

socialist standard

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

Don't worry, exploitation, greed
and profit are perfectly compatible
with the environment under the
new green deal.



GREEN CAPITALISM?



also:
Money
David Attenborough
The Rise & Fall of Corbyn



socialist standard

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Editorial

Green capitalism – a contradiction in terms

The failure of the UN climate change conference in Madrid in December was predictable. It is now well established, and accepted by most, that the incremental increase in average global temperature that's been going on for decades – and its long-term consequences of rising sea levels and more extreme weather – is mainly due to the past and present burning of fossil fuels releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. As long as this continues, so will the slow but steady increase in global temperature.

This rise can only be countered, let alone stopped, by using other sources for generating energy that don't release carbon dioxide and, to a lesser extent, by finding ways to reabsorb it and certainly not by destroying natural ways that do this like the Amazon and other rainforests.

If there is a known solution, why is it not being applied? Basically, it's because we are living in a capitalist world, divided into rival states, where production is in the hands of competing, profit-seeking enterprises. Each state, claiming to represent a 'nation' but actually representing its ruling class, asserts 'sovereignty', ie exclusive political control, over a part of the globe and the natural

resources it contains.

This was crudely, but honestly, stated by President Bolsonaro of Brazil who told the UN General Assembly in New York in September that the Amazon rainforest was not 'the heritage of mankind' but belonged to Brazil, implying that Brazil could do what it wanted with it, including burning and chopping it down to make way for profitable mining and ranching, even if this would eventually harm other states, let alone humanity.

Brazil is not alone. All states claim that the resources within their frontiers are theirs to do what they judge best with. This is why the states which have coal, oil and gas reserves on their territory are holding up anything that would reduce their profits from exploiting their fossil fuel resources, whether for export or as the cheapest source of energy for their internal needs.

They are only defending their sectional interest as all states do. Whereas within a country there is a body – the state – that can if need be force recalcitrant profit-seeking enterprises to respect the general interest of the capitalist class there, on the world scene there is no such body. The UN is just a talking shop. There is no means

of forcing fossil fuel rich states to toe the line. And they are not going to voluntarily undermine their competitiveness by using more expensive ways of generating energy when a cheaper source is to hand.

This was underlined by a report from the International Energy Agency the same month as the talking shop in Madrid that 'coal will remain by far the biggest source of power supply worldwide in 2024 ... because of demand for cheap energy in Asia' (*Times*, 17 December). Being relatively cheap there, coal use in India is expected to grow by almost 5 percent a year for the next five years while Bangladesh is building five large new coal-fired power stations.

The threat of global warming is a global problem that can only be dealt with by planned action on a global scale, but capitalism's vested interests and profit considerations are preventing this. The only framework allowing planned action is a world without borders based on the common ownership of its natural and industrial resources. That's what those rightly concerned about the dangers of global overwarming should also be working for.

Introducing the Socialist Party

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

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

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

Gradualist reformers like the Labour Party believed that capitalism could be



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

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

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

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PATHFINDERS

Celebs wanted, dead or alive

Something about the recent revolt of the younger UK royals reminds us that celebs may be good box office but they are sometimes hard for the management to keep in line. Film stars are often notoriously hard to work with, and can misbehave off set too. They even insist on having their own ideas, as if they're real people, and using media opportunities including awards ceremonies as platforms to spout their own pet worthy causes. Ricky Gervais nailed it recently, when presenting the recent Golden Globes, by asking the assembled luvvies not to lecture workers on life and politics when most of them have spent less time in school than Greta Thunberg.

But this problem may go away by itself, as new technology dispenses with reality entirely by creating a new population of purely virtual celebs who never have tantrums, make off-message statements, get caught in scandals or demand pay rises. This virtualisation has already started. In fulfilment of everyone's perfect fantasy, actors can be 'de-aged' to play themselves when they were 30 or 40 years younger, as we saw with 2019's *Captain Marvel* and *The Irishman*.

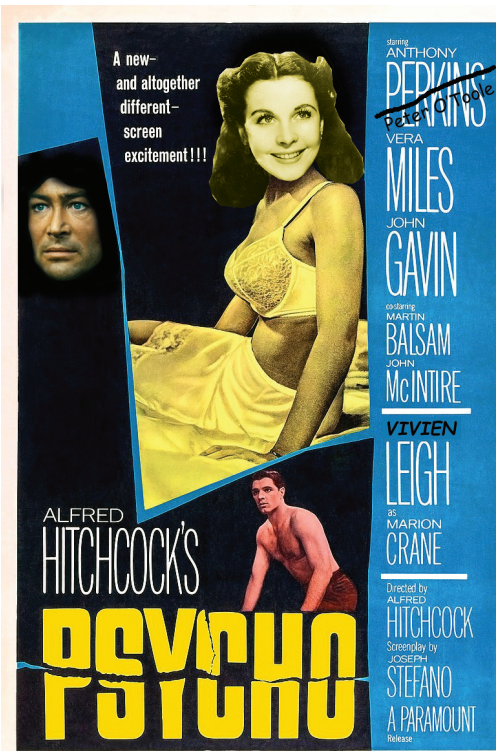
But that's nothing. Actor Peter Cushing had a largish speaking role in the 2016 Star Wars movie *Rogue One*, a remarkable bit of casting considering he died in 1994. Now one company has bought the 'rights' to James Dean's appearance and is proposing to have 'him' star in a new Vietnam movie. Ethical opinions are divided, with Marvel Studios perhaps surprisingly expressing moral repugnance (yhoo.it/38bKKra).

Think this is all rather creepy? Of course it is. This is another Alice-in-Wonderland rabbit hole that technology has opened up. But you can see the fascination. Suppose they remade *The Maltese Falcon*, or *Casablanca*, with today's budgets and production values, but with the *original actors*? Wouldn't people pay good money to see that? Or you could do mash-ups of different classics, featuring actors and storylines who never met in real life. Think *Gaslight* crossed with *Diabolique*. *Gone With The Wind* crossed with *Cold Mountain* and *Red Badge of Courage*. Or recast classic roles to see how other actors might have done it. What would James Stewart have done with *12 Angry Men*, or Peter O'Toole with *Psycho*?

Ok ok, now starting to sound like the pub film buff bore. But you have to admit, there's something horribly amusing about

the idea of these privileged Hollywood legends continuing to be plundered and commodified in perpetuity, even after they're dead. At least when we workers snuff it, the bastards finally leave us alone.

But wait, they're not thinking this through. The tech will get cheaper, and then why only make box office movies for the family-friendly customer? Screw morals, why not take deep fake porn movies to the next level, with Marilyn Monroe or Jane Russell doing physically unfeasible things with Errol Flynn or Elvis Presley? None of it's real, so the punters don't have to feel guilty. How dark and twisted could it go? How dark and twisted can capitalism go? Shirley Temple in a paedo slasher movie? There would be a public outcry. Eighteen months later it would be considered tame. Feminists would fight back of course. *Annie Get Your*



Gun crossed with *Death Wish* for starters, then *Mary Poppins* and *Terminator*. All ideas copyright SPGB, by the way, and we will sue.

Then there's the wages factor. At the moment they have to use live actors who will then be digitally converted into Bogart or Gable. Given that half of most films is CGI nowadays anyway, you could shoot the entire thing in CGI and then you can dispense with the bodies too, and just pay voice actors. If the tech continues to improve, with a big enough library of voice samples you can probably get rid of them too. Your entire production team could

consist of a gaggle of pale and half-starved teenage computer programmers trying to support sick parents and pay their way through college on the minimum wage. Just watch the cash roll in!

Better still, with advances in AI, let the digital celebs write and star in their own stories. They can direct and produce them too. So you won't need to pay writers (always an awkward resentful bunch) or directors (prima donnas) or even producers (jumped-up investors). It could be just you, sitting on a mountain of cash, with more pouring down on you like a perpetual money monsoon from heaven.

Better still, the AI celebs will take over altogether and manage their own finances, PR and contractual negotiations. Then they'll finally sack you too, and good riddance. And then, supposing that AI celebs really are smarter than humans, perhaps they'll start using their awards ceremonies to lecture us on why we should have abolished capitalism and established socialism when there was still time to do it.

But probably by then there won't be anyone left alive who cares anymore. The audiences will all be virtual too.

Tragedy and farce

Two recent news items illustrate capitalism writ large and writ small. One, the Australian wildfire apocalypse, is a tragedy that makes any further comment redundant. The other is quite trivial, ridiculous even, yet is a perfect example of capitalism making complicated and wasteful what socialism would make simple and economical: the matter of phone chargers. In 2009, there were over 30 different types of charger, generating an estimated 51,000 tonnes of waste and giving everyone a drawerful of old and useless cables. European regulators have got this absurd superfluity down to three charger types, but Apple has been deliberately uncooperative. 'A common charger should fit all mobile phones, tablets, e-book readers and other portable devices,' says the European Parliament (bbc.co.uk/news/technology-51137069). But this self-evident truth flies in the face of capitalist reality, where competition constantly bucks any trend toward standardisation. In socialism, production would not be atomised by a farcical war of competing interests, so parts could be interchangeable, repairable, recyclable, and standardised, while minimising waste and environmental impact. Common sense, right? Not in capitalism.

PJS

The pensions struggle

Pensions have loomed large into the political landscape again. As an issue for our masters, they are like submerged icebergs that from time to time bob to the surface to impede ongoing profitability: agreements that stretch far into the future, which hamper the capitalists' ability to invest today.

In December, France was gripped by days of a General Strike, which featured riots in the streets, and ongoing clashes between police and protestors. These clashes had all the appearances of being a continuation of the running battles between police and Gilets Jaunes that have been happening in France all year.

(As an aside, this situation is an instructive illustration of how propaganda in the media works. Clashes between police and protestors in Hong Kong made the top of the UK news schedule, but similar clashes in France, Haiti, Iraq and other countries around the world only made footnotes in an online resource to show that coverage is comprehensive.)

President Macron has sought to create a unified pension system, with an effective higher retirement age, to try to curb the cost of the French pension system, with workers getting points based on days worked (which will be to the advantage of those workers with broken career patterns, such as women who take maternity leave). This would replace a maze of different retirement ages and calculation methods. At the same time, some people will have their expectations lowered, and find themselves working longer for less.

Reform of pensions is the iceberg the Juppé government foundered upon, faced down with mass action by the trade unions in the 1990s. Small changes in pensions mean vast effects on the life expectations of millions of workers, and whilst they are for many far in the future, the understanding that one day we will all be too old and tired to be able to work looms large for each of us. Further, that sliver of comfort and leisure is a quid pro quo incentive to keep on working until we can get out of the exploitation system.

Likewise, in this country, and also little reported, tens of thousands of university workers have been striking. This despite the tightening of laws over calling strike action, which require a double majority both of turnout and of those eligible to vote in the strike ballot

as well. As we reported earlier this year, this strike action has previously brought employers back to the negotiating table, and saw off their initial schemes which would have greatly reduced the benefits accruing to members of the USS pension scheme.

It was understood at the time that this was only round one, and it was likely that a subsequent round of action would be required to bring matters to a conclusion, thus the UCU (University and College Union) has successfully won a second strike and action short of a strike ballot, with pay and equalities now included as a part of the dispute. At the time of writing, employers are refusing to discuss pay levels.

They maintain that USS is an excellent pension scheme, and note that employers have seen their contributions rise dramatically (50 percent increase in employer contributions over 10 years). They argue that to guarantee the pension is funded in line with state regulations, employees should contribute more than the current 8 percent (the fact that that 8 percent comes from employees in any case is neither here nor there, and cost of living will continue to dictate employers will have to pay in net terms in order to attract and retain staff).

It is clear that the little they are offering at all is only in response to the solid strike action by university workers, and even if the union eventually accepts some increase in employee contributions, it will represent a huge improvement over the original offer.

Similar arguments can be heard over the WASPI women (Women Against State Pension Inequality). The Tory government brought in legislation to raise the retirement age for women

in the UK to 65 in 1995, the WASPI campaign notes that many women born in the 1950s weren't even notified formally until 14 years later. This has led to great difficulties in retirement planning for millions of women. As the WASPI campaign notes, a 1 year difference in birthdate can now mean a 3 year difference in retirement date. In 2011 the Coalition Government sought to raise the retirement age for the same cohort again.

In an election bombshell, Labour promised £58 billion of extra money (above their published plans) to compensate the WASPI women effected. Television pundits wittered on about why should Theresa May (who would qualify) get the money, but the principle, Labour argued, was that what was agreed all those years ago when those women entered the workforce should stand.

Other pundits noted that the interaction between the policy, which would see the women given compensation, and the benefits system would see women in the lowest income groups getting no benefit from the scheme.

The theme running through all this is one of 'affordability', but that is not affordability relative to the productive capacity of society, but relative to profitability. Pensions are a part of wages, they are not paid out because of the goodness of employer's hearts, but instead because of a recognition that workers who are too old to work would be more of a hindrance than a use in the workplace, and, ultimately, they would end up having to pay the cost of looking after such workers one way or another (either in higher wages to working family members with dependents, or through charity).

Legally, pensions are commitments with individuals, and past agreements cannot be unilaterally altered. They form a part of wages which employers agree to pay when they take on staff – like the cartoon character, they will gladly pay us Tuesday for a hamburger today. All of their efforts to structure pension payments this way and that is about trying to minimise the individual and collective cost to employers.

The pensions issue is not about us living longer, but is the class struggle red in tooth and claw.

PIK SMEET



Open Letter to David Attenborough

Your recent TV series *Seven Worlds, One Planet* has done much to highlight the plight of many species of endangered wildlife. Nobody could fail to have got the message, from this and previous series, that wildlife the world over is suffering from the effects of global warming, from the ingestion of plastic and other toxic waste products, and from dwindling habitats resulting from activities such as tree felling for lumber and palm oil or from deliberately started forest fires.

As your impassioned pleas for more to be done become more and more relevant, we agree that human activity is largely to blame. However, it is not humans per se who are the culprits. Those causing the damage are constrained by the demands of global money-making. Large-scale industrial activity is subject to the profit imperative, and as long as profits are to be made from cutting down forests, producing harmful, non-recyclable products and spewing toxic waste into the atmosphere and waterways, small-scale attempts at recycling and conservation will come a very poor second. Over 70 percent of harmful global emissions are produced by around one hundred companies, and climate change conferences, for all their apparent earnestness, by and large achieve nothing because the measures they suggest will be bad for business. Even the emerging 'green' industry can only operate within the bounds of what is profitable, which is to say, not in the interest of the many.

This is not to belittle the dedicated efforts of conservation groups and wildlife lovers across the globe in trying to stem the tide. But their work is addressing the symptoms, not the cause, as are the efforts of the general public in refusing to buy products such as palm oil and dutifully recycling our cereal packets and milk containers. All such activity merely scratches the surface: the problem is global and needs a global solution.

So why not go for the jugular? If we tackle the disease itself – capitalism – rather than its symptoms, and if more of those who care passionately about the environment join the campaign to eliminate profit-based society and replace it with common ownership of the world's resources along with true democratic decision making, then we will be well on the way to a permanent solution, with the happy effect that humans, along with other animals, will be liberated from the stranglehold of capitalism.

Hoping that in your next series you invite people to join the movement to replace capitalism with world socialism.

Yours,

ROD SHAW



COOKING THE BOOKS

Not for the squeamish

According to a report in *City AM* (19 December), the Bank of England is planning to stress-test banks in 2021 to judge to what extent they can withstand a climate-related crisis. Apparently this is to see if they are over-reliant on investments in businesses that contribute to global warming, in particular fossil fuels, which could lose value or even collapse if a climate crisis forced the government to suddenly curb their activities.

This could just be the personal whim of the outgoing governor, Mark Carney, who is leaving next month to become UN Special Adviser on Climate Change and Finance. But it does tell us something about capitalism: action on a threat to business-as-usual such as climate change is only going to be taken if there is some threat to profit-making, whether short or long term. Capitalism runs on profits and decisions as to what is produced, and how much, how and where, are taken by capitalist enterprises according to what they calculate is profitable for them in the relatively

short-term. Looking after the longer-term prospects for profit-making is left to the state.

Global warming, if it gets out of hand, will represent a threat to profits, not so much in terms of reduced profit-making opportunities as in terms of the taxes the state will have to levy, ultimately on profits, to pay, for instance, for building seawalls and other defences against a rise in sea level or to move people from flooded areas.

Mitigating global warming will provide some new profit-making opportunities, as from investing in the technologies of alternative ways to generate energy; of extracting carbon dioxide from the atmosphere; and of alternative uses for fossil fuels. This is the logic behind those who argue that the way to deal with the threat of global warming is 'more capitalism', i.e., leave things up to private capital in search of profits.

But, even from capitalism's point of view, this won't do. As long as generating energy by burning fossil fuels is profitable it will attract capital investment, and it will be profitable as long as the alternative

methods of generating energy – nuclear and renewable – are more expensive, and so burned they will be, fuelling global warming.

This was neatly illustrated by an article in the *Times* the day of the Bank's announcement. Entitled 'If you're not squeamish, Big Oil pays', it explained:

'On environmental grounds, some readers may be uncomfortable buying Shell shares, as this columnist is. But they are pretty compellingly valued, trading at just over 11 times forecast earnings for a divided yield of 6.5 per cent. In every other way they are an obvious buy' (18 December).

Small investors being squeamish won't alter this. Only the state, acting in the longer-term overall capitalist interest, can do anything about it, as by subsidising alternative methods until they become the more profitable. Only then can the naked capitalist pursuit of profits take over. It's not the rational way to deal with the problem but it's the most that will be attempted under capitalism.

WOOD FOR THE TREES

LIFE WITHOUT SOCIALISM

SOCIALISTS SOMETIMES forget what it's like not to be a socialist. We search in vain for memories that pre-date our political consciousness because memories are always filtered and coloured by our present values and perspectives. But it is important for us to try and see the world as others do – as we once did ourselves – so that we can effectively communicate with those who oppose or misunderstand us.

In the absence of reliable personal pre-socialist memories we have to rely on our imagination. What must it be like to live in a world without meaning or purpose? This may seem an unduly harsh judgement but remember this is the imagination of one who is convinced that his or her role in the resolution of the class struggle is, at this historical stage, the only truly worthwhile activity. Everything else is a distraction. Of course socialists enjoy sports, the arts and personal relationships etc. but these are always secondary to the quest to regain our humanity or, more precisely, to reinforce and build on what remains of it. Despite the best efforts of the powerful and parasitical they can never entirely destroy our social and moral characteristics.

The most dominant form of distraction and, paradoxically, of escapism is the reality of making a living. This financial imperative can be so all consuming and overwhelming that whole lifetimes are lost making profits for the parasite class. This level of pressure, we are sometimes told, leaves no time for political activities. Even what little opportunity people have for quality time is defined by the entertainments controlled by their rulers – meaningless soap operas, unending football seasons, empty pop music, overpriced restaurant food etc., etc. Holidays are spent being catered for by



other wage slaves who just long for the day to end. This simulation of pleasure is purchased by the alienated labour of others just like you. Everything you consume is only available because it makes a profit for a tiny minority whose lives are even more meaningless than yours. Consumerism demands these fantasies because it has nothing else to offer. This is how socialists see our world. Now let us try and imagine how non-socialists see things.

Finding a 'significant other' and securing a well-paid job seem to be the main priorities of most non-political individuals. This is the underlying motivation that projects the individual on a trajectory of conformity and slavery which they hope will eventually bring fulfilment and happiness. The dream seems elusive and always just beyond their reach but they have committed their life to it and to turn back would mean that all of their efforts and dedication have been wasted. Then, to make things worse, they meet a bloody socialist who tells them just that! But they can't go back: the next job, the next relationship, the next therapist or political leader will give it all meaning. There then occurs a measure of cynicism that reflects the failure to achieve the goals that society imposes. They see in the playful and naïve activities of their children a painful reminder of their own hopes and dreams and become impatient to impose

the restraints of a sick maturity born of slavery.

And what of the few who become 'successful'? Politicians, sportsmen, businessmen and celebrities of every kind will rationalise the years of ruthless competitive ambition or just dumb luck that has lifted them into the ranks of capitalism's totems and their brief 15 minutes of fame. If they are lucky they will fade quietly into obscurity but many will be hunted and deconstructed by

a media who'll stop at nothing to find the scandal and corruption that inevitably attends success within a sick society and which alone can guarantee high sales for the media. The broken dreams of the majority seem to create in them an insatiable hunger to vicariously enjoy the destruction of those who appear to have realised their own ambitions.

But does seeing the world 'as it really is' provide a sense of achievement or even some measure of happiness for a socialist? Certainly we can take some pride in overcoming the conditioning imposed on us by the culture into which we were born but the subsequent obligation to partake in the political struggle can take its toll. The immense frustration of continually leading horses to water but not being able to convince them to drink can erode the soul of even the most firebrand of revolutionaries. We can take little comfort in our correct analysis and subsequent politically astute predictions in the face of the suffering of the world. Like Cassandra we seem cursed with an insight that so few can or want to hear. The return to a life of illusions sustained by a consensus born of ignorance is forever denied to us; we have torn apart the veil of lies and deception and can only continue the fight against the oppressors of the freedom that only the light of reason can illuminate.

WEZ

GREEN NEW DEAL: NO GO

We have seen wildfires in California and Australia. Hurricanes have been ripping apart areas from New Orleans to the Caribbean leaving devastation and death in their wake. Severe drought has been inflicted on countries from Bangladesh to South Africa. Closer to home, we have witnessed devastating floods in Cornwall and Yorkshire. The increasing frequency and power of these disasters have shaken the notion that these are merely acts of nature, about which we can do very little. These changed weather patterns are clearly evidence of what the majority of climate scientists have been warning for some time that the global warming crisis is upon us and humanity needs to act now to avoid a global catastrophe. Even some representatives of global capitalism are worried. Kristalina Georgieva, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, addressed the most recent international climate change conference (COP25) last December and is pushing for a higher carbon tax ("Tackling climate risk is just what IMF should be doing," *Observer*, 1 December). You need to be either very delusional or be profiting from the fossil fuel industries or just be Donald Trump to deny there is a climate crisis.

So the launch of Naomi Klein's latest book *On Fire: The Burning Case for a Green New Deal* (Allen Lane, £20) can be considered as rather timely. Naomi Klein is a writer, journalist and activist and first made her mark as a leading figure of the 'anti-capitalist' movement twenty years ago. The book was published on the twentieth anniversary of her first book, *No Logo*, which explored the rise of global corporations and their effects on the environment and workers, particularly those who live in poor third world countries. In her new book, she recounts her own experiences as a climate activist and how, two years ago, she was arrested at a protest against the Keystone tar sands pipeline in Washington DC. She is co-founder of a Toronto-based climate project group called Leap, which brings together people from different backgrounds to campaign for climate justice and other reforms.

The book is made up of a collection of essays, reports and lectures spanning the last decade. Its central tenet is that the planet is facing a climate emergency and we are running out of time. To back this up, Klein refers to a report published by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in October 2018 stating that global emissions of greenhouse gases need to be cut in half within 12 years (11 years from the date of the book's publication) for us to stand a chance of keeping global warming within the target increase of 1.5C since pre-industrial times.

Capitalism indicted, but what is capitalism?

As in her previous book, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate*, she blames capitalism for the climate crisis, and consequently argues that tinkering around with the existing economic system, with measures such as increasing the carbon tax, is not enough. Changes in individuals' personal lifestyles, such as eating less meat and using public transport rather than driving cars, will not avert climate

catastrophe. What is required is collective political action by grass-roots movements to achieve a radical overhaul of the current economic systems. She draws inspiration from the campaigning groups against climate change. There are the global school strikes, where young people are demanding more action by politicians on the environment. Klein makes the interesting point that these school children didn't just read about climate change, but many of them have actually experienced it, whether it is the severe droughts in South



Africa or the toxic air pollution in Delhi, India. In the same way socialists argue that workers don't come to socialism by just reading about it, but by their experiences of the social problems they face within capitalism. She says that it is pressure from this activity, along with other movements, such as the Sunrise Movement and Extinction Rebellion, that will bring about change. As to be expected, much of the focus is on Greta Thunberg, the 16-year old schoolgirl who is lauded as a leading spokesperson of this youth movement.

Klein rejects the use of technology, also known as geo-engineering, to fix the environment. This can be done in a number of ways. One way is to inject the upper atmosphere with sulphur with the aim of deflecting some of the sun's rays into space in order to cool the planet, and another is to fertilise the oceans with iron dust to create algal blooms which would soak up more carbon. However, tampering with nature's ecosystems, she argues, would be likely to have adverse consequences.

The Earth's temperature has been rising since the industrial revolution, the cause of which has been the burning of fossil fuels, oil and coal, by capitalist industry, releasing more greenhouse gases, such as CO2 and methane, than can be

absorbed by the atmosphere, along with deforestation, resulting in fewer trees to soak up the extra carbon. Over the last thirty years or so, when many countries deregulated and privatised their industries, global trade has expanded and at the same time global emissions have escalated. Klein notes that in the same period, often referred to as 'neoliberalism', social and economic inequality has also arisen. She recognises that climate change and other social issues, such as social, gender and ethnic inequalities, have the same cause, which is capitalism which accumulates wealth in the hands of a tiny minority, and therefore does not accept the argument sometimes put forward that the climate issue must take precedence over everything else. Any action to resolve climate change must equally tackle other social problems. This is also known as intersectionality, where separate campaign issues come together in one struggle.

She also makes the interesting point that capitalism has only existed for a small period of human history and that humans can adapt to live in different social orders. She criticises those economists who put forward the view that humans are 'selfish, gratification-seeking units' and historians who espouse the Great Man theory of history.

Despite these insights, Klein doesn't advocate the abolition of capitalism and its replacement with socialism. To see why, we need to work out what Klein means by capitalism. She doesn't give a specific definition. However, when discussing how some climate change deniers compare action to combat climate change with so-called communism, Klein remarks that 'the Soviet-era state socialism was a disaster for the climate' (p.79). Again, when referring to the Soviet Union, we learn on p. 251 that 'we have to be honest that autocratic industrial socialism has also been a disaster for the environment' and when mentioning Venezuela on the same page 'Venezuela's petro-populism is a reminder that there is nothing inherently green about self-defined socialism'. She does praise the environmental policies of countries such as Denmark, Sweden and Uruguay that have a 'democratic-socialist tradition'. From these comments, we can safely infer that when Klein talks about capitalism she is referring to private capitalism, in particular the large corporations and the banks.

We, on the other hand, define capitalism as a global society where the means of production are owned and controlled by a minority class to the exclusion of the majority of humanity, the working class, who have to seek employment by the owning or capitalist class. Production is geared to profit and businesses compete with each other in the marketplace. Concerns about the environment and human welfare must take second place. Nation states have to look after the interests of their respective capitalist classes and this leads to rivalries between them which can end in military conflict. Socialism, which will need to be established by a socialist working class after taking political action to abolish capitalism, is a society of common ownership, where the means of production are owned by everyone and the state has been abolished and there is no need for the use of money.

Green Keynesianism

Klein advocates the New Green Deal instead. It is clearly not based on the principles of socialism, but, as the name suggests, is inspired by Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal drawn up during the 1930s Depression and the Marshall Plan enacted after the Second World. It was mooted as a way of

pulling capitalism out of recession during the last economic downturn, a form of 'Green Keynesianism'. Klein holds up the US Congress New Green Deal resolutions as proposed by US Democrats Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ed Markey as the way forward. They call for 'huge investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and clean transportation' and for the US to reach net-zero emissions in one decade. Workers who transfer from high-carbon industries to green ones have their wages and benefits protected, and everyone who wants to work should have guaranteed employment. No specifics are given, as Klein describes it as a 'work in progress' with communities, many of which are indigenous and ethnic minorities, that have borne the brunt of climate change destruction, providing input into the process. They also throw in reforms – free universal care, childcare, and higher education. It is not a politically organised working class that will be the agency of these changes, but the state run by a 'progressive' Democrat government headed by Bernie Sanders or Elizabeth Warren. In the UK it would have been a Labour government headed by Jeremy Corbyn with the British equivalent of the Green Industrial Revolution – that is until the results of the December General Election put paid to this possibility. This progressive state would not abolish the corporations, but bring pressure to bear on them. It may refuse to issue permits for fossil fuel companies to build pipelines and export terminals. Like with the New Deal, the government would be backed and influenced by social movements.

The Green New Deal will not replace the market system, on the contrary, according to Klein 'Markets play a role in this vision, but markets are not the protagonists of this story – people are'. And as can be seen in the above paragraph, there will be no change to the employer and employee relationship that is a feature of capitalism.

The climate crisis cannot be resolved within a nation state, but requires a global solution. Klein recognises this, and envisages every country will implement their own version of the Green New Deal. When she talks about the rich countries developing their green deal earlier so as to allow for poorer ones to transition more slowly, this implies that there will be global cooperation. This is a tall order in a society where every nation state competes for markets, sources of raw materials and strategic routes. Recent history is not encouraging. The US is in a trade war with China, there is the re-emergence of the cold war between Russia and the West, and the UK is arguing with its European neighbours on how to exit from the European Union. Not to mention that the international climate change conferences over the last thirty years have not exactly been rip-roaring successes.

To curb the pressure on the Earth's resources, Klein argues we need to end the wasteful consumer lifestyle. To achieve this, she suggests a shorter working week so that workers can enjoy publicly-funded arts and urban parks, rather than spending their wages on cheap disposable consumer goods.

Our vision of socialism is often dismissed as being utopian. There is a lot of informative material and useful analysis in this book, but its contention that the New Green Deal can resolve the climate crisis and social and economic inequalities within the capitalist market system really is utopian. Only the abolition of capitalism and its replacement with socialism can achieve this.

OLIVER BOND

What if there was a way to make capitalism environmentally friendly and more economically robust, in a way that benefited workers in particular? Liberals like Bernie Sanders and celebrity congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (‘AOC’) are claiming that a ‘Green New Deal’ would do just that.

In February 2019, AOC introduced to Congress a non-binding resolution, titled ‘Recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal’. In it, she touts the Green New Deal as an ‘opportunity’ to ‘create millions of good high-wage jobs’, ‘provide unprecedented levels of prosperity and economic security’, and ‘counteract systemic injustices’ while also securing ‘for all people of the United States for generations to come’ such benefits as ‘clean air and water’, ‘climate and community resiliency’, ‘healthy food’, and a ‘sustainable environment’.

The economic claims for the Green New Deal are based on the Keynesian belief that government-funded infrastructure spending can generate economic growth and overcome crisis. Since many articles in the *Socialist Standard* to date have exposed the limits of Keynesianism, the Green New Deal as economic policy will be set aside here to focus instead on its underlying assumption that capitalism can be transformed into an environmentally sustainable system.

What is it about the nature of capitalism that makes it far more destructive to the environment than other modes of production? This is the core question to be examined here.

Transforming nature

At the most general level, capitalism is no different from any other form of society that has existed (or could ever exist), insofar as human beings must transform the materials that exist in nature to create useful things that satisfy their own needs. This is accomplished through *labour*, which Marx describes as ‘a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates, and controls the metabolism between himself and nature’ (*Capital*, Penguin edition, ch. 7, p. 283). He points out that this ‘appropriation of what exists in nature for the requirements of man’ through the activity of human labour is the ‘everlasting nature-imposed condition of human existence’ that is ‘common to all forms of society in which human beings live’.

Since human beings must ‘appropriate’ materials from nature to live, perhaps no society could be described as truly ‘friendly’ to the environment. Certainly past societies have also damaged the environment in their pursuit of natural materials to satisfy human needs. One example is the soil depletion and erosion in ancient Greece and Rome resulting from deforestation. However, it should be equally clear that, compared to earlier forms of society, the damage to the natural environment in the period since capitalism arose as a global system is far greater in scale.

A key aspect of capitalism that sets it apart from past societies, and partially accounts for its fundamental inability to be ‘sustainable’, is that products of labour under this system are only able to satisfy human needs after first passing through the market, where they are bought and sold. Products thus have both a ‘use value’ as objects that satisfy needs and an ‘exchange value’ on the market (expressed in price). Marx uses the term *commodity* to refer to products of labour as the unity of those two elements. Of course, commodities (and money) existed within other forms of society, but only under capitalism do the vast majority of products take the commodity form, so that wealth presents itself as an ‘immense collection of commodities’, in the opening words of *Capital*.

What makes widespread commodity production so potentially harmful to the environment? Isn’t the market

just an efficient way to distribute useful goods to people?

Even if the market economy were nothing more than an alternative way to distribute use values to human beings, it would still pose problems to the environment. This is because in producing for the market, rather than *directly* to human beings, there are many unknown and unknowable factors.

Any commodity producer (whether an individual, a corporation, or a state-run firm) must rely on past experience and recent trends to determine what to produce and in what quantity. Whether the production decisions taken will match the reality of the market today can only be known at the point of sale.

Many things can go wrong. The demand for a commodity might not be as strong as expected; or even if there is demand, the price could be too high for a sufficient number of consumers to afford. Competitors might enter the market for high-selling products, resulting in a glut of new products. Or a financial crisis could break out just as goods are coming off the assembly line. And so on. Marx thus describes the sale of the commodity as the *salto mortale* of the commodity. If the commodity falls short in this fatal leap, it can end up on the scrapheap. Here we have one fundamental cause of the vast squandering of natural resources under capitalist production.

Unrelenting drive for profits

But the wasteful nature of the market, as mediator between producer and consumer, is hardly the only negative environmental factor associated with capitalism. A far more fundamental cause of the destruction of the natural environment is the system’s unrelenting drive toward profit.

The essence of capitalism is not commodity (C) producers selling their wares and then using the money (M) to buy the useful things they need (i.e., commodity circulation: C–M–C), but rather the investment of money in commodity production as a means of generating more money (i.e., the circuit of capital: M–C–M’).

Whereas the human capacity to consume use values has an upper boundary, the desire for profit is without limits; as Marx explains in *Capital*: ‘Use values must therefore never be treated as the immediate aim of the capitalist; nor must the profit on any single transaction. His aim is rather the unceasing movement of profit-making’ (ch.4, p.254).

That the ‘boundless drive for enrichment’ of capitalists could result in environmental destruction goes without



in the production process and (2) the amount of labour time embodied in the commodities the workers themselves must consume to reproduce their capacity to labour, which Marx terms ‘labour power’.

In other words, as long as (1) is greater than the value of (2), surplus value (and hence profit) can be generated. This occurs even when workers are paid a ‘fair wage’ that corresponds to the value of their labour power. This exploitation of labour as the basis of profit accounts for the merciless drive of capitalists to extend the working day, so as to squeeze out every last drop of surplus value.

The desire for surplus value also drives capitalists to increase the intensity of labour. If an individual capitalist is able to raise the productive power of labour by introducing new technologies or machinery, so that products can be produced for less labour time than the current average among competitors who have yet to do the same, then the capitalist can sell commodities at a price that undersells rivals but still secures a profit (i.e., below the average price on the market but above the individual commodity’s value).

Capital’s unceasing drive to push the outer boundaries of the duration and intensity of labour to obtain greater profit underlies the environmental devastation under capitalism. Capitalists treat the resources of nature, like their expendable

saying. We see examples of this every day. But understanding the method behind this mad behaviour requires that we identify the ultimate source of profit.

From Marx, we learn that profit is not some trick of ‘buying low, and selling high’ or the result of the frugality of capitalists, as economic textbooks might claim. Rather, profit can be traced to the additional value generated in the production process. This ‘surplus value’ is the *difference* between (1) the labour time workers actually expend

that pain trouble us, since it increases our pleasure (profit)?’ (section 5 p.381).

The capitalists of our own day, addicted to the pleasure of profit, are just as little troubled by the environmental pain their system is inflicting. They behave as if natural resources were infinite – and will push every limit unless forced to do otherwise by ‘society’. And even when society does curb some of the worst excesses of capital, the manner of (state) intervention is governed by the same logic of profit.

In that same chapter on the working day, Marx depicts how the English state intervened to impose legal limits on the length of the working day. Since this reform was clearly in the interest of workers, and was initially opposed by many capitalists, it might seem a case of an enlightened policy based on sincere concern for one’s fellow human beings.

But if this was a case of ‘seeing the light’ it was only in the sense of English capitalists finally realising that the ‘unnatural extension’ of the working day had the side-effect of driving up the value of labour power. Marx explains that, since the value of labour power includes all of the costs necessary to raise and train a worker, if a worker is worn out prematurely from extremely long working hours, the reproduction costs for his labour power will be spread over a shorter period of time, so that its daily value increases. Marx compares this to how ‘in a machine the part of its value to be reproduced every day is greater the more rapidly the machine is worn out’.

Threat to profits

In pursuing their *Carpe lucrum* approach of seizing the day (from workers), the English capitalists ended up depleting the source of their own profits. The legislation to limit working hours only emerged when the majority of them finally concurred that ‘the interest of capital itself points in the direction of a normal working day’ (ch.6 p 272).

A similar dynamic is at work with regard to environmental legislation today. As always, each individual capitalist firm will pursue its own profit with extreme singlemindedness. Not surprisingly, this can result in all sorts of damage to the environment. But the state is most likely to introduce legislation to push back against those destructive tendencies when they also pose a threat to profitability – whether that of other (more powerful) capitalists or of the system as a whole.

Moreover, many of the reforms and laws that have blunted the destructive force of capital did not prove to be ‘sustainable’ under the profit system over the long-term. More than a century and a half after the struggle to limit the working day in Europe and North America, long working hours remain widespread there and throughout the world. Social welfare systems that were expanded during the long post-war boom are being dismantled today under less favourable economic and demographic conditions. And we could add that the ‘Kyoto Protocol’, introduced to great fanfare in 1997, has proved to be a farce.

Experience should have taught us by now that the concern capitalists and their politicians have for protecting natural or human resources is only to the extent necessary to allow for their continued exploitation. And usually resources have to be on the verge of depletion before any action will be taken to protect them.

Clean air and water, healthy food, and everything else that should be a human right, and would be in a truly sustainable social and natural environment, remain luxuries for many under capitalism. Environmental and economic reforms premised on the continuation of the profit system, like the Green New Deal, will never fulfil their promise of delivering sustainability, prosperity, and personal security.

MIKE SCHAUERTE





The supposedly halcyon days of Corbyn's successful Labour leadership contests in 2015 and 2016 are now but a distant memory as the chants of: 'Oh Jeremy Corbyn!' fade away like ghosts in the night; another 'fame to infamy saga' in the personality cult of contemporary politics.

After all, as the pundits never tired of telling us, Corbyn was not up to being a leader; perhaps the biggest compliment that could be levelled at him given the bear pit, come cesspit, of the Westminster Bubble. This fixation of the media with personality was perhaps epitomised by a rather fatuous post-mortem piece in the *Guardian* newspaper penned by Jonathan Freedland ([tinyurl.com/stwydw7](https://www.tinyurl.com/stwydw7)) who, in spectacularly reductionist mode, summed up the reason for the Corbyn defeat as his: 'lack of charisma', proclaiming – with somewhat sparse and dubious evidence – that the Left can never win elections with a leader with no charisma; but concluding, somehow, that the Right can win elections merely by fielding a sack of potatoes. Freedland spent the remainder of the article in a kind of je ne sais quoi fog, preferring to point to examples of men whom he claimed had charisma, such as Blair and Clinton, rather than enlighten his readers as to what it actually comprised. With political commentators like these it is hardly surprising that the public are increasingly dumbed down into an apathetic stupor, or else whipped up into a fervour of unrealistic expectations when it comes to politics. It may come as a shock to Mr Freedland, and his ilk, but the charisma hypothesis lacks a certain 'completeness' when it comes to explaining Corbyn's defeat.

Corbyn was a fish out of water from the get-go; thrown into the spotlight by accident, with no-one more surprised than himself. Although a career politician he was always an outrider to the main pack, having defied the Party Whip and voted with his conscience more than 500 times; usually taking a left-wing oppositional stance to war and 'imperialism' and seeking to champion causes of social and economic justice; in a nutshell, arguably the complete antithesis of the average modern day politician, who excels in guile, duplicity and low cunning. The establishment was not about to let an anti-imperialist, sandal-wearing vegetarian peacenik in a Lenin cap into the hallowed halls of power. And here 'the establishment' includes a large chunk of his colleagues in the parliamentary Labour Party who constantly plotted and schemed to

undermine his leadership.

The more Corbyn bent over backwards to appease his critics the more they lambasted him. Not that such an establishment/media-bashing campaign is anything new when it comes to exorcising the Left from respectable society, but Corbyn seemed incapable of combatting the onslaught; compounded by some of the people around him who often seemed to be setting him up for a fall, rather than helping to get him out of a jam. He went into the 2019 General Election, mumbling and fluffing his autocue lines; to some he was barely recognisable from just two years earlier when he commanded public rallies of thousands, delivering rousing speeches on the stump.

But it was not just Corbyn's emaciated persona that caused such a catastrophic defeat in the 2019 general election. Many in his party on both the right and left (from Blair to McDonnell) also handed him a poisoned chalice in the form of an incoherent Brexit stance. A 10-year-old child could have told him that you don't go into a Brexit-dominated election with polarised public opinion and refuse to say whether the UK should be in or out of the EU and then witter on about a second referendum. It was a no-brainer that the 'Oven ready/let's get Brexit done' slogans of the Tories would have more appeal to a Brexit-fatigued electorate.

The Labour Party ran a mind-bogglingly inept campaign in other ways. It had echoes of the debacle with Bernie Sanders during the 2016 Primary contest, when the Democratic National Committee sabotaged his candidacy for the nomination; preferring the prospect of handing Donald Trump the Presidency, by backing the lame duck candidate Hilary Clinton, than risk a left-leaning Sanders.

Another factor in Corbyn's demise was the digital media with its use of algorithms for data analytics and targeted marketing through the Twittersphere et al, together with a panoply of so-called fact-checker websites, often presenting diametrically opposite views of the same 'facts.' All this digital electioneering was invariably at Corbyn's expense; the pinnacle of cynical manipulation being when the Conservative Party changed the name of its Twitter account to: 'factcheckUK'.

Then there was the first-past-the-post system which put a further nail in Corbyn's coffin. The outcome of general elections are always determined by a relatively small number



*A delighted demented
Christian war criminal
celebrates*

of marginal constituencies and this time around, with the help of the shenanigans of Nigel Farage and the Brexit Party, this worked against Labour significantly.

Then there was the issue of the 'wish list' Labour Manifesto. Dependent on one's perspective it was either too radical, or not radical enough. Predictably the party grandee, Tony Blair, was in the 'too radical camp' declaring it: 'a brand of quasi-revolutionary socialism that has never appealed to Labour voters.' A ludicrous assertion given that there was nothing either revolutionary or discernibly socialist in it.

Since its inception in 1906, the Labour Party has invariably kept within the modest confines of what has been dictated to it by the powers that be; that is what they deem possible, or tolerable, within capitalism to mitigate the worst effects on the masses whilst maintaining profits for the owners of capital. On the rare occasions when it has stepped outside of such 'operational constraints' it has quickly been reminded by the banks, the corporations et al. who is really in charge -- a run on the pound, a debt crisis, a character assassination, has quickly brought the Labour Party to heel, or else they have been ousted on the basis that the Tories are much better suited to manage capitalism.

Prospects for the new decade

Johnson's crowing about 'the people's government' and 'protecting our wonderful NHS' etc. will go the way of all his other mendacious utterances to be supplanted by the most pro-business authoritarian government the UK has seen since Thatcher. Johnson is another Trumpian political figure, a few notches higher on the IQ scale; a political buccaneer, a chancer, a populist, who will lie and cheat to gain political advantage and personal aggrandisement whilst serving his masters, the capitalist elite. The consummate modern-day politician.

The wealth and income inequality gap will become ever more grotesque as Johnson applies meagre rations to public services whilst dishing out largesse to the private sector; further enriching the minority by impoverishing the majority. The remnants of the fetters on capitalism - taxation and regulation - will most likely be further rolled back in order to give free rein to 'the entrepreneurs', while the mass of long-suffering people will either be seduced with the discredited notion of 'trickle-down economics,' or else met with a cocktail of omnipotent surveillance and coercive force in order to subjugate them.

The next few years will be grim for the working class, while the capitalist class will be jubilant, but this may be their last fling. Many people over the years have predicted, prematurely, the end of capitalism, underestimating its ingenuity, dynamism and resilience. But the twin existential threats of nuclear conflagration and ecological collapse are becoming ever more acute. It is impossible for capitalism to solve these problems because it is the inherent cause of them. The very essence of capitalism is exploitation in the name of profit, exploitation of the working class by denying them the full value of their labour and exploitation of the natural environment by gobbling up resources and ignoring the 'externalities' in the form of degradation of the natural environment. The risk of nuclear war is ominously present as nation states and transnational corporations fight to claim dwindling natural resources and to secure new markets.

The human species remains incredibly resilient to such capitalist exploitation, but the natural environment is not faring so well. Other species are becoming extinct at an alarming rate and the global ecosystem, upon which all life depends, is under threat. An alternative economic system is urgently needed. There is renewed talk of socialism as the alternative. But often these are 'false flags' amounting to



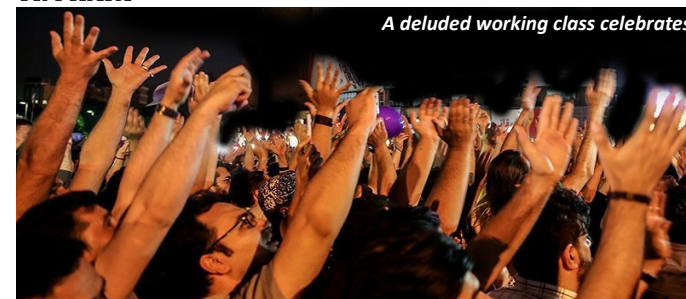
*A drunken Tory
Scumbag celebrates*

capitalism with a kinder face. Sometimes they are genuine attempts at radical change, but stop short of the abandonment of capitalism. But unless the exploitative nature of capitalism is confronted head-on and supplanted, then such movements will be insufficient.

Socialism has the potential to provide the solution by changing the fundamental economic relationship between people, and between people and the planet. Rather than commodifying every aspect of life and concocting markets where goods and services are provided only when there is the ability to pay, instead the provision could be based on need; rendering the notion of price, market and money redundant. Instead of the world's resources being mercilessly plundered in the name of profit they could be held in common ownership for the benefit of all. These socialist fundamentals would help to avoid the immense waste under capitalism and hasten a more sustainable existence.

Corbyn was successful for a short time in galvanising a mass movement with rhetoric of radical change and talk of socialism; but led his followers down a side road of reformism which in the event was a dead end. By misrepresenting reform of the capitalist system as socialism he, and others like him, inadvertently undermine the cause, rather than advance it. These efforts, whilst initially creating a momentum for change, are counter-productive as they inevitably end in tears. As Marx observed, ultimately socialism will come about when the majority of the working class understand its transformative potential and collectively work to bring it about. When people decide to take that road they will not need leaders – charismatic or otherwise. They will learn to find their way by themselves.

TIM HART



A deluded working class celebrates

Who is to blame? You would need two very long arms to list the problems facing ourselves and this planet today. We all point a finger. It just isn't us. We're just going about our business. Trying to stay alive for as long as possible. What can we do? So we point the finger. The truth though, is that there is not one person alive today who is responsible for the mess we find ourselves in. Nobody has instigated anything. We are all victims. Simply born into a system, that was ordained well before any of us came into existence. All we have done is try to get along within the dictates laid down by this system as best we can.

And you do follow those dictates. Because that's the way it is. Always has been. How things are done around here. How you get on. So you go along. As best you can. Even when things are going wrong. You go along. Because that's the way it is. Always has been. How things are done around here.

Essentially there is not a lot of difference between people. We all generally want the same. Family, friends, community and improving our lot, whilst having as much fun along the way as one can. Labour, Conservative, Green, Monster Raving? English, French, Romanian, Russian? Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh? We are all after the same things. Have the same fundamental beliefs and yearnings. The differences occur because we all differ in our opinions concerning who should benefit and who should pay. So we have conflict. Perpetual conflict between everybody.

Capitalism. When you actually stop and think about it, is absolutely absurd. It is a system built around the construct that somebody else should benefit more from your efforts than you do yourself. It is a system that, rather than give you your life requirements, actually denies them to you until you have paid due diligence with sweat and toil. And then ensures you continue to pay. It rations what you can do. It limits your choice and it takes away your very freedom. We all bemoan the symptoms caused by this system. Yet we support it?

We give money the credit for everything. Built the world it did. Total rubbish. What did build the world with all the wonders we have created for ourselves is work. Hours of work. All done by people who are co-operating. Money's only influence has been one of a coercive and controlling nature. An artificial construct that humans seem to think we need in order to facilitate. Intelligence and understanding would do a far better job. Everything ever built or achieved has been done because somebody somewhere put in a few hours of work. That is a reality. A fact. Money did nothing bar create an illusion of supposed wealth that cannot be attained by the vast majority of people.

The illusion of wealth. What is being wealthy all about? It's something all of us dream of. And this is the thing about money. It does create an illusion of wealth. Something to be attained. What capitalism actually does is to take all the wealth of our creation away, and then dangle it in front of us like a carrot. True wealth is really down to access. Goods, services, housing, health care, weekends away, transport,

leisure. Now, we as workers put in hours of work to create all of this wealth. We then allow somebody else to come along and say that we cannot have access to this wealth that we have just striven to create, because it belongs to them. And if we want access to any of this wealth, we will have to pay a cost that is way above the actual value of the item. Because profit has to be made. Does this make sense? Yet this is the system we all support. Wealth. Having access to the proceeds of our own work and not having to worry.

Our pursuit of profit is destroying this planet. Why do poachers poach? Or loggers log? Why do we overfish? Or over-cultivate our land? Why do we dump waste into our seas? Or pollute the very air we breathe? We all know the answer. We have to make profit.

So we have to cut a few corners along the way. How utterly absurd. We would lay this whole planet to waste simply to put a few extra zeros in a bank account.

Good management costs nothing and all it requires is a little understanding and co-operation. Which tends to come quite naturally when individual self-interest is taken out of the equation and mutual interest is put in.

But how do we live without money? By actually understanding what holds the fabric of society together.

Work, pure and simple. It is not trade deficits, GDPs or anything to do with share prices on the stock exchange. I am intelligent enough to understand that to live the life I have become accustomed to, requires a little work. I tend to believe that most people think this also. The combination of work. Different people, all doing whatever it is that their work happens to be. That is what has built this world and that is what will keep it running. Money? What does it do?

What money will do is always get in the way of something that could be better. It will always postpone a holiday. Is very good at inducing fasting regimes on days leading up to pay day. Will always prevent any political party from carrying out its agenda. Always make every little incident infinitely worse. It is absolutely brilliant at making you worry. Creating negative attitudes. Spreading disharmony. Feelings of discontent. Disunity. Abandonment. Just how long could this list go on for?

The way I see it, if you are working you are contributing towards society. A tooth on the cog as it were. So why should you not be able to then go and help yourself to what that society has to offer? Everything free. All goods and services, totally free, for everyone. Why does that concept seem so absurd to people? No matter what your present status is in life, it is a winner. No losers. Cake and eat situation.

COLIN ARIES



Why we don't buy religion

We publish below a letter from a subscriber which we publish here together with our reply.

As both a Christian and a subscriber, and avid reader, of the *Socialist Standard*, I am always interested when you include an article about religion. Alas, I am usually disappointed by the content – whereas the majority of your articles are well thought out and intellectually stimulating, religious reference is invariably clichéd and simplistic. Your 'Rear View' column (January) was a prime example. I think one of the problems is that atheists in general tend to have a rather simplistic view of what scholars mean by the word 'God', and they assume that what they are rejecting is what theists are accepting. (The supernatural, heaven, hell, miracles, virgin births etc., etc.) If I may, briefly, put my own views, it may enlighten fellow readers.

I attend church because throughout my life I have had a sense that there is more to the physical world than 'meets the eye'. Theologians give this otherness expressions like 'the beyond in our midst'. Or, as Paul the apostle suggested, '...that in which we live, move, and have our being'. Some call this otherness God, or Spirit, The Tao, life force. No, not a big man in the sky. Simply something underlying.

I personally have no great views about heaven or hell, what happens (if anything) when I die. In, fact, I am agnostic about many things theistic. I occasionally pray, but whether I am talking to myself or not, I have no idea. But yes, I am spiritual – I have a sense of wonder, awe, fascination with the world, beauty, love. I question meaning and purpose. I have a sense of connectedness with something deeper. Purely psychological?



Meta-physical? Who knows. I like church because I have a sense of mystery about this whole, strange state, of being human, and I like being with like minded people. I know enough about quantum physics to know that the physical world is far weirder than normal 'reality' suggests. I know enough about the debate on consciousness to know that the majority of scientists would say that the relationship between thought and matter remains as much a mystery as ever. And I am aware of the fact that whether light is observed as wave or mass appears, oddly, to depend to some extent on the observer. Bizarre indeed! None of this, of course, proves there is an underlying non-material entity to creation any more than it disproves it. But the whole thing really is too odd to suggest, as Rear View does, that everything can be 'adequately explained...!' A bold and rather premature statement indeed!

My other point in writing is that I am interested in how you see a truly socialist world treating 'religious' people. There is no point in saying that, because everything would be so wonderful, people would have no recourse to 'pie in the sky' and gods. That would simply be regurgitating the old clichés. There will, I suspect, always be people, like me, who are more 'spiritual' than others, as there will always be people who are artists, musicians or sportspeople. But, just as an artist is unlikely to stop painting because they are told that a photograph gives a much truer sense of reality than oil on canvas, so why bother, a spiritual person won't necessarily stop being 'spiritual' because the state says, 'but can't you see what science can do.'

My question is, would people who want to meet together to meditate, ponder, 'pray', be forbidden, even persecuted (as in many places already)? Would socialism want to wipe 'religion' off the face of the earth just because their ideology does not agree with it? Would the majority dictate what one is allowed to think (as 'political correctness' already does)? Worrying.

Should you print or reply to my letter in any form, I hope that you will refrain from the usual list of historic (and present day) religious horror stories to make your point. Yes, we all know about the crusades, the Reformation, modern day ISIS, child abuse etc etc. Yes, we all know that organised religion is part of the establishment and the Churches have vast wealth and why should bishops have a say in parliament. And yes, I know the God of the Old Testament is hardly a role model for love and forgiveness. Socialists get very annoyed (quite rightly) when the media rubbishes socialism largely because they don't understand that there has never been a true socialist state. In the same way, Christians would say that the horrors perpetuated in the 'Christian' name have never been truly Christian, and that the Christian vision of 'the Kingdom of God' (love, peace, goodwill, equality, brotherhood etc.) have likewise never been achieved. We have that in common; socialists and Christians are both mocked and ridiculed in today's Britain. Let's at least try to understand each other.

I will just finish by saying that I have written this from a Christian perspective. I am sure disciples of other faiths could say similar things. Finally, I think your journal is an excellent read. Capitalism and its feed consumerism is no way to run the world. There must be a better way.

Stephen Murphy, Crook, County Durham.

Reply:

We certainly agree that the universe is stranger and weirder and more mysterious than we currently understand, or possibly will ever understand. But you have misinterpreted our statement that 'the origin and development of the universe, of life, of society and religion itself can be explained adequately' because you missed out the remainder of the sentence '... without recourse to the so-called supernatural'.

Obviously we don't mean that everything has already been explained, only that when it comes to gods 'we have no need of that hypothesis'.

We're glad you like reading the *Socialist Standard*, but bemused that you think you might be persecuted for your beliefs in a socialist society. In general the only people who persecute religious people are other religious people. Scandinavian countries are the most secular in the world, and they are not famous for their religious persecution. We take the practical view that everyone is free to believe what they like in socialism, as long as it hurts nobody else. We don't think it's a cliché to suggest, like Marx, that religion is an opiate that only oppressed people need, which is why we imagine it would fade away through neglect and without any help from us.

But you posit a special case, the uniquely 'spiritual' person whose existence implies that religion will always exist. This is an abiding fascination among many religious people, the idea of a 'spirit' which they think they possess but which is partially or wholly lacking in atheists. What they really mean is that atheism is a form of disability, something less than fully human. We get this a lot, as atheists (actually we prefer the term 'materialists'), and it is quite wearing. To us it sounds rather like what white supremacists think of black people, or patriarchal males think of women, or entitled rich people think of the 'lower orders'. These world views love to fence themselves in with a narcissistic and self-congratulatory belief in their own superiority. Belittling others makes them feel all warm and cuddly. When religious people tell us how deeply 'spiritual' they are, it comes off as passive aggression.

Any 'atheist' will tell you that the ability to feel profound

wonder and joy at the beauty and majesty of existence is not at all a religious faculty, it is a human faculty shared by all of us. We don't stop appreciating the grandeur of a sunrise just because we understand something about how nuclear fusion works.

In the interests of trying to understand each other, we ought to try and explain why we are an 'atheist' organisation. Partly it's because, as you know, many religions like to impose a deferential mindset that is all about maintaining the status quo. But there are all sorts of new-wave religions, supernatural belief systems and random superstitions which don't fit this conventional hierarchical model.

A more crucial argument is the nature of the socialist project. Capitalism is a universal human problem but it exists in a world fragmented into cultural, moral, linguistic, geographical and psychological tribalisms. A universal problem requires a universal solution, and a universal solution must be conveyed in a universal language. The only universal language we know is science, and the method of science. So we base our socialist case on the scientific method, on evidence-based reasoning. Religion – of whatever sort – is a matter of personal faith and so has nothing to say to science, nor to any pursuit which aims to follow the scientific method. You may certainly argue that religious people like yourself could be socialists despite this, but it is our experience that religious people on the whole seem more concerned with their personal faith than with class politics, which is perhaps why we have never heard of any large-scale religious socialist movement – **Editors.**

COOKING THE BOOKS

Boris's gift nag

'Boris Johnson to raise minimum wage four times inflation' was how news agencies reported the government's decision, announced on 31 December, to accept the Low Pay Commission's recommendation to increase the minimum wage for over-25s from £8.20 to £8.72 an hour from the beginning of April. What is this? The world turned upside down with a Tory government bringing in a 6.2 percent wage increase by decree?

Not really, as all is not what meets the eye. The Cameron Tory government had already adopted the long-term aim of reducing the wage subsidy to employers represented by the tax credit scheme that makes the income of the lowest-paid workers up to the poverty line. Shifting the burden back on to employers was to be achieved by gradually increasing the minimum wage since as a person's income increases so their tax credit payment goes down.

Marx didn't think much of minimum wage legislation. In 1880 some members of the newly-formed French Workers Party came to London to ask him to help draw up their election programme. It consisted of two parts, the long-term aim of socialism and a list of immediate demands. Afterwards Marx wrote a letter in which he said that the second part included 'some trivialities which

Guesde found it necessary to throw to the French workers notwithstanding my protest, such as fixing the minimum wage by law, etc (I told him: "If the French proletariat is still so childish as to require such bait, it is not worth while drawing up any program whatever")' (tinyurl.com/s3n4z2w). Presumably he felt that it went too far as a vote-catching bait as it was unrealistic and unenforceable.

Maybe it was at the time but nowadays most developed capitalist countries have such laws. In 1999 the Blair Labour government introduced a national minimum wage (previously this had existed only for some sectors such as for agricultural labourers). In 2015 the Tory government renamed the rate for over-25s the 'National Living Wage' (NLW). Probably it has prevented some workers in industries where it is hard to organise effective trade unions from being paid less than the value of the low-grade labour power their employers seek, even though it will have rendered some others unemployable.

In its report on the application of the law in 2019, the Low Pay Commission listed reactions by employers to increases in the NLW: taking a cut in profits, seeking to increase prices, introducing automation, and increasing work intensity. These are the same as to any wage increase, whether imposed by law, trade

union pressure, or tight labour market conditions.

The Commission noted that 'absorbing some or all of the cost of the NLW through a reduction in profits was often the most common response'. This would be a sign that competitive conditions didn't allow a price increase; the Commission itself noted that some businesses 'do not have this option, whether because of market structures or reliance on government funding'. So much for the myth that wage increases cause rising prices.

Worrying from a worker point of view, but par for the course, is the fourth option of work intensification:

'Employers reported expecting more flexibility and effort from staff, adding tasks to job roles and raising performance standards. Workers told us of the increased pressure they have come under from such changes.'

(tinyurl.com/t77l89t). The working for wages system is a trap from which there is no escape. What you get from one hand is often taken away by the other. No wonder Marx urged trade unionists to work for its abolition.

PROPER GANDER

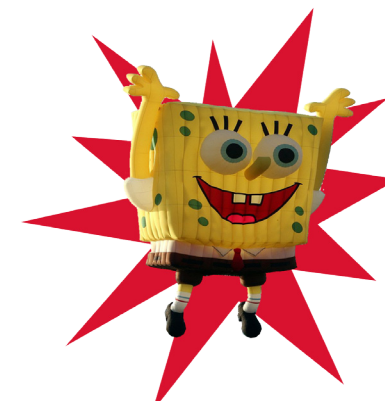
YouTube And You

IN THE FIVE-or-so minutes it'll take to read this article, some 2,500 hours of new videos will be uploaded to YouTube. The website hosts videos of just about anything which anyone with the facilities wants to post. This means that we have instant access not only to obscure pop videos from 40 years ago and films of cats playing pianos, but also to views and experiences outside those of the mainstream media. YouTube is one of the most useful parts of the internet. But in practice, it's tainted by having to be a money-making machine which uses sly methods to draw in more viewers. Videos often get rudely interrupted by adverts and there's the vaguely unsettling way the site seems to know what else we might like to watch. Our previous searches for videos are turned into algorithms which then find similar content to suggest back to us. While this can be handy, it also has its downsides, especially with political content. Being prompted to watch more and more of the same set of opinions without comparing them to others can reinforce dodgy ideologies among any naïve viewers. This has been exploited by right wing groups and individuals, whose YouTube content seems to heavily outnumber that of the left and often has slicker production values. It's easier to find videos mocking 'social justice warriors' than videos by 'social justice warriors' themselves. Fearing that association with far right wing views might tarnish its brand, and therefore its profitability, YouTube has adjusted its algorithms to reduce bias towards far right content, stopped some uploaders from getting money through adverts and banned others.

But as well as the political dross, YouTube has a wealth of videos exploring revolutionary and radical ideas. A good enough starting point as any is a quick and brief debunking of the most common arguments defending capitalism, found in the video *Top Ten Capitalist Arguments* (tinyurl.com/v99uwwv). One of these is the claim that 'capitalism promotes innovation', refuted by research saying that financial incentives don't really work and that more creativity happens when people believe their activity has intrinsic value, rather than just being a means to get money. Another argument is that 'markets [are] a rational means of organising economic life', disproved because about a third of food produced is wasted while people are starving, and

also because some commodities have built-in obsolescence, being designed to stop working so we'll go out and buy a replacement. The video also counters the notion that 'capitalism is a result of human nature' by pointing out that humans have existed for hundreds of thousands of years whereas capitalism has only been around for a few hundred.

The 'human nature' issue is addressed in more detail in *Wired For Culture – The Natural History of Human Co-operation* (tinyurl.com/s2lkreu), a lecture from the RSA (Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce). In this, evolutionary biologist Mark Pagel explains how 'human nature' is fundamentally co-operative, rather than



competitive. Both these traits developed from our distant ancestors living in and protecting their tribal communities. Although these early communities could be hostile to other groups, overall, co-operation has won out because it benefits us more than competition does.

But our drive to co-operate is frustrated by the divisions built in to capitalist society, and one way to explain this is through Karl Marx's theory of alienation, covered by several videos on YouTube. Alienation is the way that capitalism, and especially employment, distances us from important aspects of our lives. The four types of alienation which class society leads to – alienation from the products of our labour, from our labour itself, from others and ourselves – are succinctly explained in a five minute video from Sociology Live (tinyurl.com/yx6l3s6d). A more emotive short introduction is *K is for Karl – Alienation*, presented by journalist Paul Mason (tinyurl.com/ve6bcm). He explains how the roots of alienation are in how capitalist institutions are privately owned, straight away estranging workers from them, further reinforced by their

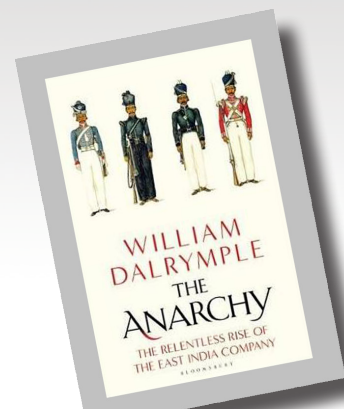
hierarchies.

Of course, the antidote to alienation is a society based not on the private ownership of production, but on it being owned in common and democratically managed. Such a society would not need money, and would instead be based on free access to goods and services. A world without money is explored in a video of a TED talk at the University of Edinburgh given by political writer Jade Saab (tinyurl.com/uo7jmpf). He gives an engaging summary of SPGB-style views about the benefits of a moneyless society, but then he goes and spoils it all by saying something stupid about governments. He doesn't use the word 'state' but he seems to assume that governments can remain in a moneyless society. This might be sloppy wording on his part, as articles on his website suggest a more progressive view. For example, he says a moneyless society 'would require a fundamental change in our economic system away from the private ownership of the means of production, towards a democratic model where citizens and workers can determine how the means of production are managed and what is done with them. Only through the democratic control of the means of production can we then democratically decide how access to goods and services produced can be managed'.

He adds that a moneyless society would 'challenge our very notion of what 'countries' are and how they function. I do not believe that a 'world government' will evolve but collaboration would naturally lead to forms of federation where resources, their extraction, transformation, and distribution is discussed through democratic systems. The UN and the EU provide interesting templates of what these collaborative 'super-structures' may look like' (tinyurl.com/wuen59t). Saab's viewpoint would benefit from a bit more class consciousness and imagination to think beyond capitalist structures, but otherwise much of what he says is familiar to socialists. As YouTube shows, radical ideas are out there waiting to be found, helping to counter reactionary views from both the right and left. The Socialist Party's own videos can be found on the YouTube channels 'TheSPGB1904', 'pfbcarlisle' and 'Liverpool SPGB', among others. However, searching for 'SPGB' occasionally also brings up videos of *SpongeBob SquarePants*, presumably thanks to a stray algorithm.

MIKE FOSTER

Imperial plunder



The Anarchy: The Relentless Rise of the East India Company. William Dalrymple, Bloomsbury, 2019

Of all the many Indian words which have entered the English language (bungalow, dungarees, khaki, pyjamas, etc.), one of the first was Hindustani slang for plunder: *loot*. By the late eighteenth century it was in common usage in Britain. Its introduction can be directly attributed to the East India Company (EIC), founded as a joint-stock company in London in 1600. The creation of joint-stock companies played an important part in the early stage of British capitalism. Merchants and other businesses could accept investors who had the cash but were not involved in the running of the business. Shares could be bought by anyone and their price could rise or fall depending on demand and the success of the business. The EIC started as a trading company, mainly with India, but with investors eager for dividends it took on a more aggressive role. By 1765 it had become so powerful it overthrew India's Mughal Empire, and began the systematic looting of that country using its own private army. At 200,000, it was twice the size of the British army, and had more firepower than any state in Asia.

According to Dalrymple's detailed study, by the late eighteenth century the EIC had become 'the most advanced capitalist organisation in the world.' It ruled most of India from a boardroom in the City of London, and Robert Clive was its manager in India. Dalrymple describes him as 'a violent, utterly ruthless and intermittently mentally unstable predator'. But he was successful in enriching its investors. Clive returned to Britain with a personal fortune, then valued at £234,000, making him one of the richest men in Europe who had not inherited wealth. He transferred to the EIC £2.4 million (about £262 million

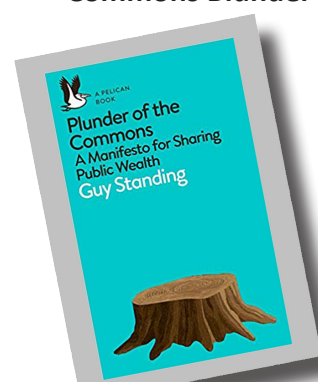
today), seized from the Bengal treasury.

The EIC's reach was global. To the east it transported opium to China, and in due course fought the Opium Wars in order to secure its profitable monopoly in narcotics. To the West it shipped Chinese tea to America where its dumping in Boston harbour triggered the American War of Independence. One of the principal fears of those who wanted independence from British rule, in the run up to the war, was that the EIC would loot the Americas in the same way as it had done India.

The East India bubble soon burst after the looting and the resulting famine in India led to massive shortfalls in revenue. Huge debts accrued and the Bank of England had to bail out the EIC with a series of loans, culminating with a request to the British government for £1.4 million in 1772 (£147 million today). As the EIC generated nearly half Britain's trade, it was judged to be too big to fail. As Dalrymple puts it, 'the world's first aggressive multinational corporation was saved by one of history's first mega-bailouts'. As a result of this bailout a process of state interference began in the running of the EIC, ending with its nationalisation in 1858. Having served its purpose in establishing a large part of Britain's empire, the EIC was dissolved in 1874 and its remaining functions transferred to the British state. As Edmund Burke wrote: 'The Constitution of the Company began in commerce and ended in Empire'.

LEW

Commons Blunder



Guy Standing: Plunder of the Commons: a Manifesto for Sharing Public Wealth. Pelican £9.99.

In a Supreme Court ruling towards the end of last year, an open space in Lancaster lost its status as a village green, on the grounds that the fields might be needed for the expansion of the local school (*Guardian online* 14 December - bit.

ly/2tjWx8c). One campaigner said, 'this judgment totally redefines the way we understand land held in the public domain'. This is just one example of the kind of development discussed in Guy Standing's book, which in some ways complements Brett Christophers' *The New Enclosure*, reviewed in the January *Socialist Standard*. Rather than just looking at the selling-off of state-owned land, it examines many examples of the privatisation or commercialisation of 'the commons', described as 'all our shared natural resources ... and all the social, civic and cultural institutions that our ancestors have bequeathed to us'.

As this suggests, different types of commons are identified. The natural commons consists of land, minerals, forests, rivers, sea, air, sky, while the social commons comprises public housing, healthcare, roads, public parks and so on. The civil commons is not so clearly defined, but includes the rule of law, justice and personal freedom. The cultural commons includes libraries, museums, mass media and sport, and the knowledge commons covers information, ideas and learning. In all these areas, there have been many examples of enclosure, such as cuts to the funding of national parks, the privatisation of water supplies and much of the NHS, the selling of allotment sites, the closing of libraries, and the domination of Google in providing information. Much of this material has been written about elsewhere, of course, but it is useful to have it summarised in a single volume.

Standing's solution to all this is to propose a Charter of the Commons, which, for instance, contains statements such as 'Farm subsidies based on the amount of land owned should be abolished' and 'Local markets selling fresh and local produce should be encouraged and protected'. A Commons Fund would be financed by a levy on all use of the commons, by a tax on wealth, land value taxation and a carbon levy. It should pay Common Dividends to everyone, thus constituting a basic income. But these ideas might equally well be summarised as 'Capitalism should be run as a nice friendly system'.

One article in the proposed Charter is: 'Privatized water companies must be restored to common ownership'. This reveals one of the problems with the whole concept of the commons employed here. Ownership and control by the state (whether of water or the railways or whatever) is emphatically not common ownership, as people still need to pay to have access to them. Standing

writes: 'our public wealth has been plundered by encroachment, enclosure, commercialization, privatization and colonization of Britain's commons': but it was not public wealth in the sense of being owned by the people. Common ownership implies an end not just to privatisation but to wage labour, production for profit and the class division of capitalism.

PB

Even if he wasn't an idiot

Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison has expressed regret over his handling of the bushfire crisis ravaging the country, a disaster that has killed 28 people. He conceded there were things he could have handled much better. He had been heckled in the town of Cobargo in New South Wales, where some locals called him an idiot and said he wouldn't be getting any votes there. He had been on holiday in Hawaii. When the bushfires worsened he said there was a new appetite for the government to take a more direct role in responding to the disaster. In an interview, the PM defended his government's approach, saying he took into account the effect of climate change, another one of capitalism's features, on the bushfires.

Australia is just like any other capitalist country, operating a system of society where the means of production are in the hands of a tiny minority who use the land and all the machinery, raw materials and the instruments for producing wealth and distribution solely for profit and reinvesting it as capital to make more capital. Until the working class understands this, the capitalist system will carry on bringing what it must bring to the working class, the same social problems.

This will go on until the working class organise consciously and politically to get control of the state for their own class interests, using the vote and parliament and to establish socialism as a system of society based on common ownership of the means of production and distribution and the democratic methods of meeting to decide and mandate what products will be built and used to meet their human needs.

The working class keep voting for the status quo, all the orthodox parties and all the ones that call themselves socialist but in reality it is capitalism with reforms they mistakenly think will lead eventually to socialism.

The Australian working class must understand that Mr Morrison, even if he wasn't an idiot and doesn't understand this, must run capitalism in the only way it can be run – in the interests of the capitalist class.

E. O'NEILL

Bad Marx – See Me!

I must begin with a mea culpa. For around four decades I was a 'Marxist Leninist', sometimes actively, often more passively. What I thus demonstrated to myself is an individual's capacity for self-delusion.

The ideology associated with Lenin continues to be presented, by adherents and foes alike, as the realisation of Marxism, the actuality of communism when put into practice. The subsequent abject failure of the Soviet Union and its bloc confirming the inherent impracticality of socialism.

Not that 'Marxism-Leninism' has gone away. There remains 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', more accurately, burgeoning capitalism protected by an authoritarian one-party state. Cross the border into North Korea and the only 'socialism' to be found is akin to 'National Socialism'.

Vietnam, Cuba, Venezuela et al make various socialistic claims and can boast some successes with enlightened social policies. However, the working class in each still stands in the same relationship to capital as in avowedly capitalist countries, with the common tendency to authoritarianism.

Stated boldly, the working class may have acquired limited influence in the ruling bodies of capitalist states, but without assuming control, or anything approaching it, anywhere. Those states that developed state capitalism as the dominant mode as opposed to the 'free' market, often adopt, or are ascribed, 'Communist' or 'Socialist' as labels of convenience.

Socialism, in Marxist terms, is synonymous with communism, it is not an interim state of unspecified length, with communism promoted as the distant, very, very distant, Promised Land, while the state far from 'withering away' actually becomes much stronger and entrenched and then gradually moribund.

Nonetheless, mention socialism or communism to many (perhaps most) folk and it's Leninism that is conjured up. Indeed, whatever fleeting contact people have with socialism it is usually in the form of a 'Communist' Party, of which there are quite a few, or a 'Socialist' party/group styling themselves Trotskyist, of which there are more.

Despite their virulent antipathy to each other, they share a common feature. Each is the vanguard of an exclusive, and self-serving, interpretation of Marxism by which the

working class will be led along the socialist road to communism. And yet, in the unlikely circumstances of actually being in a position to do so, all would actually establish state capitalism.

What defines socialism in Marxist terms is the relationship of the producers to the means of wealth creation: do they have full control over those means being held democratically in common? If producers are employed by the state, paid wages by the state, with the state controlling the means of wealth creation and surplus value, then they do not. That is still capitalism.

The attraction of 'Marxism-Leninism' is the sense that unless it is led by those who understand the grander scheme, workers will at best develop what Lenin referred to as 'trade union consciousness', going no further than making bargains with capitalism.

Indeed, the working class has, so far, singularly failed to lift its eyes from the politics of the here and now, to the grander vision of what is actually possible. The temptation is to take people by the political scruff and drag them to their destination. Unfortunately, that destination is always the state claiming to act on their behalf.

However, unless the working class acts for itself by consciously pursuing its own interests, socialism cannot come about. To be blunt, if the working class cannot be inspired and educated to vote for socialism where it is able to do so, then it certainly cannot be compelled to be socialist. Of course, socialism is not a simple matter of an overwhelming electoral or parliamentary majority. However, that would be an indication that the working class was pursuing a new society on its own behalf. There would be no need for a Lenin, living or embalmed. Until Leninism has been decoupled from Marxism it will continue to serve as an ideological bulwark containing working class potential. It is the militant counterpoint to the reformism of social democracy. Both act, in their own ways, as distractions from confronting the actualities of capitalism and the need for the working class to actively engage with transcending it.

I was afflicted by elective political blindness, but once my vision cleared I saw there are no short cuts. It is also became clear that defending the indefensible – Leninism and its derivatives Stalinism and Trotskyism – is, in the tragic terms of the Soviet purges, a crime against the people.

DAVID ALTON

50 Years Ago

Slaughter in Vietnam

Socialists look at war in a fundamentally different way from people with other political persuasions. We contend that war in the modern world is caused by the workings of capitalism with its struggles over trade, investments, oil and other resources.

The workers of the world have an identity of interests and have nothing at stake in the thieves' quarrels of their masters. The working class owns no country. None of the resources are theirs; they have nothing to fight for and everything to gain by uniting to end the system that enslaves them and produces wars and other terrible problems.

Supporters of Trotskyism and the so-called Communist Party support war and take one side or the other, thus lending themselves to the shedding of working class blood for the profits of the capitalist class East or West.

In the case of Vietnam these people seek Victory for the Vietcong and line up behind the nationalist aspirations of developing Vietnamese capitalism.

If it could be shown that Vietnam was an exceptional incident to an otherwise peaceful and humane capitalism and if all that needed to be done was to end this war and all would be well in the world, all the talk and press comments about "this senseless war" might have some point. The fact is that no argument can be advanced condemning the war in Vietnam which would not be equally valid for the first and second world wars, for Korea and all other 73 conflicts that have taken place in the last twenty years. War is a normal

condition of capitalism. An article in *US. News and World Report* (August 28, 1968) shows there have been no less than 128 wars since 1898 and that 57 per cent of these have taken place since the last world war. It must be clear from this that a particular war is an effect which cannot be dealt with in isolation. What we are confronting is a society that produces wars.

(*Socialist Standard*, February 1970)



The Socialist Party's 2020 Summer School looks at technological progress and its application in the past, present and future. This weekend of talks and discussion is an exciting opportunity to share and explore revolutionary ideas, in the relaxing setting of Fircroft College in Birmingham.

The Socialist Party's Summer School

From the development of the first tools and the wheel through to the invention of the printing press, the steam engine, the microprocessor and beyond, technology has always shaped how we live. Scientific developments take place in the context of the social and economic conditions of the time. In capitalism, technological progress and how technology is used are driven by what is profitable and cost effective more than by what is really needed and wanted. This means that technology is often used in ways which go against our best interests, whether through environmental damage, the development of ever-more destructive weapons or the misuse of

Technology

7th - 9th August 2020
Fircroft College, Birmingham

data gathered online and through social media. In a future socialist society based on common ownership and democratic organisation of industries and services, technology could really be used to benefit us, in harmony with the environment.

Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £100, and the concessionary rate is £50. Day visitors are welcome, but please book in advance.

E-mail enquiries should be sent to spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk. To book a place online, go to spgb.net/summer-school-2020 or send a cheque (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) with your contact details to Summer School, The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN.

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

THE PASSING OF A COMRADE

It is with sadness that we inform you that one of our New Zealand comrades, Jim Ryder, has passed away.

James Alan Ryder (known as Jim) was born in Liverpool July 18 1931 , and died October 25 2019.

He spent a good part of his life as a merchant seaman, and having visited New Zealand many times, decided to settle here in the 1970's.

Jim, who became involved with and joined the World Socialist Party NZ , looked forward to attending the Party meetings and participating in spreading the Socialist message at every opportunity - a comrade who lived his life as a true Socialist.

As a seaman, based in New Zealand , he was on ships which frequented the Port of Tauranga (in the Bay of Plenty) and sailed to Australia and I believe Japan, until his retirement.

His home/work for those trips was on the Tasman Venture or Tasman Enterprise - two ships owned by Tasman Pulp and Paper NZ , and operated by the Union Steamship Co of NZ.

He was a good friend who would give you the shirt off his back - always happy, always singing, a typical Scouser. Jim loved his dogs and loved having a beer with his friends.

In retirement he lived in Auckland and then the seaside town of Whangamata, where he passed away .

He instructed his friends in Whangamata to have his ashes put into two urns, one to join his son in Liverpool, and the other to be taken out to sea.

Maurice Gribble, on behalf of the World Socialist Party (New Zealand)

Meetings:

FEBRUARY 2020

CARDIFF

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

Street Stall

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

MANCHESTER

Saturday 22 February, 2.00 p.m.

Public meeting: "Where Charity Begins and Why It Should End"

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

Meet before the meeting at 1.15 p.m. in the Central Library café on St Peter's Square for lunch, coffee or a chat.

LONDON

Saturday 29 February, 2.00 p.m.

Public meeting: "What should socialists do now: Socialist principles and policy".

Venue: Friends Meeting House, 20 Nigel Playfair Rd (off King St, at Town Hall), London W6 9JF (nearest tubes: Hammersmith or Ravenscourt Park)

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

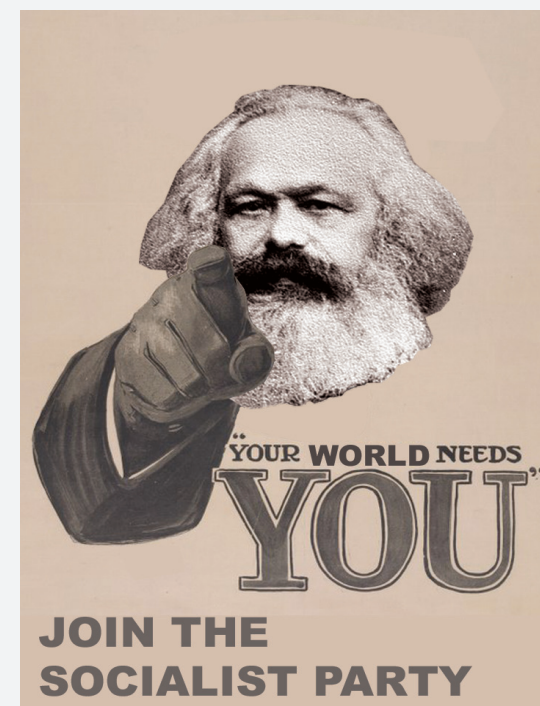
The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

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.





It started with a twit or rather a tweet

During the season of goodwill, one Jamie Evans saw a jigsaw map of Great Britain and tweeted 'is there any reason Wales has suddenly become part of England?' The *Daily Mirror* (24 December), along with others, covered the story: 'M&S blasted for £8 jigsaw of the UK that offends "absolutely everyone"'. Jamie, a Plaid Cymru councillor in Neath, said it's not the first time the store had forgotten about Wales. He hit out: 'During the 2016 European football championships, which Wales were in, M&S put up posters urging people to support England. We're used to it in Wales now, being subjected to that nonsense'. The nonsense is manifold. The original map dates from the 1800s. Whether Ireland (then a colony), Scotland, Wales, even Cornwall are independent matters not. Plaid Cymru deny that our problems are caused by the class monopoly of the means of production, in short, by capitalism. The solution lies not in nationalism, which is a delusion and a snare, but in world socialism.

Countries come and go, borders change, capitalism persists

Remember *Refugia*, the Utopian island between Italy and Tunisia, proposed as a solution to the 'refugee and migrant crisis' by two Oxford dons in 2016? The idea is going nowhere and that of *No Borders* fading: noborder.org has been dormant since mid-2013 and noborders.org.uk not updated since early November last year. Their slogans are worth recalling: *No Border, No Nation, Stop Deportations!* and *No one is Illegal*. Remember Biafra? The war for independence from Nigeria lasted over two and a half years and more than one million people lost their lives. Also worth recalling is that 'Nigeria is an entirely artificial, colonial construct created by the British Empire (and bounded by the French Empire). Its boundaries bear no relation to internal national entities, and it is huge. The strange thing is that

these totally artificial colonial constructs of states generate a genuine and fierce patriotism among their citizens....' (ICH. 14 March 2015). And: 'Less than two decades after the painstaking removal of a massive border fence designed to keep people in, Bulgarian authorities are just as painstakingly building a new fence along the rugged Turkish border, this time to keep people out' (*New York Times*, 5 April 2015).

Time For a New 'Christmas Truce'?

'They lived in similar squalor, shared the same God, and celebrated the same holidays. It was December 24, 1914, Christmas Eve, and – though they spoke different languages and had ruthlessly



killed one another for over four months – the British and German soldiers in the opposing trench lines had much in common' (truthdig.com, 25 December). The author makes the same point about shared interests of those involved in conflicts in the 100 years since then. Indeed, the vast majority of those existing

in countries as diverse as Afghanistan, Germany, Iraq, Libya, Russia and Syria have far more in common than they do with their respective generals, politicians and economic overlords, a fact recognised before, during and after the war to end all wars:

'...The poor have no country, in all lands, they suffer from the same evils, and they, therefore, realise that the barriers put up by the powers that be the more thoroughly to enslave the people must fall' (International Working Men's Association, 1866).

'In a class society, "the nation" as a homogeneous socio-political entity does not exist. Rather, there exist within each nation, classes with antagonistic interests and "rights"' (Rosa Luxemburg, *The National Question*, 1909).

'I have no country to fight for; my country is the Earth, and I am a citizen of the World' (Eugene Debs, 1915).

'The old lie: It is sweet and right to die for one's country' (Wilfred Owen, 1918).

'.. [no] policy for settling minority problems and international rivalries within the framework of capitalism is capable of bringing peace and democracy to the peoples of the world. Another war would be followed by new treaties forced on the vanquished by the victors, and by preparations for further wars, new dictatorships and terrorism. The Socialist Party... reiterates the call it issued in 1914: "Having no quarrel with the working class of any country, we extend to our fellow workers of all lands the expression of our goodwill and socialist fraternity, and pledge ourselves to work for the overthrow of capitalism and the triumph of Socialism"' (Socialist Party, September 1939).

Imagine there's no countries; It isn't hard to do; Nothing to kill or die for; And no religion, too (*Imagine*, John Lennon, 1971).

FREE LUNCH

