88 (0.2%). **Folkestone and Hythe:** Con 35473 (60.1%) Lab 14146 LD 5755 Green 2708 Ind 576 SDP 190 YPP 80 Soc 69 (0.1%).

Kent and Sussex Branch report: The last time we contested Folkestone and Hythe, in 2015, our candidate got 68 votes. 2015 was of course in the pre-Corbyn Labour Party period, but then we also had TUSC (ex-Militant SPEW coalition) on the ballot paper. Not an easy comparison, but if people were tempted by leftist reformism or Brexit issues, 2019 was probably their year to be so. Labour almost doubled their vote in this period. During this campaign we distributed 56,500 leaflets via Royal Mail, 5,000 copies of the first edition of the local 'World News' flyer to Folkestone Harbour and other selected parts of the constituency



including Cheriton, Sandgate and Hythe, and inserts in last weekend's i-newspaper (among 160,000 in the southern region). Of course it's not really the votes that are so important at this stage, but the fact that for an outlay of under £1,500 we got our leaflet delivered through 56,500 letter boxes, plus our propaganda free several times in local newspaper columns and candidate interviews on BBC TV and the Academy FM Community Radio Station.

In Cardiff, which we were contesting for the first time, we distributed 45,500 via Royal Mail with more leaflets and literature distributed at street stalls in the constituency. An advertisement was inserted in the *South Wales Echo* and our candidate, with all the others, answered set questions on Wales Online (tinyurl.com/t3tu3uq)

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

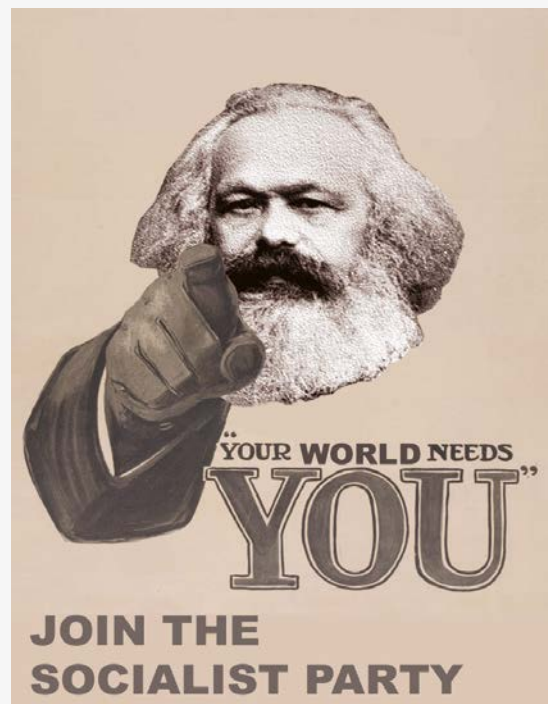
The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

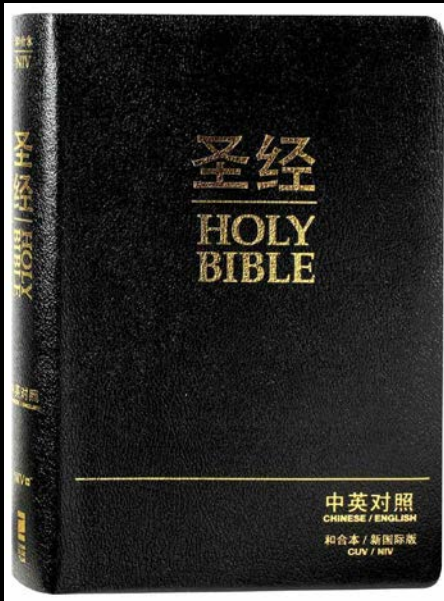
1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is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





No gods

'China is set to censor all translated versions of classic religious books to make sure that their messages reflect the principles of Socialism' (dailymail.co.uk, 27 November). Such news concerning Emperor Xi's regime comes as no surprise to socialists. Kautsky in his *Foundations of Christianity* shows how its teachings were turned from those of a rebellious sect into a state religion, suitably servile and cringing. All religions have been, in all phases of history, the allies of the ruling classes in keeping the masses bent under the yoke. Churches have crowned the peoples' oppressors, and crucified our forebears. New Age religion is merely the old repackaged in a new, modern form. Rather than obeying a priest, they choose the form of our own mental domination and the flight from reality into a magical world. Socialists, by contrast are scientific materialists. We argue that the origin and development of the universe, of life, of society and religion itself can be explained adequately without recourse to the so-called supernatural, and that this is an integral part of socialist theory. Mao stated in 1949 'China must utilize all the factors

of urban and rural capitalism that are beneficial and not harmful to the national economy and the people's livelihood, and we must unite with the national bourgeoisie in common struggle. Our present policy is to regulate capitalism, not to destroy it'. Time to banish gods from our minds and capitalists from the Earth.

No masters

During the election *SPEW*, formerly *Militant*, stated that the Labour manifesto 'offered 'a glimpse of jobs, homes and public services for the 99%, protection for our environment - and making the capitalist class pay. No wonder the boss class and their representatives in politics and the press attack it - they will do anything to prevent a Corbyn victory' (socialistparty.org.uk, 27 November). No and no. The manifesto was for reforming capitalism. A real socialist revolution would see all means of production transferred to the community to be used, democratically, to directly satisfy people's needs without any top-down control. Corbyn was as little a threat to the status quo as earlier Labour leaders. What did they do for us? Just look at Labour's record. Wage freezes, benefit cuts, racist immigration controls, strike-breaking, student tuition fees, etc, etc. Briefly, running capitalism on its terms of profits first. Corbyn in office would have ended up doing the same as all previous Labour governments have. Capitalism simply cannot be reformed to work in the interest of the many.

Free access

'Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell are part of a breed of socialists who argue that this time will be different. Socialism never failed, they insist: only the walls, barbed wire and jackboots did. So what they plan for Britain, while radical, is bound to work! True, it's more radical than anything done in any European country today. Comparisons with Venezuela or Cuba or Soviet Russia are

unfair, they say. But there is one model that today's socialists talk fondly about: the Israeli kibbutz' (spectator.co.uk, 30 November). Yet more nonsense. 'Maduro recognizes Venezuela is still a capitalist-based economy...' (mintpressnews.com, 31 May, 2018). Fidel said in 1988: 'We are capitalists, but state capitalists. We are not private capitalists' (Daum, Walter, *The Life and Death of Stalinism*, 1990). Lenin wrote of Russia in 1918: 'reality says that State capitalism would be a step forward for us; if we were able to bring about State capitalism in a short time it would be a victory for us' (*The Chief Task of Our Time*). Socialism can only be a world community without frontiers. It cannot be established in one country let alone on one farm. The kibbutzim do show that human beings can live without money and can work without wages, but their small scale means that what they can offer is very restricted. In practice they have paved the way for the development of capitalism in Israel and some have themselves become capitalist institutions employing outside wage labour and producing for the market with a view to profit.



FREE LUNCH

