

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 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.

**The Socialist Party's  
Summer School**

**Technology**

**7th - 9th August 2020  
on the SPGB's Discord server**

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 with others, through the SPGB's Discord server. To join in or for further information, e-mail [spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk).

Friday 7th August 7.30pm

### **Is Marxism technological determinism?**

**Adam Buick**

"In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist." (Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, 1847)

"It is the development of tools, of these technical aids which men direct, which is the main cause, the propelling force of all social development. It is self-understood that the people are ever trying to improve these tools so that their labour be easier and more productive, and the practice they acquire in using these tools, leads their thoughts upon further improvements. Owing to this development, a slow or quick progress of technique takes place, which at the same time changes the social forms of labour. This leads to new class relations, new social institutions and new classes." (Anton Pannekoek, *Marxism and Darwinism*, 1912) To what extent, if at all, is this a theory of technological determinism? How do changes in technology lead to a change of society?

Saturday 8th August 10.00am

### **How the Socialist Party can use technology better**

**Jake AWOFA**

Socialist Party sympathiser Jake AWOFA's site 'A World of Free Access' has a following of 17,000 on Facebook, and he joins us from Western Australia to open a discussion on ideas about how the Socialist Party can make better use of technology. How can our online and social media presence be improved? Can technology help us be (even) more democratic? What are our views on Discord?

Saturday 2.00pm

### **Ideology as technology**

**Bill Martin**

This talk looks at the how the way we think is

a form of technology. Starting with mundane objects, like a bicycle, it looks at how the ideas behind inventions are not the outcomes of lone geniuses and inspiration, but are connected to social relations and practices. It discounts the idea that history is driven by simple technological changes, and looks back to the age of conquest to show it was how technology was applied, rather than the possession of technology itself, that was behind the establishment of the European empires. It concludes by looking at the implications for socialism and how a future society might use technology.

Saturday 4.00pm

### **How we feel about technology - the views of Günther Anders and beyond**

**Mike Foster**

'Philosophical anthropologist' Günther Anders' theories about our attitudes towards technology were formed in the middle of the last century, when television and the nuclear bomb represented the latest in human achievements. He argued that technology makes us feel ashamed, not because of the impact of the mass media or the threat of nuclear war, but because we have become inferior to the technology we have created. Since Anders' time, technological progress has given us smartphones, artificial intelligence and the world wide web, feats which he would argue further humanity's obsolescence. This talk gives a Marxist perspective on Anders' theories and their implications in today's hi-tech world.

Saturday 6.00pm

### **Quiz night**

Saturday 7.00pm

### **Social**

Sunday 9th August 10.00am

### **Digital technologies as a core of social organisation of the future**

**Leon Rozanov**

Direct democracy may have worked well in ancient Greek city-states with thousands of decision-makers. Now with most modern

states having millions of citizens, the most widespread form of democracy is representative, and it is easily hijacked by the interests of capital owners or political figures who serve them. Even if socialist ideas were to become more widespread, it remains a question, how exactly would democratic principles that we all consider indispensable be put to work for a socialist society to function efficiently?

One of the earliest markers of human societies differentiating themselves from other animals was language, and later its written form, text. We have learned to pass knowledge on to future generations, and the earliest texts are almost exclusively collections of rules and laws that helped organise societies according to their commonly shared values and beliefs. If we want to create a successful future society based on socialist principles, we need to cement these principles in the text of modern technologies - software code - that will have principles of equality, fairness and resource- and need-based economy built into the digital technologies specifically designed to help run this society.

Sunday 11.30am

### **The 4th Industrial Revolution, what it is, what it means, what capitalism is doing with it, and what socialism could do with it**

**Paddy Shannon**

Just as people didn't stop using stone as a material when they learned to use bronze, then iron, and then plastic, industrial revolutions have also overlapped, with first-generation steam turbines still producing second-generation electrical power, controlled by third-generation digital computer interfaces. Now a tsunami of new acronyms including AI, IoT and VR is breaking over the top of all that, the so-called 4th industrial revolution. If you're still having trouble figuring out how to do online shopping on your home computer, you'd really better strap in and hold onto your hat, because capitalism is about to go to warp speed.