

socialist standard

October 2020
Vol.116 No.1394
£1.50

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain and the Communist Party of the World Socialist Movement

**PANDEMICS,
RACE WARS,
FOREST FIRES**



no answers, just the
**SAME OLD MEDIA
CIRCUS**

*also: Food
Democracy
Imperialism*



socialist standard

Contents October 2020

Features

- 5 The Lesser Evil**
Illusion of Choice
- 10 Food for Thought**
A Right of Access
- 12 The US Elections**
Historical Side Show
- 14 Democracy**
Enemy of Capital
- 16 Imperialism**
Part 3
- 18 Hong Kong**
China's Jackboot

Regulars

- Editorial 3**
- Pathfinders 4**
- Cooking the Books 6**
- Material World 9**
- Proper Gander 19**
- Reviews 20**
- 50 Years Ago 22**
- Rear View 24**



Introducing the Socialist Party

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

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



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

Gradualist reformers like the Labour Party believed that capitalism could be transformed through a series of social measures, but have merely become routine managers of the system. The Bolsheviks had to be content with

developing Russian capitalism under a one-party dictatorship. Both failures have given socialism a quite different -- and unattractive -- meaning: state ownership and control. As the *Socialist Standard* pointed out before both courses were followed, the results would more properly be called state capitalism.

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

Beyond the false choice

The time has come again when American workers are conned into thinking that choosing between Tweedledee and Tweedledum as their next President will make a great difference in their lives.

Oh, but isn't Donald Trump a dangerously divisive figure and a threat to American democracy? Some argue that he may defy the election result should it go against him and refuse to leave office. Surely American workers must get behind Joe Biden and the Democrats. Yes, just like they were supposed to get behind John Kerry to defeat the warmonger George W Bush in 2004, only for nice Mr Kerry to become an enthusiastic warmonger in Barack Obama's government.

This election is taking place in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic and the continuing Black Lives Matter street protests. Trump is taking full advantage of the political unrest to portray himself as the law and order candidate and is accusing Democratic governors of being soft on the protesters. The Biden campaign, on the other hand, wants to present itself as standing up for social

justice and being sympathetic to the aims of the Black Lives Matter movement. To bolster his progressive credentials, Biden has picked Kamala Harris as his running mate. Biden is also trying to capitalise on Trump's alleged mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic and the fallout from the accompanying economic slump.

However, this political posturing obscures the fundamental truth that the Republicans and Democrats are on the same side when it comes to upholding the existing system. Whether under the 'liberal' Joe Biden or the 'far-right' Donald Trump, the workers will continue to be exploited. They will have to work for a wage and if they can't find employment they may face the indignities of poverty and even homelessness. They will still be required to fight in capitalism's wars.

A New York Times article ('The Wallets of Wall Street Are With Joe Biden, if Not the Hearts', 10 August) reveals whom the two main parties really serve – 'Wall Street has fared extraordinarily well under Mr. Trump: deep cuts to taxes, slashed regulations and, until the pandemic hit,

record stock prices'. Despite this, more Wall Street capitalists appear to be ditching Trump in favour of Biden – 'More and more finance professionals, they say, appear to be sidelining their concerns about Mr. Biden's age — 77 — and his style. They are surprisingly unperturbed at the likelihood of his raising their taxes and stiffening oversight of their industry. In return, they welcome the more seasoned and methodical presidency they believe he could bring'.

Some American workers are getting wise to what these two parties are really about. On 30 August, thousands of American workers joined an online 'People's Convention', which pledged to set up a People's Party to fight the elections in 2021. Unfortunately, we cannot support the reformist platform of this new party with pledges such as 'single-payer health care, a \$15 minimum wage' (peoplesparty.org). But we are encouraged that more workers are looking beyond the established capitalist political parties. Hopefully in the not too distant future, they will begin to look beyond capitalism itself.

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



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


☐

Please send me an info pack

☐

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



Name

Address

Postcode

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

PATHFINDERS

Capitalism by gaslight

IN THE 1944 film *Gaslight*, a young couple (Charles Boyer and Ingrid Bergman) move back into the house of her aunt, murdered years before. The wife is an ordinary and intelligent woman, however she is subtly undermined by her husband's constant references to her forgetfulness, silly anxieties and overactive imagination. He says these things so often, she thinks they must be true. When she starts to hear strange noises in the ceiling, he clucks soothingly, tells her she's tired and advises her to get better rest. When the lights keep going down on the gas lamps, he expresses heartfelt concern that she's becoming overwrought, and needs medication. He makes her doubt the evidence of her senses. He makes her think she's going mad. In fact, he is doing it all on purpose. The plan is to have her committed to a mental institution so he can steal her inheritance from the aunt he murdered. He is foiled in the end, of course, but she is left a traumatised wreck.

The term gaslighting has come to describe a 'form of psychological manipulation in which a person... covertly sows seeds of doubt in a targeted individual... making them question their own memory, perception, or judgment, often evoking in them... low self-esteem. Using denial, misdirection, contradiction, and misinformation, gaslighting involves attempts to destabilise the victim and delegitimise the victim's beliefs' (Wikipedia).

The Wikipedia entry describes how sociopaths and narcissists use gaslighting as a tactic in mental abuse, and how victims develop anxiety, depression, self-hatred and 'a sense of learned helplessness'. Feminists have highlighted this as a feature of some abusive male behaviour within the context of power-relationships and domestic violence, however it does not seem to be especially gendered and it is also a feature of some parent-child relationships.

The psychological damage caused by this behaviour ranges from self-doubt to suicide. The reasons for the behaviour lie in various personality disorders involved in deflecting blame and controlling others.

A recent BBC article shows how entire industries can emulate the behaviour of such a personality disorder in order to deflect criticism ('How the oil industry made us doubt climate change', BBC Online, 20 September - [bbc.in/3iMRTUL](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-53187141)). A climate academic and former Exxon employee describes how Exxon denied the evidence of their own world-class research: 'What they did was immoral. They spread

doubt about the dangers of climate change when their own researchers were confirming how serious a threat it was.' In internal emails, Exxon told employees to 'emphasise the uncertainty' in the scientific consensus, and 'urge a balanced scientific approach'. What they meant was deflect, misdirect, contradict, misinform, and gaslight the public.

It wasn't just Exxon, the whole fossil fuel industry was at it, aiming to 'reposition global warming as theory (not fact)', much as creationists have tried to do with evolution. The Mad Men of Marketing identified their target audiences. One was 'older, lesser educated males from larger households who are not typically information seekers.' The other was 'younger, low-income women, who could be targeted with bespoke adverts which would liken those who talked about climate change to a hysterical doom-saying cartoon chicken.' The aim wasn't to refute the facts with lies, because lies would be exposed. Instead, they sought to drown the facts in noise, in order to baffle and confuse the public.

In short, they followed the classic 'tobacco playbook' and mounted a 'whitecoat project', in which they hired or induced supposedly independent scientific consultants to press the argument that the science was uncertain and that the need for action was exaggerated. Bribes weren't always necessary. Though it would be nice to think scientists generally rely on evidence-based thinking in their political attitudes, right-wing bigots do exist, and are willing to subvert science in pursuit of political agendas. A former vice president of the right-wing Cato Institute, in a belated mea culpa, admitted to gaslighting for the oil industry: 'For 25 years, climate sceptics like me made it a core matter of ideological identity that if you believe in climate change, then you are by definition a socialist. That is what climate sceptics have done.'

Surprisingly, or maybe not, it turned out that some of these politically motivated scientists – and non-experts in the field in question, were the same people who had spoken out years before on behalf of the tobacco industry and against the anti-smoking lobby. This, it became clear, was a very old and well-rehearsed strategy. As a tobacco firm put it, back in the 1950s, 'Doubt is our product, since it is the best means of competing with the 'body of fact' that exists in the minds of the general public.'

Apart from trivial references to some American political shenanigans from

the likes of Clinton and latterly Trump, and a nod to other presidents like Putin, the Wikipedia article currently does not expand on the large-scale use of gaslighting by industries like oil and gas, or tobacco, or those of pesticides, sugar, plastics and many others. But there are limits to what any single article can cover. This psychological manipulation is part of the fabric of capitalist ideology itself.

Think about how often you, as an intelligent human being and wage slave in capitalism, have been induced to doubt your own knowledge and judgment, how often you've been persuaded that you don't know enough and should leave important matters to politicians. Think how often you've wrestled with the baffling complexities of complicated public debates until you've simply given up. Think how bad you've felt about your own failings, your own silly anxieties, your own inadequacies at work, at home, in school, in relationships, in your emotions and in your social life. Think how often you've felt dismissed, disregarded, put down, ignored, condescended to, lied to and patronised. Think how you've been made to think it's just you, that nobody else has a problem or can even be trusted to understand, that maybe you need help or treatment or drugs or counselling because you just can't cope. Think about how often you blame yourself, you should have tried harder, you should have believed in yourself more, you shouldn't have been so weak, you shouldn't have let yourself or others down.

All of this is what it feels like to be gaslighted. Your problem isn't that you're inadequate, it's that you're being ruthlessly and expertly manipulated by a rich and powerful regime which aims to stay rich and powerful, even if the world burns, by keeping you in a state of learned helplessness, where you do what you're told and vote for leaders to think for you.

Socialists want a revolution to abolish capitalism before the world burns, but we also get something out of being socialists right now. Specifically, we get the opposite of gaslighting. We thrive in a community of mutual respect and support, where we each have a voice, where nobody is the boss, and where we can relax in the company of people who understand exactly how we think and feel, because they are workers too. If you're sick of the gaslit world out there, try some daylight with us.

PJS

US ELECTIONS: THE LESSER- EVIL FALLACY

As the American presidential election draws closer, progressives such as Noam Chomsky are making their message to vote Biden very much more vocal, declaring Trump is so demented and deranged that a president already displaying symptoms of senility and dementia is preferable and so working people must ignore Biden's ignominious past record. Unlike 2016, there is now no debate whatsoever about who the lesser evil is. The claim is not that the Republican Party and the Democratic Party have actually converged into one on many issues (even if not identical) and that they share so many policies that the choice is between Tweedledum and Tweedledumber.

Our principle is to abstain from voting for either evil and offer neither a mandate to rule. Working people are required to register their rejection of capitalist candidates. Both Trump and Biden are staunch champions of the capitalist system and apologists for Wall Street and the Pentagon. November's election is a contest about who will preside over the 'executive committee of the ruling class'.

The lesser-evil argument is rampant these days. Biden is presented as an ally of African-Americans and other minorities. Trump is depicted as the authoritarian autocrat, suppressing liberties and repressing resistance. The working class should not support either of the presidential candidates this year, as neither represents the interests of the working people of the United States. Both would continue the assault on the living standards of working people, to boost corporate profits by cutting social services and take back reforms won through hard struggle over the past years. The working class should reject the 'Big Business' candidates and their shared programmes of economic austerity and war preparations. There is no such thing as a meaningful choice when it is to pick between cholera and typhoid.

The lesser-evil fallacy serves only to keep the voter chained

to the duopoly political system and its two parties. Voting in this election will only hold back the process of forging an independent workers' movement. Workers have had the lesser-evil strategy for many decades and bitter experience indicates that it hasn't worked, and even less chance than ever will it succeed today.

Biden is not opposed to capitalism but out to save capitalism from Trump. His campaign is not based in the working class or on any working-class struggle but upon an imaginary gentler, kinder capitalism. As a politician Biden adopted blatant anti-working-class policies that should shame and condemn any 'socialist' endorsing him. Biden may not be as openly racist as Trump yet he has a history of flirting with segregationists and he has shared with the right wing similar positions on immigration, law and order and foreign policy.

Not voting in the presidential election is not a matter of principle for socialists. The working class can use the electoral process as part of its struggle for socialism to assume political power and capture the institutional machinery of the state. The Socialist Party holds that there is nothing more dangerous for our fellow-workers than endorsing a class enemy. As genuine socialists we want the working class to become conscious of itself and realise its power to change society. It is the working class versus the capitalist class. Socialism cannot be achieved by electing capitalist candidates but rather by fighting capitalists collectively.

Socialism seeks to eradicate the basic causes for war, poverty and environmental damage which it knows are the products of capitalism. No matter the outcome of the election, no matter who wins, the continued existence of capitalism is assured, none of the consequences of the profit system will be abolished. The Socialist Party stands for socialism now and not later through any electoral bargaining with our class foe. The purpose of the Socialist Party is to promote socialist consciousness and organisation and that will not be accomplished by entering into alliances with any capitalist politician. Biden is not a lesser evil, despite the pronouncements of liberals such as Chomsky and others. Any person who does not tell this truth isn't worthy of the name of socialist. There is only one party in the USA that expresses the interests of our American fellow-workers and that is the World Socialist Party of the United States.

ALJO



COOKING THE BOOKS

Do monkeys produce surplus value?

'Liverpool FC have cut ties with their "official" coconut milk following allegations that monkeys were used as slave labour to pick fruit for the product' (*Times*, 11 August). The animal rights group PETA had produced evidence that in Thailand monkeys were being used as 'coconut-picking machines' and were maltreated by being held in chains when not working.

The monkeys were certainly maltreated but were they being economically exploited in the same way as human wage workers? Were they producing surplus value?

Marx divided the capital of a business into two parts. (1) The instruments of production, raw materials, buildings, fuel, which he called 'constant capital' and (2) the fund out of which productive workers were paid, which he called 'variable capital'. In the course of production the elements of constant capital transferred only their pre-existing value, whether in one go or gradually, to the product. Productive workers too transferred the value of their labour power to the product, but at the same time added new value over and above

this; hence 'variable capital' with the variation being surplus value.

But what about the labour power of animals used in production, which at one time was so widespread that 'horse-power' was chosen as the name of a unit of mechanical force: is this constant or variable capital?

In discussing, in the opening chapter of Volume I of *Capital*, production by humans of what they need, Marx made the point that this involved them changing other parts of nature into something useful for them. These use values

'are combinations of two elements – matter and labour. If we take away the useful labour expended on them, a material substratum is always left, which is furnished by Nature without the help of man. The latter can work only as Nature does, that is by changing the form of matter. Nay more, in this work of changing the form he is constantly helped by natural forces' (Section 2).

In a later chapter Marx pointed out that 'physical forces, like steam, water, etc when appropriated to productive processes cost nothing' (chapter 15, section 2). In the previous section of the same chapter he had included animal power alongside wind power and water

power as among the natural forces that humans used in production.

A capitalist enterprise, therefore, does not have to pay for the 'material substratum' of wealth or for the forces provided by Nature; these are available to them cost-free. This applies as much to animal power as to wind or waterfalls (or the sun's rays, tidal power, etc). What a capitalist enterprise does have to pay for, however and which can be costly, is the means of harnessing these free natural forces – windmills, water-wheels (solar panels, tidal barrages etc). In the case of animal labour, it is the animal itself that has to be paid for; its labour power does contribute to production but, as it is free, is not a part of capital, neither constant nor variable.

As the animal itself has value (it has to be bred or acquired and maintained by human labour) it is a part of capital, but as constant capital. Like a machine it transfers its value gradually to the product until it wears out, but adds no new value. PETA was not so wide of the mark in describing those monkeys in Thailand as 'coconut-picking machines'.

Just because they don't produce surplus value is no reason for us workers not to show solidarity with our fellow other-animal workers and oppose their maltreatment.

Socialism in one enterprise?

In an article in *Counterpunch* (28 July) Richard D. Wolff, of 'Capitalism hits the fan' fame, criticised the widespread definition of capitalism as 'private' or 'free' enterprise on the grounds that it ignores state enterprises and that 'free' is a loaded term that in any case only applies to those who own enterprises. He offered instead:

'A key unique quality of capitalism is the employer/employee relationship between two different groups of the people engaged together in the economic system. That relationship entails an exchange of wages or salaries for labor power (the ability of an employee to work). A contract between employer and employee covers that exchange plus the employee's exertion of brains and muscles over lengths of time and to ends specified by the employer.'

A defining feature of capitalism is indeed the wages system. Ending capitalism does involve the ending of this employer/employee relationship. Wolff, however, sees this as being implemented at enterprise level, describing as 'instances of communist enterprises' worker coops where 'one and the same community designs, directs, and performs the work of an enterprise such that each community member has one vote and enterprise decisions are made democratically.'

His justification for calling worker coops

'communism' is that they are commonly owned by those working in them and end the employer/employee relationship as far as their members are concerned. But if the common ownership of something by a group is 'communism' then there are many other examples of it within capitalist society. What socialists aim at, however, is the common ownership of the means of life by society as a whole – a communist society.

Marx wasn't opposed to workers forming cooperatives. In fact he saw their emergence as one of the signs that society was becoming ripe to move from a capitalist to a communist society; they showed that the individual private owner/employer was redundant and that workers were quite capable of organising production without them. He was, however, opposed to the reformist demand that the state should subsidise them. In his own words:

'The co-operative factories of the labourers themselves represent within the old form the first sprouts of the new, although they naturally reproduce, and must reproduce, everywhere in their actual organisation all the shortcomings of the prevailing system. But the antithesis between capital and labour is overcome within them, if at first only by way of making the associated labourers into their own capitalist, i.e., by enabling them to use the means of production for the employment of their own labour' (*Capital*,

Volume III, Chapter 27).

In other words, under capitalism, workers co-ops had to function like a capitalist enterprise with all the shortcomings this involves such as, we can specify, having to make a profit to re-invest in up-to-date methods of production so as to remain competitive and stay in business.

Wolff's conception of the role and significance of 'cooperative factories' is different. He envisages them as producing for the market alongside private and state enterprises both under capitalism and in 'socialism' (by which, going completely off the rails, he seems to mean places like the old USSR). He advocates cooperative enterprises as a way forward for workers within capitalism in the same way that other reformists used to advocate state enterprises.

This brings out that his definition of capitalism is incomplete. It needs to include as well as the employer/employee relationship that production is carried on for sale with a view to profit. Capitalism is a market society in which everything is bought and sold, not just labour power.

Common ownership on a society-wide scale implies that the democratically-run productive units would not be producing for a market, precisely because what they produced would belong to society and be available to be distributed in non-market ways, whether free distribution, free use or taking according to need.

LETTERS

Democracy

Dear Comrades

The September issue of *The Socialist Standard* creates the unfortunate impression of a sharp division of opinion within the SPGB and the WSM on the vital issue of democracy within capitalism. The editorial in the September issue of *The Socialist Standard* states that 'we must not [conclude] that capitalist political democracy is a sham,' while RDC writes: 'It can be argued that even the limited democracy allowed ... is a sham' (p. 10). The apparent discrepancy is bound to confuse readers.

I do not think that any real division of opinion exists on this issue. At most there may be differences of emphasis. RDC acknowledges that voting and the freedom to protest are 'important rights,' so clearly he does not regard capitalist democracy as a complete *sham*. At the same time, the author(s) of the editorial concur with RDC in stressing the limits of capitalist democracy.

I suggest that we formulate our position as follows.

'No political system under capitalism is correctly described as democratic. However, the political systems of many (though far from all) countries do contain certain *democratic elements*. These democratic elements have arisen in the course of

historical development, often – as the editorial notes – as a result of working class struggle. It is extremely important to socialists that these democratic elements be preserved and (to the extent possible) strengthened and extended, even though they can never neutralize the essentially undemocratic nature of capitalism. The stronger and more extensive the democratic elements in political systems, the greater the scope for the spread of socialist ideas and the surer the prospect of a smooth and peaceful transition to socialism.'

Stephen D. Shenfield (WSPUS)

Well done Diego!

Dear Editors

We don't usually mention sport in the *Standard* but, just as we are going to press this month, an interesting item popped up on the BBC website. A triathlete approaching the end of a race in Spain saw the chap in front turn off the route by mistake. Out of a sense of fair play, Diego Méndrida just stopped before he got to the finish and waited to allow his fellow athlete to cross the line first. No big deal in sporting terms, because this is not a mega-business like football, but in its small way it helps to counter the lie that portrays life as necessarily a dog-eat-dog affair.

S.F.

Socialism is not a Dream. It can be Reality. It's up to You...

SOCIALISM IS the great beacon of hope for humanity. The working class, black and white, have put up with endless injustice in capitalism. Socialism will be a huge relief after the long nightmare of capitalist exploitation, inequality, and poverty in the midst of material prosperity. Socialism is not an end, but a beginning, it is the beginning of the real history of humankind, an awakening to a new age of socialist justice. Socialism means the free development of each man and woman, black and white, as the condition of the free development of all men and women.

The black and white working class cannot walk alone, they are united together as brother and sister. In socialist society all black and white men and women will be able to say they are free at last. The working class need to realise that they create the world's wealth and that their interests are in common irrespective of race and opposed to the interests of the capitalist class. When the united black and white working class recognise their own immense potential power to transform society, act in conscious unity to solve their problems by abolishing capitalism, then they will be truly in touch

with their own emancipation. There is an urgency now to get rid of capitalism and move forwards to a world socialist society through cooperative, revolutionary political action.

Capitalism fosters inequality, prejudice, unfairness, racism, injustice, unemployment, homelessness, police brutality and the criminalisation of our young people. Racism thrives when capitalism is in a slump and adopts austerity. Racism results from the economic anarchy of capitalism, the prejudice diverts the working class from facing the real cause of modern society's problems which is the existence of capitalism. Capitalism promotes and aggravates conflicts such as racism. The cure for racism is the abolition of capitalism.

Socialism is organised on the basis of human co-operation for the common benefit of all humankind where things will be

produced solely to meet human needs. Socialism will mean the greatest flowering of imagination, creativity and achievement in history, it will be a world of abundance and freedom. People will relate to each other as equals, as sisters and brothers. Co-operation will be the norm and an established reality, not an impossible dream.

Socialism will be the end of racism; it will be a world free of social conflict in which human beings live and work in unity without distinction of race.



UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

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

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

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

MIDLANDS

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

NORTH

North East Regional branch.

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

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

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

Bolton. Contact: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589.

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

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

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

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

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

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

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

Luton. Contact: Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP.

Cornwall. Contact: Harry Sowden, 16 Polgine Lane, Troon, Camborne, TR14 9DY. 01209 611820.

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

Essex. Contact: Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billericay, CM12 0EX. patdeutz@gmail.com.

Cambridge. Contact: Andrew Westley, wezelecta007@gmail.com. 07890343044.

IRELAND

Cork. Contact: Kevin Cronin, 5 Curragh Woods, Frankfield, Cork. 021 4896427. mariekev@eircom.net

NORTHERN IRELAND

Belfast Contact: Nigel McCullough. 02890 930002

SCOTLAND

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WALES

South Wales Branch (Swansea)

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

South Wales Branch (Cardiff)

Meets 2nd Saturday 12 noon (January, April, July and October) Cafe Nero, Capitol Shopping Centre, Queens Street, Cardiff.

Contact: Richard Botterill, 21 Pen-Y-Bryn Rd, Gabalfa, Cardiff, CF14 3LG. 02920-615826. botterillr@gmail.com

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

LATIN AMERICA

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

AFRICA

Kenya. Contact: Patrick Ndege, PO Box 13627-00100, GPO, Nairobi
Zambia. Contact: Kephass Mulenga, PO Box 280168, Kitwe.

ASIA

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

AUSTRALIA

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

EUROPE

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

Germany. Contact: Norbert.

weltsozialismus@gmx.net

Norway. Contact: Robert Stafford.

hallblithe@yahoo.com

Italy. Contact: Gian Maria Freddi,

Via Poiano n. 137, 37142 Verona.

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

COMPANION PARTIES OVERSEAS

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

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

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

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

PUBLICATIONS

PAMPHLETS (£4.00 each unless stated otherwise)

- What's Wrong With Using Parliament? (£2.50)
- Ecology and Socialism
- From Capitalism to Socialism (£3.50)
- Africa: A Marxian Analysis
- Socialism as a Practical Alternative
- Some Aspects of Marxian Economics (£5.50)
- How the Gods Were Made by John Keracher
- Marxism and Darwinism by Anton Pannekoek
- Art, Labour and Socialism by William Morris
- How We Live and How We Might Live by William Morris
- The Right to be Lazy by Paul Lafargue
- Socialist Principles Explained (£2.50)
- The State and the Socialist Revolution by Julius Martov
- An Inconvenient Question
- Sylvia Pankhurst on Socialism (£3.00)
- Why Socialists Oppose Zionism & Anti-Semitism (£3.50)
- Rosa Luxemburg on Socialism
- The Magic Money Myth

NAME:

BOOKS

- Strange Meeting: Socialism & World War One: £4.50
- Are We Prisoners of Our Genes? £5.50
- Socialism or Your Money Back: £4.00
- Centenary of the Russian Revolution: £8.00
- All of the above books (25% discount) £16.00

DVD

- Capitalism and Other Kid's Stuff: £5.75
- Poles Apart? Capitalism or socialism as the planet heats up: £5.75

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

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

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE:

MATERIAL WORLD

HAIR IS BIG MONEY

LONG LUXURIANT hair has long been associated with femininity and beauty in many cultures. It is described as a woman's crowning glory. The rising demand for human hair means more and more suppliers and many from dubious sources. The lucrative extension industry is booming worth billions of dollars a year. Human hair is a commodity. Hair is big money. The global hair wigs and extension market is estimated to reach revenues of more than \$10 billion by 2023. In 2016, imports to the US alone were a business of almost \$700 million. Synthetic hair, although natural looking is not as versatile in that it cannot be heat-styled, curled or straightened. Perhaps the synthetic hair technology will eventually catch up and make fake hair indistinguishable from the real thing but for now a good quality wig made of human hair sells for thousands of dollars in the United States, and hair extensions made of real hair can sell for several hundred or thousand dollars.

It is not the intent of this article to shame anyone for wearing wigs and extensions; the ability to transform yourself through one's hair can be positive and empowering. We all know a friend who suffers from alopecia or undergoing cancer treatment causing loss of hair and the psychological pain felt.

That being said, it is important to consider who is providing the product. Hair extensions and weaves have now become a must-have fashion accessory and stories of unethical practices abound in the developing and undeveloped countries. Much of the hair on sale comes from small agents who tour villages and small towns in Asia, South America, and eastern Europe, offering poverty-stricken women small payments to part with their hair. It's an unregulated industry built on exploitation. There are reports of husbands or partners coercing women into selling their hair. But one source is from

Hindu temples, and those in institutions like orphanages or prisons. The human hair imported is not classed as a body part so it is exempt from regulations. It's nearly impossible to determine whether it's been willingly donated or not. Those who market the hair insist it is a consensual commercial transaction between hair gatherers and the females who want to sell their hair.



Hair harvested is disinfected, steamed, boiled, dyed and sewn. Each step further erases any traces of its original owner. Salon clients care about the price; they don't care about the origin, they don't want to think about the women who grew their hair and had it shorn before it landed on their own heads. Few customers wish to question the supply chain and the dealers are reluctant to reveal how they acquired the hair. It is the price that

counts. Hair is now just another luxury item like make-up or expensive clothes. The desire for long, thick hair is a lot stronger than any sense of guilt.

One well-known source of hair is Indian women. At Hindu temples they will have their heads shaved as part of a sacred ritual called tonsuring, a sign of religious devotion and humility. The temples then sell the shorn locks to traders who will then process and ship them all over the world. Indian temples are said to make more than several millions a year in hair sales.

However, US Customs and Border Protection have seized consignments of tons of hair suspected to have come from interned Uighurs in the Xinjiang province of China.

'When companies are buying goods because they seem like they're lower price, a really great deal, I would recommend that they really look into why the goods are such a great deal,' said Ana Hinojosa with US Customs and Border Protection.

'For a long time, the presumption about goods coming into the US, was that they weren't made with forced labor,' said Sophie Richardson with Human Rights Watch. Now the presumption about goods coming to us from Xinjiang is that they have been made with forced labor, and it's up to the companies to prove that they weren't' (bit.ly/32eTYTB).

To Tim Hazledine, a professor of economics at Auckland University, the hair trade is effectively

'farming humans.' It may be a renewable resource, but it grows slowly and to keep up with increasing demand 'there must be a lot of people whose hair is getting cut out there'.

Women in developed nations aren't as desperate to sell their hair for cash as poorer women in developing countries where women and girls can be 'sheared', one after the other, like sheep.

ALJO



'Malnutrition is caused by "the lack of access to sufficient, nutritious and safe food" due to poverty' (UN Food and Agriculture Organisation 2017).

Within the current political system planning ahead on whatever front, the main goal will be in some way or another connected to the financial aspect. Housing, for instance, is a major problem for millions around the world even though it is designated by a UN resolution as a basic human right. In 'normal' non-Covid times the UK, with less than one percent and the US, with less than five percent of the global population, both have significant numbers of people living rough on the streets or in hostels whilst more than enough housing remains empty but unavailable to them. On a global level we can only make estimates of the whole picture but there is no doubt that too many millions of people are without one of the basic necessities of life.

Even larger numbers of individuals struggle to get enough to eat, especially nutritious food that would help to keep them healthy and, in most cases, that is also linked to their financial situation. Whether the poor in faraway undeveloped places, both urban and rural, or the poor in supposedly more affluent Western countries, the divisions between haves and have-nots are there in plain sight. Another supposedly human right is not available to them.

Air, water, food and shelter. The four absolute necessities for humankind. Currently a minority has these in plenty but the majority, on a sliding scale, is limited on their access to clean air, enough clean water, sufficient, varied food and shelter suitable to their environment and family needs. Again, all these are limited by a person's financial situation.

If we value our own being as an individual in this world then surely we recognise a similar value for each and every other human being? And wherever one lives in this world, urban or rural, all have these similar basic requirements.

Imagining removing the financial aspect from our lives is the key to discovering just how different all lives could be, how decision-making becomes inclusive and relevant for all, how this could free people up from a boring and hateful treadmill to creative and inclusive new ways of organising and planning.

To be able to move ahead in a way which eliminates all the major negative facts and stress which face humanity right now, to confront them with the aim of protecting both people and planet for the long term.

Cash crops

There is enough food produced currently to feed the global population but much is lost as waste from homes, from shops and from storage facilities. Much food is kept off the market, in storage, to maintain price levels. It is a criminal act, to know that people are dying for lack of food and to deny them access for lack of money. There is food for all but all are not getting it, so something radical has to change to make that happen.

Food has long been a commodity, promoted non-stop in the media – but usually as a processed *product* rather than a fruit, vegetable, cereal crop, animal or fish. It is something bought in a supermarket in a package. In poorer areas of large towns and cities it has become common to see customers' baskets filled only with these processed foods because it is cheaper to feed the family this way. Also it becomes more difficult to find fresh produce in these areas – most of the locals could not afford it anyway. Those living in large urban areas may not even have access to a market where fresh food can be found. The more up-market towns may have a 'farmers market' weekly or seasonally but the prices tend to be out of reach of many. Globally there are very many different local situations, however similar effects and results will be found according to the earning power of the customer.

The all-consuming hype of mega-corporations and mainstream media, which are paid to push their particular brands of food, is an obstacle that should be easy to overcome when there will be no profit from such advertisements. Associations, foundations, charities and the like will all become redundant when no one is without food or housing.

A current problem in large areas of the world is that of corporate takeover, removing huge populations from productive land in favour of growing crops for profit rather than crops for food. 'The Green Revolution' of the 1960s and 70s which was heralded as the solution to world hunger is a good example of this. What happened over a period of a

few years was that a new modified rice, supposedly more nutritious, was grown over huge areas in India, and other parts of Asia, the seed pressed on local farmers and grown by corporations as monocrops. In Asia – the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, there are thousands of varieties of rice and this vast area is considered as the most biodiverse in the world for vegetables, fruit, root crops and cereals. The new rice, as many other genetically modified crops, required large amounts of nitrogen fertilisers and irrigation. The change over some years was revealed by the huge rise in diabetes, the new white rice having a high glycaemic index, with 60 percent of global diabetes occurring in Asia. Plus increasing numbers of people had reduced access to a varied diet as a result of poverty.

Now in 2020 we find another move to push yet another rice as a supposed miracle crop:

'Agrochemical transnationals (TNCs) and collaborating institutions such as the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) are using concerns over food security during the pandemic to push for an industrial agricultural system that is already discredited' (theecologist.org/2020/aug/19/ golden-rice-trojan-horse).

The message needed to counter this increasing control of global food is that of the enormous diversity of crops, whether grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts or livestock – fish and meat – and the health benefits of food uncontaminated by chemicals of any kind. There is evidence that much of food production over the previous few decades is proving harmful to humans through allergies, obesity and downright slow poisoning. There are numerous court cases internationally pending from farm workers suffering serious illnesses from exposure to herbicides and pesticides; ongoing information related to corporations attempting to increase the spread of genetically modified crops against the will of many farmers and illegally in some countries.

One example, India, is covered in detail by Colin Todhunter at Countercurrents (bit.ly/3bEsoCc). Recently revealed are details of the revolving door between developers, patent-holders and regulators – nothing new there then. With regard to GM brinjal (aubergine) Bangladesh is now being targeted as both India and the Philippines have so far rejected it. Although India has officially accepted only one GM crop, cotton about 20 years ago, there are examples of other trials taking place without official approval.

Without the profit motive

Without the profit motive there could be no incentive to force these various changes and communities would be free to choose their own way when looking to the future. Wide-ranging discussions would take place between all stakeholders and experts as to the efficacy of trials and possible implementation. Certainly without the current global political system true democracy could at last raise its head and provide populations with the diversity of multiple food stuffs and do it in ways which don't pollute our water and our soil, whilst also reducing the harmful gases emitted.

UN estimates for the next 30 years show a worldwide increase in the percentage of populations living in urban areas. For the UK it is projected to be 90 percent by 2050. No doubt this will be linked to work-related projections for the convenience and most profitable conditions for the capitalist system's way of working. Now, during the Covid pandemic, there has been an increase in UK urban areas of applications

for allotments – up by 300 percent in one area. When moving towards changing to a socialist system there are a number of positives from an increase in local crop cultivation. Gardens, rooftops, walls, underground spaces (there has been one for several years under Clapham High Street) are all being used for food crops. Most of these can benefit the urban environment from increased biodiversity with plenty of scope for improving environments whilst also being productive. There is a short but interesting article on this topic at <https://bit.ly/3bFYIo9>.

The system we are living in now is unsustainable. The top one percent of EU households have carbon footprints 22 times larger than climate targets allow. Only about 5 percent of EU households live within the required limits. A reduction per person of 2.5 tonnes of CO₂ per year by 2030 is required to reach this target. The EU average per person is 8 tonnes, the top one percent produce 55 tonnes. A global problem being given scant political attention.

According to James Hansen of Columbia University, regarding climate change, *'the agonising efforts of scientists to avoid provoking accusations of alarmism have led to an innate optimism bias – sometimes leading to cautious underestimates.'*

Until we can move away from the entrenched format of *everything* for profit there is little to no chance of changing the direction the planet is headed. Removing the capitalist approach to life is a better scenario for all global inhabitants, human and other. Then choices can and will be made for the benefit of all. What choice of food to be grown will be discussed and decided by people who have the right information. Releasing us from the many constraints of money will enhance lives positively. Our future choice of urban or rural living will be made freely, fulfilling personal goals. Looking ahead to the collective goal of socialism we acknowledge the vast diversity of cultures around the globe and the need to recognise and welcome all variations. After all we are just one small part of a vast, beautiful, ancient tapestry of human life. We don't know just how all the many global communities will organise together but we are well aware that all the skills available will be welcomed far and wide. We need each other to protect our future generations' well-being and whole environment.

JANET SURMAN



America is at the cusp of deciding the nature of its future, or at least it thinks it is. It has two scarcely distinguishable options, Democrat Joe Biden and incumbent Donald Trump. The Trump presidency has already had an effect on America that will long outlast his second term, should he get one. The wildfires sweeping the West Coast have had fuel thrown upon them by the rapid destruction of what little environmental regulation there was before Trump. Nominal wages have gone up steadily over the last four years, but cost of living has been growing faster, far outstripping the growth in wages. This is to make no mention of the coronavirus crisis – the United States has seen an exceptionally high death rate – almost 200,000 cases as of writing. Liberals often wax lyrical about the death of ‘American culture’. While Trump’s campaign has undoubtedly had a palpable effect on the way political issues are discussed, how it is a death of American culture is unclear. Indeed, the liberals’ biggest failure was to miss the fact that the seeds for the Trump victory were sown by the Democrat presidencies. And this is the mistake they are repeating in 2020.

Popular populist

The shock from liberal commentators four years ago has still not worn off. The first term of Donald Trump’s presidency is coming to an end – and liberals are still in such disbelief that he might get a second. There is no attempt to empathise with the many working class Americans who voted for Trump – an immense irony, given editorials in the liberal press such as ‘When A Heart Is Empty’ (*New York Times*, 10 September). In it, David Brooks, a noted moderate conservative, writes, ‘[Trump’s] is not an intellectual stupidity. I imagine Trump’s



David Brooks

I.Q. is fine. It is a moral and emotional stupidity. He blunders so often and so badly because he has a narcissist’s inability to get inside the hearts and minds of other people. It’s a stupidity that in almost pure clinical form, flows out of his inability to feel, a stupidity of the heart.’ How do we square this

with the fact that Donald Trump won in 2016? Liberal commentators will struggle to.

The truth, contrary to Brooks’ charge of ‘emotional stupidity’ is that Trump has managed to win the hearts and minds of a huge amount of the American working class. How? By going against the establishment.

Trump has criticised Hillary Clinton for being a Wall Street

shill and a criminal, the Democrats for throwing America into war after war, and the mainstream media for consistently marginalising swathes of views – particularly those favoured by workers. The thing about these claims is that they are all correct. His Twitter, laughable as it may be, is so obviously not ghostwritten. It is unprofessional, direct, unpretentious – one might even say it is, in a rather odd way, down to earth. Trump has not taken himself to be entitled to votes. On the other hand, Joe Biden said to a black voter who was on the fence that, ‘If you have a problem figuring out whether you’re for me or Trump, then you ain’t black.’ Odd, coming from someone who thought desegregation would lead to his children growing up ‘in a racial jungle’, and that ‘poor kids are just as bright and talented as white kids’. If these comments had come from Trump, they would be plastered on every headline. In this case, the liberal media tries to pass it all off as a joke (*Washington Post*, 22 May). It is precisely this difference between the Democrats and Trump that has led to the polarisation seen in American politics – the working class has realised that the Democrats have done nothing for them. The elitism and political careerism of the mainstream Democratic party has become an unmissable stain on their campaign.

Liberal elite

Of course, Trump’s greatest success is that he has managed to convince working class Americans that he represents them. Sure, he has pointed out some of their issues, but the policies he has put in place have done nothing to resolve them. Perhaps this just goes to show how out of touch the Democrats are: even lipservice to the American working class is more than they have done. This might be the backbone of the Trump





strategy – if you convince enough working people, but also evangelicals, racists, and so on, you can garner enough of the vote to go back to serving your real constituency: the capitalist class. Trump's policies have been mostly typical rightwing corporate welfare, combined with a sort of protectionism that hasn't been seen in

a while. Trump may be marking the end of the neoliberal world order, replacing it with something that could even more straightforwardly be described as American hegemony.

This is actually not entirely accurate: Trump has been forming close alliances with some of the world's most ruthless dictators, notably the Brazilian Jair Bolsonaro, and Russia's Vladimir Putin. Steve Bannon, the former chief strategist in Trump's cabinet, has become somewhat of a left-wing bogeyman, uniting nationalist and right-wing leaders worldwide, including Marine Le Pen in France and Nigel Farage in the UK. Something bigger is at work, and it is keen to captivate 'the masses'. Populism has become a political slur thrown around by liberals that describes this phenomenon. Socialists understand that there is a political and economic elite, whose interests are opposed to those of the workers. It's clear why liberals, the elite in question, want to deny that this is the case. The rightwing has managed to capture the same sentiment but their claims about who the elite is differ from ours immensely.

The Democrats had a left-wing populist candidate – indeed, one who was popular with some Trump supporters: Vermont senator Bernie Sanders. Sanders was the most radical mainstream American politician by far, drawing on a tradition that has been left mostly untouched since Eugene V. Debs, one of the founders of the Industrial Workers of the World. American social democracy could have tried to win the election by tapping into the anti-establishment sentiment that has taken hold of the workers. Of course, the mainstream Democratic Party, as a representative of capital (no different to the Republican Party) would rather have Trump than Sanders. Shenanigans in the election process were conducted

accordingly. Even Trump pointed out that the alternative left-wing candidate, Elizabeth Warren, was only in the running to split the Sanders vote.

There is clear discontent within the American workers: particularly the youth. The majority of millennial Americans are not afraid of the word 'socialism'; in fact they prefer it to 'capitalism'. Liberals are keen to point out that they never lived through the Cold War, and that this might explain their lack of hostility to socialism. Or, it might be that thirty-year olds have lived through four recessions. For a great liberal hero, liberals seem remarkably unkeen to listen to Adam Smith: 'No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable'. Yet, the Democrats, based on nonsensical concerns of 'electability' keep advancing centrist candidates, who are just grist to Trump's mill. The Democrats ran the electability experiment with Clinton. It failed. Yet they are trying it again with Biden. The workers feeling so disenfranchised that 'did not vote' makes a significantly higher category than either Trump or Clinton votes in 2016. Perhaps if 'did not vote' amounted to a vote for no president at all, the country would be better off.

At any rate, the election draws near. If Trump manages to secure another victory, the consequences for the environment will be disastrous. One would hope that working class Americans will have seen through the ruse, but as long as the mainstream opinions are strictly limited to Democrat and Republican, there is going to be little progress. A socialist might reasonably worry that the age-old choice between socialism and barbarism is being made, and that the people are choosing barbarism.

MP SHAH



**Elizabeth
Warren**

CAPITALISM: Incompatible with Democracy



We continue our explanation as to why capitalism is not and cannot be democratic

The ownership of the mass media is merely the start of the problem. Another way of constraining democracy is by limiting what is seen as being suitable for discussion. Liberal Democracy (LD) does not normally limit discussion by outlawing ideas and throwing people who fail to conform into gaol or worse, although this may happen in certain circumstances. Instead it falls more into the category expressed by Marx that the dominant ideas in society are those of the ruling class. The dominant mode of thinking is instilled in people gradually from a young age via institutions such as the family and the education system, then cemented by the mass media. What this encourages is a limited range of permissible opinions which are, to a large extent, an endorsement of capitalism and its system of market 'democracy' so that in general such opinions are held as being natural common sense whilst ideas and opinions that fall outside of this remit are seen as being illegitimate, illogical and irrational and perhaps even dangerous. Try to discuss an alternative which fundamentally challenges the major features of capitalism and you are likely to be ridiculed or considered as a dangerous subversive. In any event getting a serious discussion of them on to the mass agenda is as difficult as running through a brick wall.

When capitalism is seen to be failing in some way as, for example, in the 2008 financial crisis then the system is often subject to a more critical examination and questions may be raised about its future. However, such an examination will be extremely limited as in the instance of the events of 2008 there had to be scapegoats – certain individuals got out of control; it was due to a minority of greedy people, and the like. The system itself will not be subject to a serious critique. The alternatives put forward will be something like increased economic regulation or perhaps more state intervention in the economy whilst the core features of the system, production for profit, capital accumulation, employment (wage slavery), the market economy, these, if discussed at all, will only be in the margins, not on the main agenda.

On that main or mass agenda the only alternative to

capitalism is a reformed version of that same system. The process of limiting the discussion to a pre-set agenda is undemocratic as it places restrictions on the alternatives open to us in solving ongoing problems. So this is part of the process of constructing reality. We have all come across terms such as 'we have to live in the real world' or 'there is no alternative'. The nonsense being peddled here is that the 'real world' equals capitalism to which there is no 'alternative'. It is almost as if the capital system has always existed and will always exist, as if it is the one and only reality.

It is continually the case that political language is used to obfuscate the real meanings of concepts. For example take the word 'free', we are very often confronted with the terms 'Free World', 'Free Trade', 'Free Markets', 'Free Enterprise'. These terms most definitely hide more than they reveal. What the word 'free' means in the face of capitalism has nothing to do with the majority of the people in the so-called 'Free World' being free. In fact the opposite is the case. The world-wide capitalist system presents a situation where the mass of people are at best tied to the dictatorship of capital. The other so-called 'freedoms' (trade, markets, enterprise), whilst presented in the rhetoric as a system where small businesses or the self-employed operate via their own hard work to exchange their goods (commodities) via 'free' mechanisms, are in reality part of a process which is dominated by a few major corporations and the world market. Capitalism is a world-wide economic system, a system that leaves millions throughout the world not only far from 'free' but in poverty or even starving. This of course includes people living in the major power of this illusory 'Free World', the United States of America. In addition, this is the system that results in wars all around the planet but never mind because capitalism gives you the 'Freedom' to die for your country, meaning the part of the world you were born in.

Profits - capitalism's main priority

Real democracy is not possible under capitalism. However, democracy is continually used by countries which operate under the banner of 'Liberal Democracy' as a propaganda tool. A country under this heading will enter into trade agreements, providing they are profitable, with totalitarian regimes, who are known to have appalling records in areas such as human rights. Western capitalist countries have therefore entered into such agreements with countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt and China. They do so with no scruple whatsoever as the opportunity to trade and make profits is of far more importance than concepts such as human rights or democracy.

In addition, major economic powers operating under this banner have not been slow in acting to remove from power democratically-elected governments when their economic interests are threatened. Iran in the early 1950s and Chile in the early 1970s are major examples, though there are many others. In the latter case, whilst the election of the Popular Front government had nothing to do with establishing socialism, which would require an entirely different set of circumstances, it is nevertheless difficult to recognise as democratic a system that overthrows democratically-elected (in their terms) governments and replaces them with dictatorships. As indicated, there are many other cases of similar actions and this is a subject that deserves more attention.

It is also the case that an LD such as Britain has a rather dubious internal record in certain areas of human rights. Since the end of the 1970s there have been countless Acts passed on the industrial relations front, all designed to hinder workers taking collective industrial action to defend their terms and conditions of employment; so much so that we reached the

point some years ago where it is almost impossible to organise collective action which can be both legal and effective. This applies as much to Labour governments as it does to Conservative ones. In addition, there has been a series of Acts over the same period that make it extremely difficult for protest movements to stay within the law whilst organising meaningful campaigns.

A democratic society requires a democratic base

Dictionary.com defines democracy as: *'A form of government in which supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system'*. It describes the United States of America and Canada as examples of democratic countries. The Cambridge English Dictionary states that democracy is *'The belief in freedom and equality between people, or a system of government based on this belief, in which power is either held by elected representatives or directly by the people themselves'*. It then states that the early 1990s saw the spread of democracy to Eastern Europe. There are many other similar definitions to these and it is not really surprising that in the current environment they relate to LDs.

Such definitions limit democracy to political systems of government but remain silent on the most basic and important feature in society, namely, how the means of production and distribution are organised. Concentrating on the political system limits the concept of democracy because it is constructed on the base of present-day society and the political system operates to defend that society's structure. So, where there is a lack of control for the vast majority at its most fundamental level, no political system can overcome that undemocratic nature and it is not designed to do so (but this does not mean that it cannot be made to contribute to this purpose under the right conditions). This is the main reason why the so-called democracies that operate within capitalism are not democracies.

The type of definitions of democracy outlined above are just defending capitalism. For example, Dictionary.com talks of a 'free electoral system' but it is only free in a very limited sense, most people have the right to vote for the political party of their choice, but as we have pointed out it is not free from bias in the realm of acceptable ideas. How can it be when it is constructed on an economic dictatorship at the base of society? Likewise the Cambridge English Dictionary definition speaks of 'a belief in freedom and equality between people' but freedom and equality between people is completely absent in terms of the organisation and ownership of wealth production and distribution.

In fact this is where the inequalities within society stem from and they cannot be healed by the political system, especially one which is designed to perpetuate such fundamental divisions. Both definitions have reference to power being held directly by the people but this is quickly diluted to elected agents or representatives acting on their behalf, the capitalist reality is that those agents or representatives are acting in the interests of capital accumulation and definitely not in the interests of the majority.

Socialism and the use of the political process

If socialists regard the political process on offer in LD as undemocratic, then why do we advocate that it is possible to use it in order to replace minority control with common ownership? Should we not logically reject the empty rhetoric of capitalist democracy entirely and favour something similar to a modern system of workers' councils? Should

we not recognise the limitations of the political process and the possibility that, if the socialist movement grows to an extent that it forms a large minority, that the right to use the limited democratic system might be closed off to us? In addressing this, two points need to be considered. Firstly, it would be a mistake to dismiss a process that, for now at least, gives us the opportunity to put forward the socialist case as an alternative to the capitalist system. It is therefore an important way of winning more people over to the socialist movement. If it offers this advantage then why not use it? Secondly, just because we advocate using the political process does not mean we rule out using other democratic methods alongside it and which would supplement the political process. In fact we never have ruled it out.

There is a common misconception amongst many that the World Socialist Movement (WSM) advocates using political means alone to bring about socialism and rules out all other forms of organisation. For example, some years ago Leftcom when reviewing our pamphlet *What's Wrong with using Parliament?* suggested that the reason for the pamphlet was to 'restate their belief that socialism can only come about via parliament'. There is a lot of difference in saying that parliament can be used in bringing about socialism to saying either that it would have to be used or must be used in all circumstances. What we in the WSM insist on is the need to organise on a democratic basis.

If you wish to achieve a free and democratic society you have to use democratic methods, as the means for achieving something will determine the end result. So we oppose as utopian and dangerous the idea that a well-organised and conscious minority can lead a majority who lack socialist understanding to the freedom of socialism. We of course do not know what precisely will happen in the lead-up to socialism but would think it highly likely that, as socialist consciousness develops in various parts of the world, workers will create several different forms of organisation. One would be a movement to represent them at the political level. This would probably vary depending on the differing circumstances in various parts of the world. But there would be other forms of organisation, perhaps something like workplace and neighbourhood councils. Industrial organisation such as unions would take different forms to those around today, reflecting an increased socialist awareness. Lastly, we might even see people in some places creating their own parliament, a 'peoples' parliament', more advanced and effective than what exists today. Whilst we do not want to engage in too much crystal-ball gazing the point is that socialists accept that, when workers begin to engage with socialist ideas in far greater numbers than we have today, they will form various types of organisations to help achieve their goals. What must also be pointed out is that in such changed circumstances parliament would not be the dung heap that it is at present. For us the key is democratic means, whatever the differing forms of organisation that may develop.

The path towards a genuine democracy is a path leading away from capitalism whether of the state or so-called private variety and towards a society run by people for people, using the most advanced productive capacity and technology available to directly satisfy human needs whilst giving regard to protecting and nurturing our planet which is the source of life itself. The time to act towards that goal is now. We do not suggest that the road towards this alternative society will be easy but it is necessary and urgent.

RDC

Anti-imperialism is not anti-capitalism

We continue our series on the origins of the mistaken view that workers in the advanced capitalist countries share in the exploitation of those in the so-called 'underdeveloped' countries.

In his 1920 Preface to *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism* Lenin comments:

'Capitalism has grown into a world system of colonial oppression and of the financial strangulation of the overwhelming majority of the population of the world by a handful of "advanced" countries'.

Colonialism is not quite the same thing as imperialism. It entails the annexation of, and direct political control over, other territories by a state which is not necessarily true of imperialism. For Lenin, political independence was indeed achievable 'within the bounds of world imperialist relationships' (*A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism*, 1916). The classical Marxist diffusionist view held that, with capitalism's development and the increasing internationalisation of capital, nationalism would decline as a social force. Unfortunately that hasn't yet happened. However, here we are focussing on what ought to be the attitude of socialists towards nationalism. Early twentieth century Marxists, like Rosa Luxemburg, were already arguing that nationalism had become reactionary. Capitalism had outlived its usefulness to progress, having prepared the ground for socialism by raising society's productive potential to an unparalleled degree. While that potential continues to expand with technological innovation it is increasingly being squandered in all sorts of ways.

Nationalist struggles

Lenin's take on nationalism was different. The rise of monopoly capitalism associated with imperialism entailed the 'super-exploitation' by a few oppressor (imperialist) nations of the oppressed (colonised) nations on the capitalist periphery. Nationalist movements in the latter, were – allegedly – qualitatively different from those in nineteenth century Europe in an era of ascendant capitalism. As Jim Blaut summarises:

'The nationalism of colonies and semi-colonies is called into being by the intensification of exploitation and oppression. In an important way, this is a new phenomenon..., it cannot be assimilated to the theory of national movements which emerge during the rise of capitalism and have as their purpose or goal the simple creation of a bourgeois state. The nature of colonialism is such that producing classes suffer along with whatever young or incipient bourgeoisie may exist. Therefore the national liberation movements in colonies and semi-colonies are profoundly different from the national movements of earlier oppressed nations such as those in non-colonial portions of the Tsarist Empire. It is not innately a bourgeois struggle against feudal forces for the creation of a classical bourgeois state. It is a multi-class struggle directed primarily against imperialism' (*The National Question: Decolonising the Theory of Nationalism*, 1987).

Since imperialism and monopoly capitalism were linked, this suggested that 'national liberation struggles' could serve as the harbinger of 'global proletarian revolution' which would likely erupt first where the impact of imperialist exploitation was harshest – namely, those economically backward countries still transitioning to capitalism. That required

workers there to take the lead in this struggle, so it 'could be turned onto a socialist trajectory or a non-capitalist trajectory which would result in socialism'.

National struggle was thus clothed in the rhetorical language of class struggle. Trotsky similarly opined: 'The sectarian simply ignores the fact that the national struggle, one of the most labyrinthine and complex but at the same time extremely important forms of the class struggle, cannot be suspended by bare references to the future world revolution' (*Independence of the Ukraine and Sectarian Muddleheads*, 1939).

For all Trotsky's labyrinthine attempt to assimilate class struggle to national struggle, he was attempting to square the circle. 'National struggle' can only be advanced by watering down, and compromising, the class struggle. It is an attempt to impose from above a fake commonality of interests between classes whose own interests are diametrically opposed.

Though Lenin himself rhetorically committed himself to the concept of 'proletarian internationalism' and the repudiation of 'national chauvinism', it is difficult to see how one could ever successfully prosecute any 'national liberation struggle' without also fostering national chauvinism as its motivating ethos.

In any event, subsequent global developments exposed the fundamental flaws in his thinking. Particularly after the Second World War, vast swathes of the 'developing world' were granted political independence from their erstwhile colonial masters. Indeed, since then there have been further – successful – attempts at achieving political independence though these have tended to follow a somewhat different trajectory, resulting in the formation, along mainly ethnic lines, of new breakaway states as the product of civil war within existing states – for example, Southern Sudan. These latter developments do not fit well within the Leninist framework and its simplistic division of the world into 'oppressor countries' and 'oppressed countries'.

In any case, history has emphatically vindicated Luxemburg's repudiation of Lenin's argument that socialists should support national liberation struggles to expedite a 'global proletarian revolution'. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Instead, capitalist relations of production along with an accompanying capitalist mind-set has become firmly entrenched in the countries concerned. Hence the unedifying spectacle of erstwhile 'Marxist' guerrilla fighters transmogrified into well-heeled business people or corrupt politicians, hobnobbing with multi-nationals in a bid to pimp out the nation's cheap labour force to overseas investors while cracking down on dissent and spiriting away a sizeable chunk of the nation's revenue into some private offshore account. If you are going to ride the capitalist tiger don't be surprised where it takes you.

World revolution

Yet ignorant Marx critics still routinely trot out the ridiculous refrain that Marx 'got it all wrong' in that the revolutions he hoped for occurred first, not in the advanced countries, but on the capitalist periphery. What these critics overlook is that these were not the revolutions Marx had in mind. Rather, they were capitalist revolutions enabling the transition to capitalism.

In the *German Ideology* Marx suggested the coming communist (socialist) revolution would likely be spearheaded by the advanced countries precisely because communism presupposed the advanced development of the productive forces: 'Empirically, communism is only possible as the act of the dominant peoples "all at once" and simultaneously, which

presupposes the universal development of the productive forces and world intercourse bound up with them’.

We don’t need to take the idea of instantaneous global revolution too literally. Obviously, there will be some time lags involved in the spatial transformation from global capitalism to global socialism. However, Marx insisted on the absolute necessity of majoritarian socialist consciousness before that could happen. The logic of his diffusionist model suggested that if one part of the world had a socialist majority, other

parts would not be far behind.

For Lenin, the ‘law of uneven development in capitalism’ meant it was impossible to achieve socialism simultaneously across the world. But, this was a reference to the objective preconditions for socialism – not the subjective preconditions – and, if anything, it would support Marx’s contention that a socialist revolution would likely occur first

in the advanced countries where the productive forces were most developed. But Lenin’s ‘law’ has long been completely irrelevant to the socialist objective, anyway. Socialism can only be a global alternative to capitalism and it is the productive potential of the world as a whole that crucially matters, not any one part of it.

Why then his obsessive preoccupation with this ‘law’? A clue can be found in his article *On the Slogan for a United States of Europe* (1915):

‘The victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country alone. After expropriating the capitalists and organising their own socialist production, the victorious proletariat of that country will arise against the rest of the world—the capitalist world—attracting to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries.’

This implies not only the uneven development of the productive forces but the uneven growth of socialist consciousness itself. Lenin’s view was that workers in the advanced countries, by benefitting from imperialism, would be much more resistant to socialist thinking compared with their counterparts in the backward countries where national liberation struggle would more readily translate into ‘proletarian revolution’.

So when he spoke of organising ‘socialist production’ within a single country initially, the logic of his argument about how he saw a global proletarian revolution unfolding suggested he had in mind an economically backward country. However, it is precisely in such a country that material conditions would be least propitious for socialism. Furthermore, insofar as socialism and capitalism can no more coexist than one can mix oil and water, this would imply severing links with global capitalist supply chains exacerbating the hardships experienced there.

Lenin’s attempt to argue his way out of this impasse was disingenuous. Instead of the ‘victorious proletariat of that country’ literally ‘organising their own socialist production’ what he really had in mind was a process of ‘building socialism’ involving the implementation of state capitalism which he saw as being organically linked to socialism.

Ironically, far from advocating autarky, Lenin favoured closer integration with global capitalism and imperialist investment in the Soviet economy under his New Economic

Policy his government was forced to adopt in 1921:

‘Get down to business, all of you! You will have capitalists beside you, including foreign capitalists, concessionaires and leaseholders. They will squeeze profits out of you amounting to hundreds per cent; they will enrich themselves, operating alongside of you. Let them. Meanwhile you will learn from them the business of running the economy’ (*The New Economic Policy*, 1921).

This partnership with Western capitalists continued under Stalin, the former providing much of the capital and expertise to finance Soviet industrialisation. Prominent among these was Henry Ford to whom Stalin expressed his gratitude, calling him one of the world’s greatest industrialists and obsequiously adding, ‘May God preserve him’ (history.com/this-day-in-history/ford-signs-agreement-with-soviet-union).

Who is ‘imperialist’?

This was not just a one-way street, however. Just like the ‘Monroe doctrine’ enunciated by the American president James Monroe in the early nineteenth century, opposing further colonisation in the Americas by European powers only in order to hypocritically assert US imperialistic hegemony over the region, so the same can be said of Soviet imperialism.

The realisation that workers in the West were not going to rise up to support the Soviet regime prompted a strategic shift by that regime towards supporting nationalist struggles in developing countries as a means of undermining its Western rivals. For all its paper commitment to the principle of ‘national self-determination’, this did not stop the Soviet Union exercising its own political (and economic) muscle when it came to those countries falling within its own sphere of influence, installing puppet regimes and threatening or carrying out military intervention in countries like Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968).

All this prompts the question – what exactly is meant by ‘imperialism’ – and, by extension, ‘anti-imperialism’ – today? Lenin developed his theory of imperialism in opposition to Kautsky’s ‘ultra-imperialism’ which envisaged the major imperialist powers forming a federation which would make military conflict largely redundant or irrational – a pious hope, indeed.

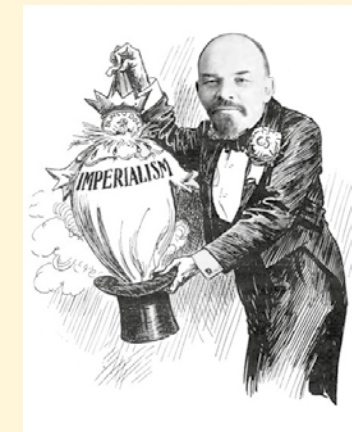
But Lenin’s own theory was shaped by the then existing reality of colonialism which in the post-war era has largely disappeared. At the same time we have witnessed the rise of giant multinational corporations, some with a larger revenue base than most states. If imperialism is about the conflict between nation-states how does this hold up in an era of ‘neo-liberal’ governance?

Concerning Lenin’s distinction between ‘imperialist countries’ and ‘oppressed countries’, Michael Roberts and Guglielmo Carchedi, have identified ‘10 countries at the most that fit the bill as imperialist’-- essentially the G7 countries plus one or two small states – by analysing cross-border flows of profit, interest and rent. As Roberts notes, little has changed in the century since Lenin wrote on the subject: ‘it’s still the same countries’ (bit.ly/35j9Y98).

But if being an ‘imperialist country’ means being a net ‘recipient of cross-border income flows’, then it seems improbable you will ever get rid of imperialism while capitalism (and its ‘cross-border income flows’) exists since what we are talking about here is essentially a zero sum game. Eliminating one imperialist power simply creates a vacuum into which another will inevitably step.

Thus, nationalistic ‘anti-imperialism’ has proved to be not only a fundamental distraction from the class struggle for socialism but also fundamentally futile on its own terms.

ROBIN COX



Hong Kong was a small but important part of the British Empire, acquired by military might. Hong Kong Island originally became part of the Empire in 1842, after China was defeated in the First Opium War, as the lucrative opium trade was imposed on China by Britain. After the Second Opium War in 1860, further land was ceded, including Kowloon Peninsula. Then in 1898 the New Territories to the north of Kowloon were leased to Britain for 99 years.

Under British rule, Hong Kong became a centre of global trade and finance, much of it supported, directly or indirectly, by the opium industry. Its

Chinese population lived in squalor, while, in the first decades at least, many wealthy Westerners enjoyed opulence and an often-debauched lifestyle, with the Royal Navy ready to defend Britain's interests and so-called free trade.

As the end of the lease approached, the British government decided that Hong Kong without the New Territories would not be viable, so in 1984 an agreement was reached that the whole of Hong Kong would be transferred to China in 1997, with an undertaking that the social system would be guaranteed for fifty years. Hong Kong is officially a Special Administrative Region of China, under the supposed principle of 'one country, two systems', and there is at least a semblance of the capitalist idea of democracy, with elections and political parties, though the members of the Legislative Council are only partly chosen by direct elections.

Hong Kong's economy has fared pretty well in capitalist terms since the Chinese takeover. It is a very large importer and exporter, with many goods being trans-shipped through its container port and its airport the largest anywhere for international cargo. It has the world's seventh-busiest stock exchange, and the second-highest number of billionaires of any city (behind only New York). Some supporters of capitalism have regarded Hong Kong as leading the world in economic freedom, in terms of the rule of law and the ability of people to make decisions about their lives. Given the extent of inequality and poverty and the lack of genuine democracy, this was always nonsense, but presumably even such apologists are likely to be changing their minds given recent events.

At the end of June this year, China imposed on Hong Kong a new security law, which included possible life sentences for secession, subversion or terrorism. Some cases could be tried in China, not Hong Kong, and the Beijing government would have the final say on how the law should be interpreted. The head of Amnesty International's China Team said the law 'represents the greatest threat to human rights in [Hong Kong's] recent history' and 'China will have the power to impose its own laws on any criminal suspect it chooses'. Others claim that it infringes human rights and international law. There were protests last year that involved pitched battles with police, and the new law was widely seen as making any kind of protest illegal. Some critics thought the law meant that Hong Kong was 'turning into China for real'.

Even before the law came into effect, some opposition groups, both pro-independence ones and campaigning organisations, decided to dissolve themselves, though some



carried on their work from Taiwan. Many people deleted social media posts in order to be on the safe side. On the first day of the law being in operation, there were demonstrations, met by riot police, with ten people being arrested under the security law. Anyone allegedly promoting 'Hong Kong independence' can be charged with inciting secession.

China set up a new security agency in Hong Kong, with a so-called 'hard-liner' as its head. Journalists have become worried about revealing sources and fear that even reporting banned slogans may be illegal.

Books by pro-democracy

activists have begun to disappear from local libraries, supposedly so it can be ascertained if they violate the new law. Among those arrested was a newspaper owner, and the offices of his paper were searched. At one demo in early September, around 300 people were arrested, including a twelve-year-old girl who allegedly ran away 'in a suspicious manner'.

District council elections held in November last year resulted in a big majority for the 'pro-democracy' groups, while opinion polls showed that most people supported the protests, if not the violence. This year's Legislative Council elections have been postponed till next year, presumably because the authorities fear an outcome unfavourable to them.

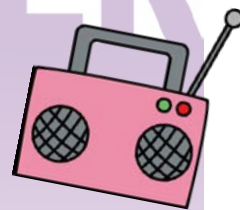
Politicians in other capitalist countries have objected to China's recent policies. Johnson has said that up to three million Hong Kong residents who hold British national overseas status would be given the right to settle in the UK, though it remains to be seen if he would keep to this if push comes to shove. Australia has made it easier for Hong Kong students in Australia to remain there after they graduate. Trump has put an end to any special economic treatment for Hong Kong, so that it will be treated the same as China. This may mean that US companies will switch from using Hong Kong as a regional hub to another Chinese city or Singapore.

One reason for these actions by China may relate to the issue of control in the South China Sea, which is an important sea lane and has extensive oil and gas reserves (see the August *Socialist Standard*). Eight missile boats and corvettes from the Chinese navy are currently stationed in Hong Kong, and one recently took part in a 'live-fire drill' which involved firing cannons and torpedoes. This is a very small part of the whole navy and even of the South Sea Fleet but it may still be useful in standing up to US naval operations there. There is, however, little chance of demonstrations in Hong Kong undermining the Chinese navy's strength, and Hong Kong becoming independent from China is hardly a real possibility in the short or medium term. It may also be the case that clamping down on dissent in Hong Kong is a way of sending messages to Taiwan, which is still viewed as a 'rebel province', or to workers in China who may be kicking against the traces. China, the message reads, will not put up with dissent or any kind of demand for more democracy. The Beijing government is in charge, and people had better bear that in mind. Stopping demos and arresting fairly small numbers of people could be an effective way of making this point.

PAUL BENNETT

PROPER GANDER

Radio Ga-Ga



SWITCH OVER from TV current affairs programmes to those on DAB radio, and you'll notice quite a shift in tone. The telly's news bulletins and shows like the BBC's *Question Time* or *Newsnight* appear airbrushed and staid when compared with the more blunt discussions found on the commercial talk radio stations.

With nearly three million listeners each week, the heavyweight in the market is LBC, which as the London Broadcasting Company was the first licensed commercial radio station, back in 1973. It became more widely known after relaunching nationally on the DAB platform in 2014 with the self-aggrandising boast of 'Leading Britain's Conversation'. In 2017 the station gained further publicity from its interview with Diane Abbott MP when she made a hash of explaining Labour's funding plans for the police, and also when it ditched Katie Hopkins as a presenter for advocating a 'final solution' following the Manchester Arena bombing. Not all of LBC's hosts are poisonous rent-a-gobs like Hopkins or Nigel Farage, whose regular programme was dropped a few months ago. James O'Brien's phone-in slot often shows up racists and xenophobes for what they are, and he wearily ran rings around Jacob Rees-Mogg when interviewing him about the practicalities of leaving the European Union. Frosty conversations are a hallmark of LBC.

Less popular, but more populist is TalkRADIO. This station, relaunched on DAB in 2016, follows a similar format of having phone-in discussion programmes helmed by opinionated hosts wearing headphones. While LBC presenters are more likely to try and catch out their interviewees, TalkRADIO hosts tend to bring in guests who reinforce their own opinions, which are invariably of the patriotic, right wing libertarian variety. This stance reflects who ultimately owns the station: along with Virgin Radio, Times Radio and Talksport, it's part of Wireless Group, which is part of News Corp, owned by pro-Trump Rupert Murdoch.

Among TalkRADIO's regular presenters is Mike Graham, who refers to the station as being 'the home of common sense' for the 'silent majority'. He lays out his trade when he says on one show 'we don't need

any lessons in history from the *Guardian* reading yoghurt knitting lentil munching morons who think that there's something wrong with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland'. As well as presenting *The Independent Republic of Mike Graham*, he chairs *Plank of the Week*, where he sits with a couple of other pundits to slag off people recently in the public eye. One 'plank of the week' was Banksy for his efforts in arranging a boat to rescue migrants at risk in the Mediterranean Sea.

Another frequent target is 'woke' culture, which the station associates with transgender activists, Black Lives Matter ('a ghastly, horrible organisation that would like to see the destruction of everything that is good about Britain', according to Mike Graham) and Extinction Rebellion ('pathetic', so says another presenter, Mike Parry). The station particularly focuses on its rival the BBC's emphasis on diversity. For instance, Ian Collins in his show called the BBC directive about training its staff in avoiding racial bias 'absolute cast-iron bonkers' and another presenter Dan Wootton slated the BBC for being obsessed with 'vile, toxic, tribal identity politics'.

The 'wokeness' of the BBC is also criticised because having a 'liberal London groupthink' means that it isn't as impartial as it is supposed to be. On one of Mike Graham's shows, regular guest and TV presenter Neil Oliver says that news is expected to be neutral, 'a magnolia paint colour version of events', and that the BBC gives this impression to disguise its left-leaning bias. On one of his shows, Ian Collins adds that BBC presenters should leave their political opinions on subjects such as Black Lives Matter outside the studio. But he, and the other TalkRADIO presenters, aren't shy to inflict their own views on us. They simultaneously berate the BBC for being biased while making the most of their own biased broadcasting.

Whether or not the BBC is partial in the way TalkRADIO accuses, it's right to point out that the BBC isn't impartial. And it can't be impartial, because it is part of the establishment, and therefore reflects the ideology which maintains the status quo. It's partial towards acceptance of the system overall. TalkRADIO is the same, just

in a more extreme and in-your-face way.

While the BBC has to stick to stricter editorial rules than TalkRADIO or LBC, all news broadcasters have to follow Ofcom's code of guidance about 'due impartiality', which means that alternative views should be considered. Earlier in the year, TalkRADIO was found not to have done this and was fined £75,000 after former presenter George Galloway discussed allegations of antisemitism in the Labour Party and the role of the Russian state in the Salisbury poisonings. When the station's presenters do cite different opinions or interview activists, it's invariably with a dismissive, sneering tone.

TalkRADIO's preoccupations are shown by how it repeatedly latches on to the same kind of subject in the same kind of way. Its recent fixations have included dance troupe Diversity's Black Lives Matter routine on *Britain's Got Talent* and the possibility of 'Land of Hope and Glory' and 'Rule Britannia' being removed from the *Proms* because of associations with colonialism. While these and any topic should be discussed, TalkRADIO doesn't scrutinise, for example, Donald Trump or Sky News. Nor does it have programmes about poverty or exploitation or environmental threats or war. The subjects the channel doesn't cover tell us as much about its stance as those which it does.

TalkRADIO's critique (if it can be called that) of left-wing ideology would be of interest, but it's based on a caricature, and it comes from a cynical, cold place. A distorted worldview. Listen to TalkRADIO for too long, and you'd think Britain is divided only into 'lentil munching morons' infatuated with diversity quotas, and the Union Jack-waving 'silent majority' fed up with 'political correctness gone mad'.

MIKE FOSTER



REVIEWS

Saving graces



The Science and Passion of Communism. Selected Writings of Amadeo Bordiga. Edited by Pietro Basso. Brill. 540 pages,

Amadeo Bordiga (1889-1970), the first leader of the Italian Communist Party who later became a prominent figure in the Left Communist opposition to Stalin, was a super-Leninist. Not only did he hold that under capitalism the working class was incapable of understanding socialism but that (for this reason) the working class should not be consulted by the vanguard party as to what to do; this party should seize power as a minority in an armed uprising and then rule on behalf of the workers. So why should he be of any interest to socialists?

After the Second World War Bordiga resumed activity (during the fascist period he had remained in Italy), which for him was mainly a question of developing a correct understanding of Marx. This led to his two saving graces – his analysis of the USSR as capitalist and his view that communist society had to be a society from which production for the market, working for wages, and using money (even as an accounting unit) had disappeared.

According to him, Russia had never ceased to have a capitalist economy. In this he followed up Lenin's view of the 'New Economic Policy' that the Bolsheviks were forced to adopt in 1921 and which Lenin described as the development of capitalism under the auspices of the 'proletarian state' (i.e. a state controlled by a vanguard party claiming to have socialism as its aim). For Bordiga, at some point during the 1920s the 'proletarian state' ceased to exist but capitalism continued. He preferred

to call Russia simply capitalist rather than state capitalist, on the grounds that production was in the hands of enterprises as separate accounting and capital accumulating units producing for the market. Even though he exaggerated the degree of autonomy of state enterprises, he was to be proved right to the extent that, with the collapse of Bolshevik rule in the 1990s, many of the oligarchs who emerged as open capitalists did come from the ranks of those who had managed state enterprises.

To illustrate Bordiga's view of communism (which we call socialism) the editor has chosen an article written in 1958 entitled 'The Revolutionary Programme of Communist Society Eliminates All Forms of Ownership of Land, the Instruments of Production and the Products of Labour'. In it Bordiga starts from a criticism Engels made of the agrarian programme adopted by the French Workers Party in 1894 which came out in favour of peasants owning the land they worked even those employing workers. Engels saw this as 'opportunism' in the sense of adopting a policy to attract votes that contradicted the socialist aim of common ownership by society of land. This aim, says Bordiga, rules out both peasant cooperatives and either municipal or state ownership of land.

He doesn't object so much to the word 'nationalisation' (also used by Marx) as this implies that the land belongs to the people rather than to a political institution. He ends up rejecting the word 'property' – even as 'common property' – altogether as it still implies ownership by a restricted group, even if this group is the whole human population alive at a particular time. In communism the existing population would not have exclusive rights over the land to do with it as they pleased, as this would be to exclude future generations. What they will have is the use of the land which they will have to care for and hand down to future generations in the same or better state that they found it. Bordiga quotes Marx:

'Even an entire society, a nation, or all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the earth. They are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations, as *boni patres familias*' (Capital, Volume 3, chapter 46).

The words in Latin are from Roman law (which Marx started to study in university)

meaning literally 'good heads of family'. Today, we would use a more familiar form of words such as 'good stewards'.

This introduces what would now be called an ecological dimension to socialist society as envisaged by Marx. Bordiga, writing in the 1950s as a Marxist, took up this point and developed it in other writings, long before ecological movements got off the ground.

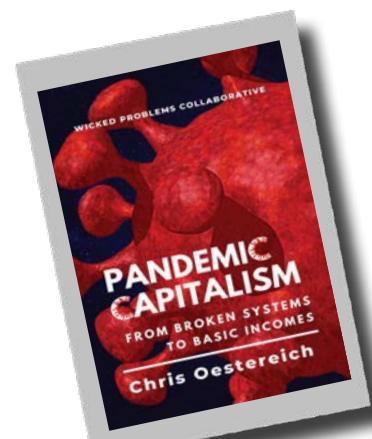
Bordiga goes on to apply this not just to natural resources but also to the instruments of labour made by humans and to the products of their work (hence the article's title). None of these will be 'owned' but will simply be there to be used by good stewards. The concept of 'property' and 'ownership' is replaced by that of 'stewardship' though the word Bordiga uses is 'usufruct' (use without ownership).

Bordiga's brand of Left Communism gave rise to various groups in the 1970s which inherited his (and Marx's) view of communism as a worldwide society from which classes, private property, the coercive state, markets, money, wages and profits had disappeared. So he deserves some credit for keeping alive, as we have done, the original idea of socialism/communism.

Priced at over £50 this book is mainly for university libraries not the general public. Bordiga's article is available, though in a different translation, in the Libcom online library.

ALB

Capitalist cake



Chris Oestereich.
Pandemic Capitalism.
From Broken Systems to Basic Incomes. Wicked Problems Collaborative. 2020

While this short book insists that the post coronavirus world can and must be

one of radical change ('a new paradigm' as one of its chapter titles says) and one that provides a decent means of life for everyone, it nails its colours to the mast in the opening pages by quoting approvingly the World Economic Forum's words: 'We seriously need to consider implementing a well designed Universal Basic Income (UBI), so shocks may hit, but they won't destroy.' So the new world will, in the author's view, still be one ensconced in the existing system of 'incomes' and not one involving the real paradigm shift of abolition of wages and salaries, of buying and selling and of money and wages. It will be, in the author's own words and imagination, 'a cake made of socialism with a layer of capitalism'.

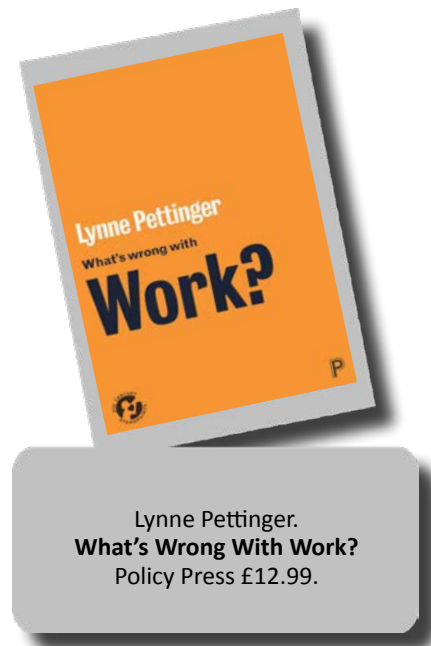
Having said that, it cannot be denied that this book has a laudable aim, that of 'finding a way to share the bounty of our planet, while working within its limits'. Its description of the kind of society we live in ('a society rooted in cut-throat economic competition' with 'spiralling inequality', where 'necessities go unfulfilled while the privileged indulge in perversities') is impossible not to recognise and agree with. The author is right to say that we live 'on a planet where much of the food that is grown goes to waste, we destroy unsold garments, and homes sit empty'. The question he asks about what the world could look like if people were able 'to choose a collaborative orientation, rather than being forced into a competitive one' is also entirely pertinent to the endeavours of socialists to open up people's imagination to the possibility of a different kind of world, one of cooperative work at all levels and free access to all goods and services, where, in the words of one of this book's chapter titles, we would all be 'sharing the bounty'.

With regard to UBI, the author is right to say that it is an idea that has very much come to the fore in recent times, the idea being that the state would pay each of its citizens an unconditional basic income. But could such a reform solve the endemic problems of capitalist society? Would it rather not be just capitalism with a few tweaks? As articles which have appeared recently in the *Socialist Standard* (May and June, 2020) have shown, the likely effect of UBI, even if it could be made to work, would be to redistribute poverty. The chronically poor would be slightly better off (better than nothing admittedly), but the gulf between the vast majority who own little other than their energies and the minority who monopolise most of the world's wealth would remain. Above all it would leave the market and commodity relations, the bulwarks of capitalism, intact. So, far from the idea of UBI being,

as the author puts it, 'a stretch of the imagination' for many people, it is actually relatively easy to imagine as reforms of capitalism go. The real stretch of the imagination is the socialist society of from each according to ability to each according to needs. So one thing we would entirely agree with the author on is his approving reference to the words of the anarcho-socialist author, Ursula Le Guin: 'We live in capitalism, its power seems inescapable – but then, so did the divine right of kings.'

HOWARD MOSS

Working Hard



As the author says on the first page, a book with a title like this is an invitation to grumble or to comment that it's going to be a long book. In fact it is of interest more for some of the points that are made than for any overall argument.

One important theme is the centrality of informal work, which is difficult to define but essentially applies to employment not covered by national legislation or entitlement to benefits such as paid annual leave or sick leave. According to the International Labour Organization, two billion people (just over sixty percent of global work activity) are in informal work, and this figure rises to ninety percent in developing countries, where a substantially greater percentage of women than men are informally employed. What might be called standard contracts of work are becoming rarer, with seasonal work, on-call work and zero-hours contracts being more common, even if they do not count as informal work.

The book pre-dates the move to working from home as a result of coronavirus, but still has quite a bit to say on homeworking, the 'hidden workforce'

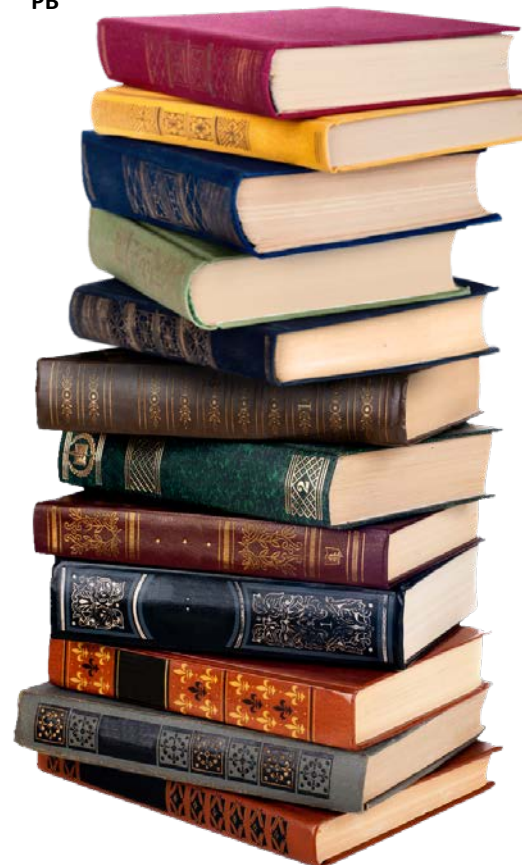
mainly consisting of women. Further, work can be not just hidden but invisible, as with cleaners who work when offices are otherwise closed. Cheap clothes are made by invisible workers, as nobody would supposedly buy goods made in such dire conditions if the workers were really visible.

Care work is also often hidden, taking place in people's homes. It is usually seen as low-status and low-skilled, partly because it has generally been associated with women. Yet its importance is undeniable in terms of the health and wellbeing of those cared for. Working on and with human bodies emphasises the crucial role of connections and relations between people.

Green jobs can allegedly be supported by all sides, from government policy-makers and employers to unions and community groups. But in practice many 'green jobs' are dirty and dangerous, such as recycling. The manufacture of solar panels relies on processed metal ores and can be damaging to both the environment and the workers who make them.

Researchers often discuss the recent increase in informal work and the rise of the gig economy and of precarity. But Pettinger notes that 'Informal work is globally and historically the most common form of work'. So-called full employment is really an exception, an ideal applying in western Europe from the 1950s to the 1970s, connected to the notion of a male breadwinner. Not that even then it meant there was no unemployment.

PB



50 Years Ago

Black Power

The rise of the Black Power movement in the United States has spread around the world wherever Negroes live. It has also invaded this country, gaining rapid momentum mainly among the young.

According to its followers, the poverty that affects the black masses is caused by the whites. We hear daily of white exploitation and the desire by the Black Power advocates to replace this by black exploitation. Now, will this make the exploitation any more worthy? Will the advent of Black Power (whatever that is) create jobs for the unemployed? Will they secure a better price for the fading sugar industry? Except for a change of boss, how different would the life of the man in the street be?

Under the searching light of reason Black Power turns out to be nothing more than another racist organisation, designed to gain power for a few by exploiting the ignorance of the majority. Those who are really interested in solving the desperate poverty we see around us should think carefully before they fall victims to cheap emotionalism.

The problems of black people are not caused by whites. There are whites in

developed countries like America and England who are just as poverty-stricken as people are here. It is the social system that the people the world over live under that make poverty and other things a part of man's life. There is only one race, and that is the human race. Let us realise that we must all work together or the real enemy may never be destroyed.

from The Socialist Review, published by a group of Socialists in Kingston, Jamaica.

(reprinted Socialist Standard, October 1970)



Photo: David Fenton via Getty Images.

NOW ON SALE

SOCIALIST PARTY OFFICIAL LOGO BRASS BADGE

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



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

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

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

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

Meetings

All meetings/talks/discussions are currently online on **Discord** (unless it is stated that the meeting or talk is on Zoom). Please contact the spgb@worldsocialism.org for how to join.

OCTOBER 2020 DISCORD EVENTS

Wednesday 7 October 7.30pm BST

The FAQ Workshop

SHOULD WE STOP REIFYING CAPITALISM?

We all do it. We talk about capitalism as if it's a thing, which has 'qualities' like being blind, insane, reckless, psychopathic etc and we impute motives to it as if it has living desires and aims. We turn it into a thing –reify it – because a concrete entity is easier to conceptualise and relate to. But in doing so perhaps we turn the 'thing' into a monster, a golem that looks unbeatable. Would it be better to avoid this kind of talk, and refer instead to social relationships and unwritten agreements, thus perhaps demystifying and diminishing the task to a more human scale?

Friday 9 October 7.30pm BST

FRIDAY NIGHT TALK

WHY SOCIALISM? THE POWER AND LIMITS OF SPECULATION

Richard Field speculates on the positive side of socialism and how far we can go in this.

Wednesday 14 October 7.30pm BST

The FAQ Workshop

IS A THIRD WORLD WAR INEVITABLE?

We issued a pamphlet with this title back in 1982, when the Cold War seemed destined to continue indefinitely. But just seven years later the world changed dramatically, with the collapse of the Soviet Eastern bloc regimes. Now, with the resurgence of capitalist Russia, the rise of China, the possible fragmentation of Europe, and the global economy hit by the double whammy of a slump and a pandemic, the world is more unpredictable than ever. So how would we answer the question today?

Friday 16 October 7.30 BST

FRIDAY NIGHT TALK

GEORGE ORWELL

Richard Botterill looks at his writings and political ideas.

Wednesday 21 October 7.30pm BST

The FAQ Workshop

SHOULDN'T YOU BE THE ANARCHO-SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN?

An opponent once used to make a point of calling us that, in the hope it would annoy us. It didn't. In fact some members

even agreed. Others objected. But since we stand for a stateless society could he have had a point that we could be that contradiction in terms an anarchist political party?

Friday 23 October 7.30pm BST

FRIDAY NIGHT TALK

POPULISM

Paul Bennett looks at the rise of this political phenomenon in recent years.

Wednesday 28 October 7.30pm BST

The FAQ Workshop

SHOULD WE CONSIDER DIRECT ACTION?

Occupy Wall St & UK came from nowhere to hit headlines. Extinction Rebellion did the same. How? Because their political ideas were elegant and sophisticated? No. Because of direct action. It doesn't have to be illegal. It doesn't have to be dangerous. Could we adopt direct action tactics to publicise the case for socialism?

Friday 30 October 7.30pm BST

FRIDAY NIGHT TALK

US ELECTION SPECIAL

General discussion with video clips

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.



KISS

'The traditional class war has been waged between wage-earners (who sell their labor) and their employers (owners of capital and the means of production). These classes have been assigned various names (proletariat, bourgeoisie, capitalists, etc.) but these broad class definitions don't describe all the class conflicts emerging in the modern U.S. economy.... Six years ago I took a stab at defining *America's Nine Classes: The New Class Hierarchy* (April 29, 2014), to which I would now add a tenth class, gig economy precariat, ...' (charleshughsmith.blogspot.com, 27 August). We should clarify that workers sell labour power, and capitalists extract surplus value. Smith's ten 'classes' – the Deep State, Oligarchs, New Nobility, Upper Caste, State Nomenclatura, Middle Class, Working Poor, State Dependents, Mobile Creatives and Gig Economy Precariat – add further confusion. All people are either workers or they are capitalists and if they are in the former class they are robbed and they are relatively poor and they have a world to win, if they are in the latter class they are exploiters and they are relatively rich and the world is theirs, literally: *'Study Shows Richest 0.00025% Owns More Wealth Than Bottom 150 Million Americans'* (Common Dreams, 10 February, 2019) and every 38 seconds a US citizen dies of poverty and poverty-related social conditions. Warren Buffett, whose 82 billion dollar fortune makes him the 6th richest person on Earth, once stated: 'there's class warfare, all right, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning.' Winning worldwide.

Pie in the sky

'...Anna Howard Shaw, an American Methodist pastor and suffragette, became the first clergywoman to preach in Sweden. That was in 1911, at an international women's suffrage conference, and long before women could be ordained in the Church of Sweden, in 1958' (yahoo.com, 23 August). Today female priests there outnumber men, but earn less: '...around 2,200 kronor (213 euros, \$253) less a month than their male counterparts...' It should not be imagined that the mundane campaign for equal pay is new - it was, for example, commented on in *The Socialist Standard* of December 1904. And according to a report from 2017, women will have to wait 217 years for wage equality! Yet believers are in conflict over the status quo. Consider, 'Christian fundamentalist Stacey Shiflett insisted that Trump was sent by God himself to govern the U.S.' (alternet.org, October 21, 2019) v. 'Right now, in America with this movement there is love and truth

Anna Howard Shaw



and justice breathing, the American people are resisting the suffocation and resisting the death. And thank God it is happening' (alternet.org, June 19). Neither campaigns for wage equality or to abolish religion will end exploitation. The supreme aim of the workers must be their emancipation from wage-slavery, and the fight against superstition is but one phase of this great fight. But it must never be forgotten that since religion is always used as a weapon by the ruling class against the workers, no socialist in the struggle for working class emancipation can honestly avoid the religious conflict.

Priests, police and politicians

The Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, quoted above in opposition to the Trump-supporting Christian, is president and senior lecturer of Repairers of the Breach and co-chair of the *Poor People's Campaign: A National Call For Moral Revival*. With regard to the killing of George Floyd, he '...experienced a range of feelings. Derek Chauvin, that white police officer, the way he posed



Credit: twbuckner

was something I have seen a hundred times — it was how people pose over dead animals' (op. cit.). Barber blames the President: 'Trump is fundamentally against the things that would help all Americans. Trump may have started talking about Latinos and Mexicans being rapists, but he will not even protect the country from COVID-19 which is killing everybody.' If Trump is removed next month, it will be business as usual: the capitalist system which robs, slaughters and degrades will continue. To be clear, police are workers. They, like the vast majority of society, need to work in order to live. Yes, they have been used to break strikes but some have used the strike weapon themselves. The nature of their work does not exclude them from other members of their class. This is also true of those who form the vast bulk of the military. Should they leave, these workers need to find employment elsewhere, in order to support themselves, one of many problems not experienced by the 1 percent.

The chutzpah of philanthropy

'Li Lu says he walked into a lecture Buffett was giving years ago at Columbia University and "...was instantaneously taken by him. What he basically taught me in that course was that somebody with high moral principles and integrity can make a lot of money off the market by being wise and smart and moral," Lu says. ...Says author Miles: "He's transformed my life personally, more than anyone else in terms of modeling good behavior and having fun. He's made me a better person, made me rethink my own philanthropy, in terms of helping those who through no fault of their own were born on the wrong side of the track" (finance.yahoo.com, 29 August). The capitalist class is charitable out of self-interest; it gives nothing outright, but regards its gifts as a business matter, and makes a deal with the poor saying: 'If I spend this much upon benevolent institutions, I thereby purchase the right not to be troubled any further, and you are bound thereby to stay in your dusky holes and not to irritate my tender nerves by exposing your misery. You shall despair as before, but you shall despair unseen, this I require, this I purchase with my subscription of twenty pounds for the infirmary!' (Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 1844). Such chutzpah — the capitalists suck out our very life-blood and then place themselves before the world as mighty benefactors of humanity when they give back to us a mere fraction of the wealth generated by our class.