

socialist standard

October 2021
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Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement



Also:
Kindness



After the Revolution
Countdown to COP26

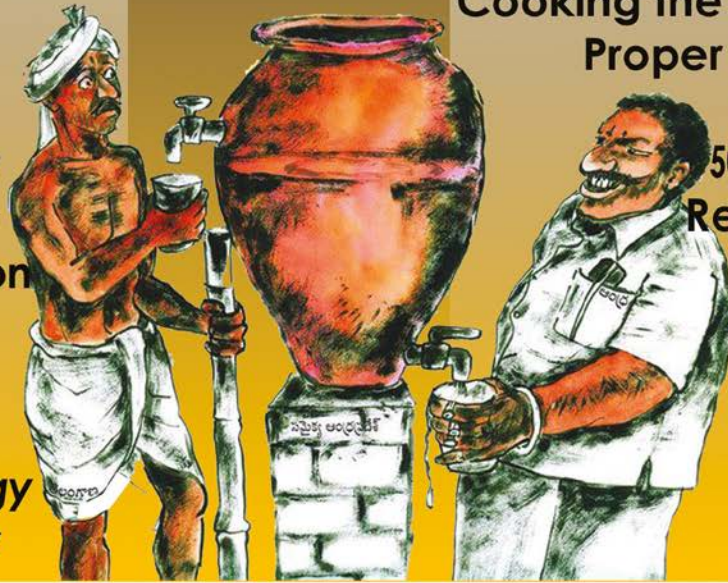


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Introducing the Socialist Party

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

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



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

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

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

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

The battle for 'We'

Somebody once remarked that the most important word in the political vocabulary is 'we'. It was a shrewd observation, since to get someone to use 'we' in relation to some group of people is to get them to identify their interest as the interest of that group.

In the battle for 'we', socialists are trying to get all those excluded from ownership and control of means of production to recognise the fact of their common interest as one class within capitalist society, to regard themselves as 'we' and to use 'our' and 'us' only in relation to that class and its interests.

Those who control one or other of the two hundred or so armed states into which the world is divided have to try to prevent this practice emerging, and deliberately seek to undermine it, in the interest of the other main class in capitalist society – those who do own and control means of production and who derive a privileged income from this. They seek to convince

the people who they rule over that the 'we' they should identify with is 'the nation' as the nation part of what they call the 'nation-state'.

Those born and brought up in Britain have been taught, through what's been drummed into them in school and through what they continuously read in the papers or hear on the radio or television, to regard themselves as British. In school they are taught the history of the kings and queens of England, and of the wars in which the British ruling class has been involved over the centuries, and of the evolution of the British state. The media reinforce this by reporting news from an almost exclusively British angle and encourage identification with 'the nation' via identification with 'our' sports teams and performers.

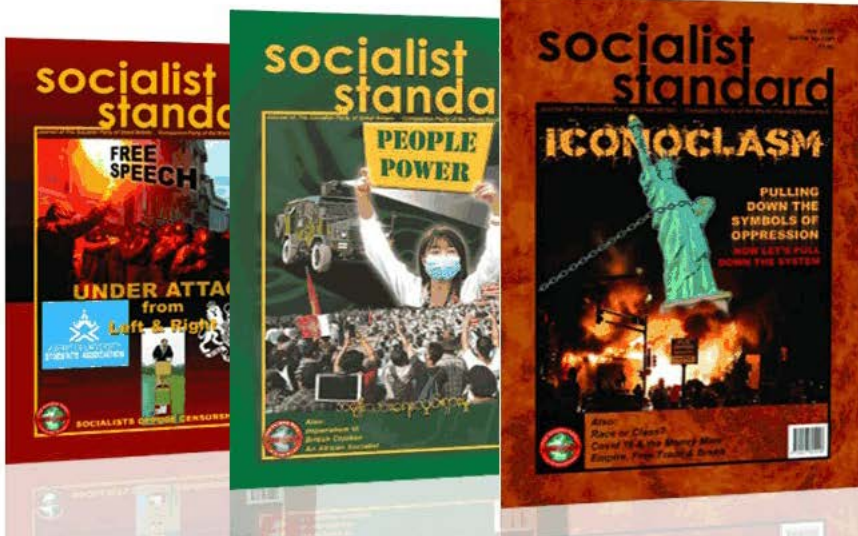
It therefore comes almost as a reflex action for people to use 'we' in relation to the British state and to regard themselves as part of a British 'nation'. So they spontaneously say such things as 'we beat

the French at Waterloo' or 'we won the Second World War' or 'we got twenty gold medals at the Olympics'. Even opponents of particular policies pursued by the British state, yesterday as well as today, fall into the same trap and say such things as 'we should never have conquered India' or 'we shouldn't have nuclear weapons'.

Such usage is music to the ears of the ruling class as they know it means that they currently have the upper hand in the battle for 'we'.

For socialists, 'we' are all those, wherever you are born, wherever you live or wherever you come from, who are not members of the privileged ruling class. 'We' are all members of a world-wide excluded class of wage-working wealth producers, who have a common interest in coming together to abolish so-called 'nation-states' and establish a world community without frontiers.

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PATHFINDERS

FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIREPROOFING

LAST MONTH UK climate activists staged a number of sit-down protests in the middle of the M25 motorway, causing hours of tailbacks, associated costs and delays, and allegedly some collisions. The optics on this were not favourable. The papers roundly condemned the tactic, pointing out that, aside from the safety concerns, causing standing traffic jams was environmentally something of an own goal. And inevitably, the *Daily Star's* description of them as 'Tarquins' and 'soap-dodging posh boys' underlined the disconnect between the perceived middle-class nature of climate protesters and the reality of life for hard-pressed workers trying to go about the daily grind of wage slavery. When you're trying to motivate the public to act quickly and drastically on climate change, reminding them that you have the leisure and lifestyle to go and sit on motorways during the working day, while preventing them from making their works' deadlines or minimum wage van deliveries, is a great way to put the kibosh on any hope of united class action.

Not that class unity is on the minds of Insulate Britain (IB), who are demanding that the government pay for the insulation of the UK's 29 million aged and 'leaky' homes, at an estimated cost of between £360 and £640 billion, on the argument that the investment would pay for itself 'economically, environmentally and socially' over a 25-year period (bit.ly/2XuyQsU).

One is entitled to speculate about IB's grip on reality when their section on science begins with 'The science is clear. We are facing an unprecedented emergency that will destroy this country' (insulatebritain.com). Really, *destroy* the country? Still, there's no question they're right about the need to upgrade the housing stock to reduce energy waste, and they may be right that investment would pay for itself in the long term. They're certainly correct that the government's investment in this area is 'derisory'. But here's where there's another disconnect in the thinking.

It's probably true to say that if private householders invested a large sum up front in retro-fitting energy-saving upgrades, they would see benefits in the fullness of time. So why don't they?

The obvious answer is, they can't afford it. IB knows this very well. Their own sources state that 25 years is 'clearly longer than the planning horizon for most

households', a rather euphemistic way of saying that people have to worry about making ends meet today, not making savings next year or next decade.

Where the disconnect exists is in not appreciating that 25 years is also beyond the planning horizon for most governments.

We're not going to make excuses for any government, particularly Boris Johnson's shambolic and egocentric 'presidency', but if you're going to be in charge of a capitalist government then you'd better operate within the immediate priorities, which may not include expensive long-term green schemes.



The UK state is around half a trillion quid out of pocket due to the pandemic, such that the anti-tax Tories have been driven to ignore their own manifesto pledge and raise taxes and business tax, freeze pay and pensions, and cut public spending. They are in hock up to the hilt, with GDP – the government's taxable source of income – down by 22 percent after the 'biggest annual contraction in over 300 years, since the Great Frost of 1709' (bit.ly/2VLRWK9).

Some credit cranks believe that banks can create money on demand, at any time and without dire consequences, a fantasy view of economics frequently criticised in these pages. Single-issue activists sometimes have a similar lazy tendency to imbue governments with the magical power to waft vast sums into being, at any time and for any purpose, on the assumption that if they don't it's only because they are complacent Tory bigots who don't care or don't understand the problem. The idea that governments with all their billions simply can't afford some things doesn't occur to some activists, especially those who regard 'politics' as irrelevant, and who therefore don't comprehend why it's more important to states to squander fortunes on aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines than on hospitals and decent pay for carers.

Capitalist governments may have skewed

priorities but they don't have infinite funds. They get their income from taxing the profits of the rich, either directly through corporation tax or indirectly via workers' income tax. If they tax too much, they'll have the rich down on them like a ton of bricks. Alternatively they can borrow, and have been doing lately in spades, but then they end up robbing Peter to pay Paul. So, just like householders, they tend to be short-termist. Instead of investing effort and resources in fireproofing for the future and preventing global warming, as socialism would do, they fritter away money

firefighting in the present, with their minds on the next election rather than on the next century.

The trouble with IB's demand to insulate every house is not that it's a silly idea. It's a very good idea, and would very likely be a top priority in a post-capitalist non-market society able to do what's needed instead of what's cheapest. But in the present system the scheme looks vanishingly unlikely. Most people

intuitively know that the rich aren't going to shell out for the public good, and that governments do what the rich want and not what the poor need. So as well as pissing workers off by blocking motorways, IB's stunts also reinforce a public sense that environmental activism is one giant exercise in sincere but child-like naivety.

And the public sense is not wrong. In the fond hope of building a broad coalition, activists continue to pretend that the environment is not a political matter. But everything in capitalism is a political matter, especially where profit is concerned. The road protesters who blocked the M25 ended up being arrested. In some parts of the world they might have faced much worse. Environmental activists across the world are being murdered at the rate of 4 a week by vested interests (bbc.in/3hDGk3F). What is killing them is the class war.

The only way to stop this class war is for workers to win it, and to do that we need to organise collectively to end capitalism and the choking stranglehold of the rich. Environmentalists who insulate themselves from class politics by appealing to governments for change are like mugging victims getting a kicking and appealing to the muggers to wear softer boots.

PJS

Credit: PA

LETTERS

What about the monarchy?

Dear Editors

I have subscribed to your journal to read intelligent alternative opinions as part of a thought-provoking process. I had intended to renew. However, the article on pages 14 and 15 'Parasites' puts me off – it is below the belt as we look forward to H. M. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Clearly the writer assumes an elected President would be much better. How shallow. Just look back at the conduct of so many past and present. Being elected does not 'improve the human condition', often elected by minorities. The Queen's 70 years of service has been remarkable and should be commemorated.

Councillor G. Wanstall, Dover.

Reply:

You have correctly understood that we are not monarchists. We are opposed to monarchy, even a rubber-stamp constitutional one. It can't and won't survive into socialism. Obviously.

In the capitalist state known as the 'United Kingdom' the monarch is not only the formal 'Head of State' but also the focus of the nationalist identity that the capitalist class seek to inculcate into the state's subjects. With some success, as you are far from alone in your view.

Are the royal family 'parasites'? The capitalist class think they perform a useful role for them. We don't see that they do anything useful as far as the rest of us, the excluded non-owning

majority, are concerned. They are the head of what's left of the aristocracy and great landowners in their own right. In any event, calling another human being 'your majesty' or 'your highness' offends against our democratic sentiments.

However, this does not mean that we see any merit in the British state becoming a republic. That would, as you put it, 'not improve the human condition'. It wouldn't make any difference, either way. Capitalism would remain as would the problems it generates for the excluded majority forced to work for wages. The USA and France are long-established republics but the position of the excluded majority is no better there than it is here. Whether the capitalist state you live under is a monarchy or a republic is an irrelevance.

So, you are wrong to conclude that we want the head of the British state to be an elected president instead of a monarch. Our priority is ending the class-divided capitalist system and replacing it with a one based on the common ownership and democratic control of productive resources by all the people. Neither a monarch nor a president will have any place in such a society.

To tell the truth, we are dreading the 70th anniversary next year of the present monarch ascending to the throne. It will be a festival of British nationalism to which we, as world socialists, are opposed – just as we are to all nationalism, everywhere. – *Editors.*

Feeding Frenzies in the South China Sea



ALL THE talk of COP26 has tended to obscure other aspects of capitalism's dark agenda that lurk below the surface, waiting to bite someone's legs off. One such agenda burst to the surface last month with the gung-ho expedition of a British Carrier Strike Force through the South China Sea combined with the announcement of a new military (Aukus) pact between Britain, the US and Australia, designed to make Australia the nuclear submarine policeman in the Indo-Pacific and contain Chinese expansionism. Suddenly, instead of global warming, the papers were full of breathless talk about global war.

China, on its way to overtaking the US as the world's premier superpower, economically if not yet militarily, is acting as if it owns that particular ocean and everything in it. Increasingly dodgy

activities, including creating artificial island air bases and mounting amphibious landings that look like practice for invading Taiwan, are causing much alarm to regional powers and indeed anyone who wants to use that ocean as a shipping route (ie. everybody).

America's motivation is obvious. Australia has just fallen out with China, it's biggest trading partner, so will be happy to accept US/UK weapons tech as leverage. The UK meanwhile, having just bought two carriers it couldn't afford (with a paltry 8 F-35 fighters on board which had to be supplemented by a further 10 US planes just so it didn't look ridiculous), is desperate to preserve the illusion that it's still a world player, with Boris Johnson wittering about 'Global Britain' to distract the voters from 'Brexit Balls-Up'.

Meanwhile New Zealand, with its lovable mumsy Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, is caught on the prongs of a dilemma, being in the 'Five Eyes' espionage ring with Australia, the UK, US and Canada, but simultaneously also having China as its biggest trading partner. It would be terrible for Jacinda's image to be embroiled in a regional macho pissing contest, but she can't stay out of the fray. She's felt obliged to announce a ban on Australian nuclear subs in NZ waters, in line with existing

policy on nukes, but must be squirming about the fact that New Zealand is also the administrator of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership trade pact (CPTPP). This pact was set up by the US expressly to restrict China's trade influence, and includes Australia, Canada, Japan and Chile. But then Trump pulled the US out, and the UK applied to join. Now China has applied to join as well!

WTF? you might say. Indeed. And China is also in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) which has 14 member states including South Korea, Japan and, er, Australia and New Zealand.

Funny that Britain fell over itself to exit a European trading bloc, supposedly in the interest of 'free trade', while elsewhere countries including the UK are falling over themselves to join trading blocs, even when they seem to be in competition with each other.

We offer no brilliant analysis of this regional game-play, except to observe that capitalist states circle each other like sharks sniffing for blood, and if they find any, it'll no doubt be workers who end up as the fish food.

PJS

COOKING THE BOOKS

Labour power shortage

'So what's wrong with labour shortages driving up low wages?' asked Larry Elliott, economics editor of the *Guardian* (29 August). Nothing, but it does bring out the commodity status of the human capacity to work, what Marx called 'labour power':

'By labour-power or capacity for labour is to be understood the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description' (*Capital*, Vol 1, ch. 6).

It's the energy a human can expend on some work activity. Under capitalism it is something that is bought and sold, sold by workers and bought by employers.

It is sometimes said that what workers are selling is their 'labour'. This can be passable as a shorthand for 'labour power' (as in 'labour market' or 'labour shortage') but can be seriously misleading insofar as it suggests that what workers are selling is the product of the exercise of their labour power; that they are being paid for their work and at its full value. But they're not, because a part of their work, over and above the part corresponding to their wages, is provided free to their employer. In the case of those working

for the government and its agencies (civil service, local government, health service, education) this saves their employer from having to spend so much. In the case of those working for an employer selling some product or service, it is something their employer converts into money as their profits, what in fact makes the capitalist economic system go round.

This is admitted by orthodox economists and national statisticians as they define 'value added' as the revenue generated in productive activity, not just wages but profits too. If workers were paid for the whole of the value added in production – and only human workers add it – there would be no profits. What they are being paid for is their labour-power, not their work.

This is why socialists are not being pedantic when we insist on drawing a distinction between 'labour power' (the capacity to work) and 'labour' (the outcome of working).

Generally speaking, workers receive the value of their labour power in that they are paid the value of what it costs them to produce and reproduce it, appropriately called the cost of 'living'. As it is sold on a market, just like commodities the actual price paid for a particular kind of labour power varies with market conditions.

When demand exceeds supply, the price goes up, the quicker if workers are organised to press for this. When supply exceeds demand, it goes down, though again if they are organised workers can prevent it falling as much as it might otherwise do.

The present shortage of lorry drivers, hospitality workers and social care staff is being called a side-effect of Brexit. Boris Johnson claimed, on 7 September in the House of Commons debate on paying for social care, that this was intentional. Wages in low-income occupations, he said, were going up 'in exactly the way that those of us who campaigned for Brexit hoped'. Whether or not this was intended (and the financiers who funded the Brexit campaign would not have minded as this wouldn't affect them), it has happened.

HGV drivers are benefitting – temporarily while more are trained – but many of the lowest paid will be no better off as the tax credits they are paid (the subsidy the government pays to low-wage employers) will go down.

There is, or rather should be, an elephant in the room: how come most humans are put in the position of having to sell their mental and physical energies to another group of humans?



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Don't tax the rich **Abolish them**

Statistics abound showing how the wealthiest around the world have grown even wealthier. Economists explain that never before in history has any society's inequality been so extreme as in this current epoch. The concentration of wealth in the hands of an ever smaller minority is a global phenomenon. Money goes to money as it is said.

In the USA the combined fortunes of the richest seven billionaires passed \$1tn for the first time. The richest 0.01 percent of Americans, 33,000 individuals, now pay just one-sixth of what they used to pay in tax, when measured as a percentage of their total wealth. The IRS recently published estimates that the richest 1 percent of US households don't report around 21 percent of their income, using complex tax avoidance strategies that allow them to cheat the federal government.

In the UK, between March 2020 and 2021, the 54 UK billionaires saw their wealth increase £40 billion (US \$54.9 billion), a gain of 36 percent.

Around 500 super-rich Russians, who make up less than 0.001 percent of Russia's population, owned more than the poorest 114.6 million, or 99.8 percent of the adult population. In China, Zhong Shanshan saw his wealth during 2020 increase by 3,300 percent (\$66 billion). Nor was he alone, with many others enjoying a rise in profits. So much so that the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, is now demanding financial sacrifices from the country's wealthy.

And such is the embarrassment of riches among capitalists that in the USA some have formed an organisation called 'Patriotic Millionaires' aimed at making wealthy people pay more in taxes.

Even the conservative International Monetary Fund has called on governments to shift the burden of taxation away from low and middle earners and towards the better-off, warning that unfairness in taxation leads to social unrest.

Politicians are uniting to combat international tax avoidance and tax evasion schemes. We already see that there are efforts to unify different countries' tax codes to close down loopholes that enable various methods of dodging local taxes.

Rather than attempting a redistribution by levelling incomes and reducing the disparity using government fiscal policies, the Socialist Party proposes a much more fundamental solution – the expropriation of the capitalist class.

Austerity policies and reductions in the welfare state are paying for tax cuts to the wealthy and this is proving to have

deadly consequences. The USA is described as the richest society ever known, yet we wouldn't guess it given the 'deaths of despair' caused by addictions and mental ill-health taking the lives of tens of thousands.

Billions of people are being affected by reduced pensions and social security benefits; by lower subsidies, including those for food and fuel; by government and local authority caps on the delivery of public services like education, health, social work, water and public transport; by the rationalisation and narrow-targeting of social protection so that only the very poorest of the population receive ever more frugal state

benefits with more people being excluded.

The Socialist Party takes the uncommon, but very much the orthodox Marxist position that the ultimate burden of taxation, despite a few minor exceptions, falls upon the capitalist class (this is explained elsewhere in our publications). When particular businesses cheat by tax evasion, they are stealing from their fellow capitalists

by not paying their 'fair' share of the revenue for the upkeep of government services.

This all leads to our unusual stance that we don't really care at all about the rich tax dodgers, although it does reveal their hypocritical nonsense of being patriotic and law-abiding. Indeed some of the wealthiest claim to be philanthropists who donate to charities but it exposes the undemocratic attitude that spending policy is to be decided by these individual capitalists and not collectively by their 'executive committee', the state.

So when it comes to naming and shaming the rich for tax dishonesty, we say it is a crime far less than the thievery from working people of the fruits of our labour-power through the exploitation of the extraction of surplus-value. But we may take a well-deserved feeling of schadenfreude when those 'captains of industry' are being exposed as the crooks that they are. The capitalist system is rigged from the start and working people have been conditioned since childhood to love it, preserve it and ultimately defend it with our lives even as it enslaves, impoverishes and kills us. The problem is not the billionaires but instead the ownership of the means of production by the capitalist ruling class. And the problem is not greed but instead the way the capitalist system works, the creation of surplus value from the sweat toil and, yes, often the blood of working people.

ALJO



UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

All meetings online during the pandemic.
See page 23.

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 Sat. 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 3rd Mon, 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: Stephen Harper spgbsw@gmail.com

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

Glasgow branch. Meets 1st and 3rd Tues. at 7pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Contact: Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. 01355 903105.

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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)

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South Wales Branch (Cardiff)

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MATERIAL WORLD

The Tigray Tragedy

'Ethiopia has 110 million people. If the tensions in Ethiopia would result in a widespread civil conflict that goes beyond Tigray, Syria will look like child's play by comparison' - **Jeffrey Feltman**, US special envoy for the Horn of Africa.

SELDOM FEATURING as headlines in the media, since November 2020 there has been a civil war in Tigray, a mountainous region in north Ethiopia of more than 5 million people, a conflict that has killed thousands of people and displaced millions from their homes. The civil war is said to have spread in recent weeks to the Amhara and Afar regions and displaced hundreds of thousands of more people. Some observers hold memories of the Darfur genocide in Sudan.

Ethiopia's prime minister, Abiy Ahmed, embarked on a military campaign against the region's secessionist ruling party, the Tigray Liberation Peoples Front (TPLF), after accusing them of attacking a federal military base.

Ahmed was awarded the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize for his reconciliation policies with Eritrea yet when the elected Tigray leaders requested peace negotiations, he refused talks. Instead he invited Eritrean troops to enter Ethiopia to do battle with the breakaway TPLF and the Eritrean soldiers proceeded to commit widespread atrocities. They also took the opportunity to attack camps hosting Eritrean refugees who had fled the repression and persecution in their native country.

The federal government has declared 'It is now time for all able-bodied Ethiopians



Credit: Patrick Tsui/FCO

to join the defence forces, special forces and militias and show their patriotism.'

The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said 'a humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding before our eyes', with up to 900,000 people facing famine conditions in what has been called the world's worst hunger crisis in a decade. Tens of thousands of children are on the brink of death.

Ramesh Rajasingham, the UN's acting humanitarian aid chief told the Security Council that over five million people require humanitarian help.

Attempts to deliver much-needed aid has been hindered by Ethiopia's government blockades, according to Grant Leaity, the UN's acting humanitarian coordinator for Ethiopia, sounding the

alarm over a critical malnutrition situation unfolding in the embattled Tigray region. Humanitarian access in Tigray remains unpredictable with obstructive military checkpoints thwarting the efforts to deliver life-saving supplies. What assistance is arriving is

reportedly being looted by the TPLF insurgents.

Francesco Rocca, president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent told the media that 'The situation there is one of the most difficult I've ever seen. The people there are missing almost everything.' Rocca said only four hospitals out of 40 are operational in the region and are all facing major shortages in medical supplies. He decried the unacceptable looting that has ravaged most of the health facilities in the region.

UN aid chief Mark Lowcock said, 'There is no doubt that sexual violence is being used in this conflict as a weapon of war.' Dr Fasika Amdeselassie, the top public health official for the government-appointed interim administration in Tigray, told Reuters, 'Women are being kept in sexual slavery.'

War comes at an enormous human cost. Once again, we are witnessing death and destruction inflicted upon civilians based upon ethnic differences with the divisions spurred on by politicians' power-plays and propaganda ploys. As always in war, all sides accuse the other of lying and carrying out atrocities. And the likelihood is that all are equally guilty and none of the participants is innocent. Peace for people in Tigray will be elusive.

ALJO



Countdown to COP - Part Three

Time is not on our side

COP26 is almost upon us and already we have had a flurry of advance statements and declarations. In November we can expect a multitude of government departments, industry bodies, scientific committees, NGOs and think-tanks plus myriad grassroots pressure groups and political organisations, offering up arguments to support their solutions. The Socialist Party, too, will be in attendance at Glasgow, presenting our own unique analysis that only a revolutionary transformation of society and the ending of the capitalist system can offer humanity the opportunity to proceed along the path of social evolution towards a better world for all.

Thousands of people will bring all sorts of ideas to Glasgow. We will for our part give the socialist vision. We will expose the blind irrationality of the capitalist market, with its short-sighted profit-and-loss accounting. We will try to explain that climate change crises are not aberrations but are an inevitable consequence of the capitalist system. We say society's prosperity and the planet's well-being can only be guaranteed by world socialism. We perceive a dark future when we witness the wilful burning of the Amazon rainforest in the hunger for profit.

One way or another, COP26 will be decisive for the fate of humanity. Unless greenhouse gases are swiftly and drastically curbed the result could be environmental catastrophe on an almost unimaginable scale.

Capitalism has inflicted incalculable harm on the inhabitants of the earth. Tragically, the future could be even worse for a simple reason: capitalism's destructive power, driven by its inner logic to expand, is doing irreversible damage to life in all its forms all around the planet. Rosa Luxemburg famously said that humanity had a choice, 'socialism or barbarism.' Given the climate crisis, her warning has even more meaning. Daily we hear of species extinction, global warming, resource depletion, deforestation, desertification, on and on to the point where we have almost become accustomed to impending catastrophe. Our planet cannot indefinitely absorb the impact of profit-driven, growth-without-limits capitalism. Unless we change this, we will reach the point where the harm becomes irreversible. Yet even the most modest environmental reforms are resisted by sections of the capitalist class. The goal of the big corporations is to secure the greatest possible profits for their super-rich owners — regardless of the consequences for the planet and its people. This makes the establishment of a socialist society all the more imperative.

We are dealing with the problem of an outmoded and unnecessary economic system dominated by a class whose primary purpose is to maximise capital accumulation and profits. This is condemning the planet. The Socialist Party does not accept this status quo and rejects the values and priorities of capitalist exploitation and production for profit.

The mounting realisation that humanity faces critical risks from global warming must create an awareness of the danger that capitalism presents.

Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Sunrise and Extinction Rebellion focus on the single issue of the environment as the most pressing matter of our time. They may well be right, in one sense. However, we say that if all the combined energy campaigning against individual problems the system throws up had been spent on attacking capitalism as a system, instead of distracting millions of workers, then our task of building a new cooperative commonwealth would have been vastly aided. A great amount of our political work has been taken up in attempts to rectify the damage done to socialist ideas by other political organisations and in challenging the single-issue mentality of thousands of organisations. If people eliminate the cause of the problems, the problems won't keep cropping up. Instead of trying to fix the symptoms, forever and forever, year in and year out, people can eliminate the cause, once and for all.

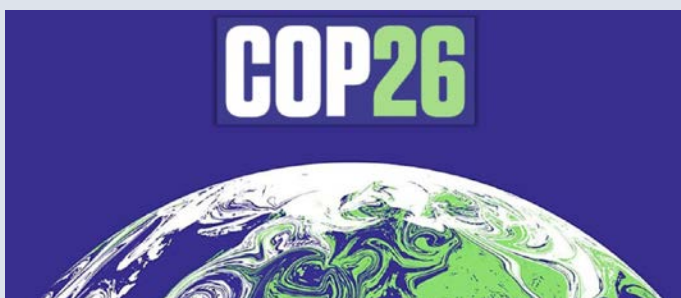
Voices in the ecology movement inform us that we are individually responsible for climate change and imply that it is our personal fault that the planet's environment is fouled up. They tell us that it is 'mankind' which contributes to carbon emissions because our 'excessive' consumerism makes manufacturers increase their production to satisfy demand. In fact the carbon footprint of one individual is very small and practically irrelevant. The biggest culprit in global warming is the business interests of the industries which produce almost all the emissions. Corporations are less concerned with stopping pollution than with making more profits than the next corporation. Carbon capture technology is expensive, so companies would have to cut deeply into their profits to take any real steps toward stopping emissions. Business is not about to lower its profits for anybody. Business has not reduced its profits to end poverty nor to cease wars. Why should we expect them to do such a thing in order to halt global warming?

What comfort can people get from the assurance of governments that they can solve the global warming crisis? The promises politicians make are fraudulent. They talk endlessly about what they will do some day, but it always remains talk. They have promised policies and action that will slow down greenhouse gas emissions, yet are doing almost the least they can get away with doing. How can anyone be satisfied with politicians who promise and never deliver?

A socialist society which has control of the means of production and distribution can assure adequate comfort for the population. The potential to create such a society exists, but that potential can be realised only if working people act to gain control of their own lives by organising, politically and industrially, for socialism. The aim of socialist production is not profits but simply what people need to live comfortably.

What is required to stabilise the rise in temperature is a global political and social revolution to end capitalism and put humanity in charge of its interaction with the rest of nature. This can only be done if the Earth's natural and industrial resources become the common property of all humanity. We need to wrest control of science and technology from the hands of our 'masters'. There is little time left, for humanity stands at the crossroads now and must make its choice now. Socialism will open doors that have been locked to humanity throughout our history, and finally allow us to enter a new stage in our social evolution.

ALJO



Have the Tories gone socialist?

Events and circumstances occur that undermine and trash the accepted narratives and certainties of capitalist society and highlights capitalism's shortcomings in providing for human needs. After the collapse of the Soviet bloc economies at the end of the 1980s, it was the received wisdom that the free market with its competition between private businesses was the only viable way to run society; economies with substantial state intervention stifled private investment and in its wake brought economic stagnation and decline. This orthodoxy was accepted by all mainstream political parties until capitalism entered another of its periodic crises which manifested itself in the financial crash of 2008. Governments, of all hues, were then forced, against their political instincts, to intervene to bail out the banks. However, with the large government debts and budget deficits that were built up as a result, capitalism's supporters were able to draw attention away from the real cause of the crisis, capitalism, and pinpoint the blame on the state sector, in particular the welfare state.

In the UK, David Cameron pursued this line of attack by accusing the previous Labour government of profligate spending, which left the state coffers empty, thus necessitating the build-up of government debt to combat the economic downturn. This narrative allowed Cameron to re-position the Tories as the responsible low tax and small state Party that helped him secure the election victories of 2010 and 2015.

In the 2019 General Election, Boris Johnson employed the same narrative to contrast his party with that of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party, which, it was alleged, would put the economy at risk with its spendthrift proposals. Along with his pledges to get Brexit done and 'level up' the country, he was able to coast to victory. However, no sooner than he had his feet under the desk at Number 10 Downing Street, the coronavirus pandemic crisis came along and knocked his government sideways. The government was forced to take direct control of the economy by ordering the closure of retail and hospitality businesses during lockdowns and had to fork out cash to subsidise them and pay 80 percent of the wages of their furloughed workers. Consequently, huge amounts of government debt were built up.

Having nearly maxed out the credit card, the government had little choice but to break an election pledge and raise taxes to fulfil another election promise to fix the social care system and also to help clear the backlog of NHS cases caused by the pandemic. Johnson chose to raise the National Insurance contributions for both employers and workers by 1.25 percent and taxation on dividends by the same percentage from April 2022. The government hopes to raise £36 billion over three years which will mainly be allocated to the NHS with some of the money going to social care. This raised howls of betrayal from the letter pages and columns of the Conservative press. The front page headline of the *Daily Telegraph* (8 September) screamed 'Highest taxes since the War'. In a piece that appeared in the same newspaper the next day, the authors, Camilla Tominey and Tony Diver, wrote with a straight face apparently, 'Yet the Conservatives' newfound socialist drift threatens to pose even bigger problems for Sir Keir Starmer'.

Opponents of these measures from all political parties have pointed to the unfairness of the extra burden this extra levy would place on lower paid workers. At first sight, we should

be moved by this newfound concern shown by Tory politicians and media pundits for lower paid workers, but unfortunately it does not seem to apply to all workers. Not to those who are about to have their Universal Credit benefits cut by £20 nor those who will be coming off furlough at the end of September and are facing unemployment. Labour's compassionate stance overlooks the fact that the previous Labour government raised National Insurance to fund the NHS in 2002. It is not only for lower paid workers that crocodile tears have been shed, but also for the low wage young workers who have to pay for the older workers, who don't pay National Insurance (aside from working pensioners who will be required to pay National Insurance from April 2023). Capitalism's supporters never miss a trick, pitting younger workers against older ones.

The pandemic did not create the problems of health and social care, but exacerbated them and brought them into sharp relief. The government plans have been criticised for containing little in the way of reforming the NHS and the social care system. Some suggest that improvements could be made by adding private insurance into the system. This ignores the fact that private companies will only engage if they can squeeze as much profit as they can. All this chatter sidesteps the main problem in that social and health care currently takes place within a society where profit must take priority over human need. In other words, the capitalist state is limited in what finance it can provide without reducing the profitability and competitiveness of the national state.

Raising taxes and government expenditure have nothing to do with socialism. These are tools employed by the capitalist state to manage the capitalist economy and as we have seen the government cannot wield them as they please. Socialism is a society of common ownership where everyone has free access to the social product and there is no state, no wages system, no money system.

OLIVER BOND



We are living in a society which even its supporters admit is based on 'scarcity' even if their definition of scarcity is rather eccentric (the absence of 'sheer abundance', as their economics textbooks define it). Scarcity does exist in the normal sense in that not enough is being produced of the things, services and amenities that people need to lead a healthy and satisfying life.

It is a society of artificial scarcity as far as the vast majority is concerned. Society has the means to produce enough for all, in fact more than enough. Enough food, decent housing, a good all-round education, a good health service. Enough for everybody could be produced but isn't and can't be as it's not profitable. So, people are put in a position of having to compete for what there is; and where the rule is that the more money you have the more (and better) you get. People are in effect rationed by the amount of money they have or can get. For most people there is not much choice about this. To get money, you can beg, steal or work for an employer. Working for wages is the basic way most people get the money to buy what they need. But it means that what people can get is rationed by what they are paid.

You can get together with others to try to get a better deal. Socialists have always argued that all those who have to work for wages should join together to get as much as they can and eventually as a class – the appropriately named 'working class' – to get rid of the present competitive economic system and replace it with one organised on the basis of the common ownership of productive resources.

Unfortunately, this hasn't got very far, and has never even been attempted, apart from ill-conceived and misnamed projects such as in Russia and by Labour governments, which failed. Partly because of these failures people, including activists, have come to think and act as if there is no alternative to the present system, and that the most that can be done is to get a better deal within the system, whether as an individual (or family) or as a member of some group other than as an economic class.

As a result, practical politics is 'scarcity politics' where individuals and groups compete to get the most they can out of what has been made available. Identity politicians seek to create a new grouping and work to organise their target group as another competing unit. This brings them into conflict with socialists who want all workers, including those in the targeted groups, to organise on a class basis. The identity politicians, if they succeed, will only make a bad situation worse by further dividing people, splitting them into more competing groups than there currently are.

Legitimate grievances

Having said that, the targeted groups generally have a legitimate grievance – they have and still do suffer discrimination purely on the basis of being who they are. The demand to be considered of equal worth, with the same treatment, as any other human being is a perfectly legitimate demand which socialists endorse and practise. There should be no discrimination against anyone on the basis of gender, skin colour, language or even religion. Every human being, whoever they are, is of equal worth and should be treated as such.

'Black Lives Matter' is a good example. This slogan is an elementary declaration that all lives are of equal worth. But then the question arises of how to put this into practice. Most countries (with the notable exceptions of those that practise sharia law) recognise the legal equality of men and women. In Britain there is complete legal equality between them and in

fact between 'whites' and, to borrow a term from apartheid-era South Africa, 'non-whites'. The only people living here who suffer from legal disabilities are non-citizens (a reminder that so-called 'nations' are identity groups too).

Legal equality, though important, does not end other forms of unequal treatment that arise from being poor and its consequences in terms of worse housing, worse education, worse health and inferior health care.

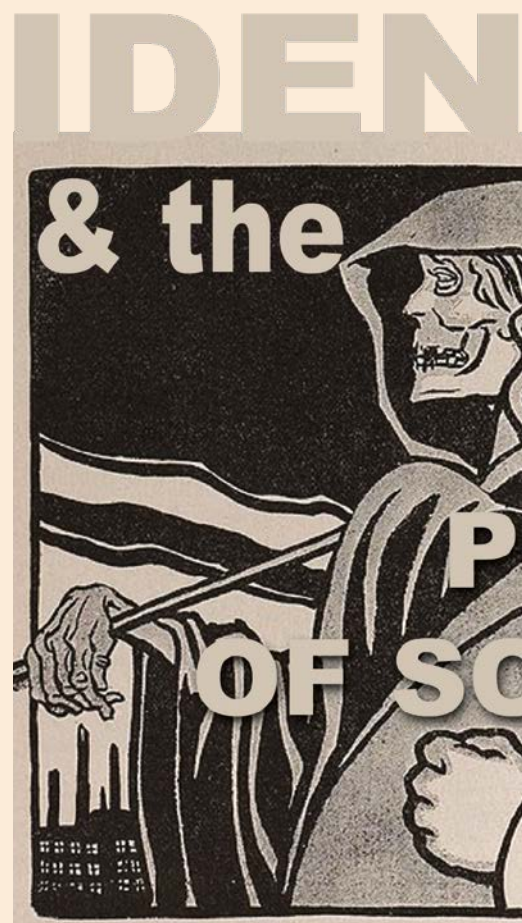
This is where the identity politician jumps up and adds extra demands to the simple demand for respect and equal consideration such as the 'Black Lives Matter' slogan. They demand more money be allocated to their target group to improve housing, education and health care services for its members.

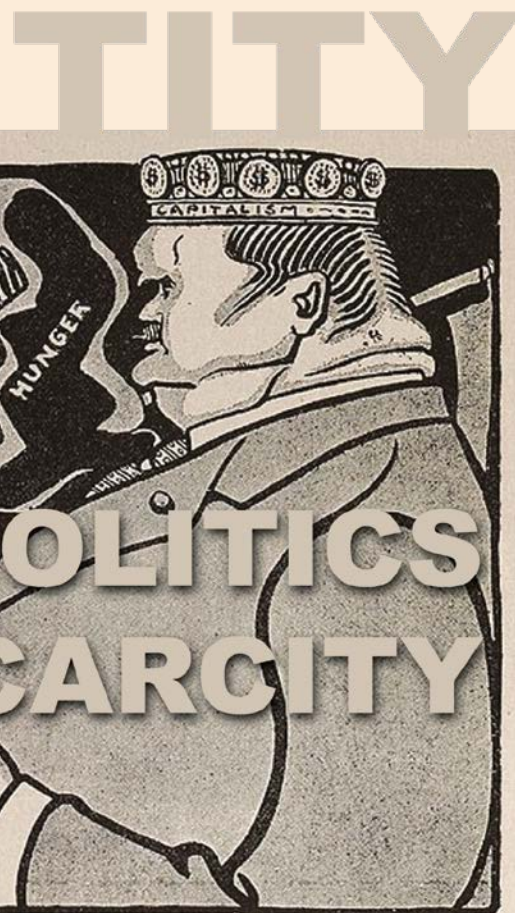
The trouble is that, in the context of the politics of scarcity, this will tend to be at the expense of other groups. Capitalist states only spend on social reforms that improve people's lot if there is also some benefit to the capitalist interest in terms, for instance, of a more educated or fitter workforce. Even then the amount they spend is limited – since they have to pay for these through taxes that fall, directly or indirectly, on their profits. Spending too much undermines their competitiveness and the whole profit motive that drives the system. So artificial scarcity is never going to be ended under capitalism. It can't be as it's built into the system.

Zero-sum game

That we are dealing with a more or less zero-sum situation is explicitly recognised when claims for 'quotas' and 'positive discrimination' are raised. Here, more for one group means less for some other group. What is that other group expected to do? Given that neither group sees any alternative to the present system and accepts that the only politics is the politics of scarcity, they are not going to accept this lying down but will push back and resist, to try to keep what they've got (or think they've got). Identity politics on one side encourages identity politics on another, making the overall political situation worse.

In some cases this is deliberate, as with racists and nativists, but also those who talk of 'white privilege' which implies that all whites have an unfair privilege which should be taken away. The result is that the basic conflict in society is seen as a scramble between different identity groups rather than between those who monopolise the means of life and the excluded majority forced to work for wages.





In-system activists

Peter Joseph of Zeitgeist has coined a useful term to describe the well-meaning people who seek a solution to discrimination and poverty within the present system of artificial scarcity – ‘in-system activists’. But what do they envisage as success? If they reject, either explicitly or in practice, a different system of society (common not class ownership, production for needs not profit), what will things be like if they achieve their aim of eliminating any discrimination against their own target group within capitalism?

Logically this

could mean, for instance, governments, parliaments, boards of directors, even the top military brass, composed of 50 percent women and 50 percent men. Or that the percentage of university students from their target group be exactly equal to their percentage in the general population. From the opposite angle, that the same percentage of the majority population should be living in bad housing or in poverty or in prison as their percentage in the population. If that's 90 percent then 90 percent of those in bad housing, poverty or prison should be from the majority group instead of whatever lesser figure it is now. A redistribution of poverty to benefit the target group. That's not going to get them very far.

In-system activists may regard this as a caricature of their position but it is a logical conclusion that stems from them trying to obtain more for a particular group within the context of artificial scarcity. They may protest that what they want is more resources to be devoted to improving all sections of the population, even if proportionately more for their target group. That, for instance, the percentage of them going to university could be increased without reducing the number of others going there, by increasing the total number of university places.

They are correct that the resources do exist to improve things for everyone – across the board and not just in education. However, the structure and operation of the capitalist economic system prevents this being done. Using existing resources for this purpose can only be achieved in a quite different system where the aim can be human welfare, not profit, and where artificial scarcity can be replaced by plenty for everyone.

Not communities

Identity politics assumes that all in the target group constitute a ‘community’. To describe some group as a ‘community’ there must be some overriding common interest which binds

the group together. But, whatever else they have in common, the identity politicians’ target groups don’t share a common economic – ie. survival – interest. They are divided into classes, into owners and non-owners, rich and poor, with antagonistic, in fact irreconcilable, interests since the wealth of the wealthy is dependent on the past and present labour of the excluded majority.

There are plenty of rich women, gays and non-whites. Those from the excluded majority have a different economic interest from the wealthy members of their supposed communities. Their material needs are not fully met, not because they are gay, non-white etc. but because they are part of the excluded majority forced to work for wages to live. And so they have more in common with others who are in the same economic position as them. Which is why socialists urge them not to identify themselves with the rich people within their proposed identity group but with their economic class.

Those in-system activists who stand for equal treatment for their target group within the artificial scarcity of capitalism could protest against the criticism that logically their ideal must be strict proportionality in the distribution of both benefits and disadvantages amongst all groups. They could say that what they want is not that, but that nobody should be discriminated against because they are a woman, gay, black, or whatever; that everybody should be treated as an equal human being.

Precisely. So they should. But dividing people into separate identity groups is not the way to treat them as equal.

Even if equal treatment of women, gays, black people is achieved under capitalism – and there is no reason why in principle it could not be, even if in practice there are historically-inherited obstacles to this – those in these groups who are not wealthy owners of means of production would still face discrimination: as members of the excluded majority who have to work for wages. They will remain victims of what might be called ‘classism’. This is the one discrimination that cannot be ended within capitalism as it is built into the system; in fact, capitalism, as an exploitative class-divided society, is based on it.

Those who want a better deal for some particular group should not be promoting ‘identity politics’ within a system that imposes artificial scarcity. They should be working for an end to artificial scarcity; which is not possible in a society based on class ownership and production for profit.

‘Classist’ discrimination can only be ended in a classless society based on the common ownership of productive resources where everyone has a chance to have an equal say in the way things are run and the same access to what they need to live and enjoy life. In short, where the old socialist principle of “from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs” applies. Everybody accorded equal consideration irrespective of what they are.

And nobody discriminated against as regards access to material goods, services or amenities.

ADAM BUICK





By the time socialism is established climate change and degradation of resources will have had an even greater impact than currently. So, how might a socialist society adapt to be in harmony with the environment? Depending on how long the wait is, the many factors to be seriously considered include climate insecurity, energy insecurity and food insecurity. These, together, reveal the absolute necessity of going beyond the limits of industrial mono-agriculture.

Inclusive global socialism is a world without a monetary profit system, unlike today where capital rules every facet and dimension of our lives. There are many wasteful jobs in capitalism, non-productive in the sense of being solely related to money, when what we sorely need is to be productive in ways that satisfy our needs *and* that work in harmony with nature, with our bio-system. It is imperative that the balance which has been gradually destroyed from the industrial revolution onwards is restored.

Mono-culture versus diversity

All life on this planet has three basic needs, air, water and food. Harsh as it sounds everything else could be viewed as a bonus. Whilst addressing the numerous challenges which lie ahead we must also recognise that these problems cannot be dealt with from a purely UK perspective – or European, North American, or any other single territorial focus. All areas of the globe are in this together and unless we are prepared to take that into account there is no chance of successfully remedying the problems created by our single common problem – the capitalist system.

It is common knowledge globally now that these basic essentials (air, water, food) are consistently and continuously contaminated as a result of the way the current system works, for profit, not for public or planetary good. Socialism can focus on more localised food production built on the experience of local knowledge of the vast variety of seeds and plants available. Control will be out of the hands of present-day multinational corporations which have consistently degraded soil, water and air in the name of profit. The aim will be healthy, uncontaminated food.

The need to emphasise local and regional farming is in contrast to all the various problems globalised agriculture has caused around the world. One example out of many reveals how the monetary system in India has led to greater discrepancies between ‘rich world/poor world’ access to food. Multinationals have taken over great swathes of agricultural land to grow fresh fruit and vegetables for export which has necessitated the import of wheat and rice (previously locally grown) from North America. Before this theft of land farmers on their own smaller plots provided more than was necessary of a variety of crops. But now millions are either landless farmers working for large corporations or have moved to cities in search of whatever work is available. Two negative results are increased air pollution from fresh crops being flown by air and increased pollution from the shipping of grain crops; and the vast amounts of water needed for irrigating such crops is stealing much needed water from many local communities. Whilst aggravating climate change, fossil-fuel-dependent industrialised global agriculture is unable to change within the current system. This globalised capitalist trade is severely damaging the planet and all its various life forms, and continuing on such a path in socialism is neither desirable nor viable.

When considered rationally there is absolutely no contest between capitalism and socialism in the field of agriculture. The industrial food system is based on oil; bio-diverse, organic and local food systems are based on living soil. The industrial system creates waste and massive harmful pollution; living agriculture is based on no waste.

‘Green capitalism’?

What is currently considered waste in farming is allied to the profit system. Any avoidable costs are passed on to third parties or simply to nature. These externalities come in many forms. Massive cess-pools from raising cattle, pigs and poultry in huge numbers in confinement are well known for the contamination and despoliation of local water systems. Mono-crop production based on chemicals (pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers) regularly poison the air, the water, the soil and

the crop, negatively affecting both farm workers, local people and customers who are buying chemically contaminated food.

Organic farming has little if any waste. Green crops are recycled into the soil in order to add or fix nitrogen. Animal 'waste' is returned as enrichment to the soil, not released into the water system. Animals are fed on natural diets not chemical concoctions given to increase milk, egg or meat yields. There is much evidence showing the dangers of the many chemicals imposed on industrially raised animals, birds and fish including increased illnesses, deaths and allergies for some of which mega-corporations are having to pay record amounts of compensation after long-running court cases.

A proper, natural food cycle, not this chemical circus which has been forced upon us, and a more localised system of production radically reducing transport miles, together will give us fresher, healthier food, air and water.

A wide interpretation of what socialism will look like in practice will be vital if we are to continue to survive on this planet. Many different and varied cultures exist around the globe with hugely varying customs and proven methods for sustainability, low energy use and a more relaxed way of life than many in our so-called 'developed' world. Within this context and regarding the 'neoliberal' driving force of 'globalisation' – negatively impacting the planet by reaping riches without hesitation or concern for the disintegration of eco-systems – what will be the relationship between these different cultures? Are electric cars, from production through their useful working years, or wind energy as an alternative to current energy supply actually the real answer to some of our problems? Or are they just 'green' ideas of the business community still out to make profits?

There are multiple green groups around the world calling for governments to meet various standards or protocols, but if we invested any hope in the progress gained from meetings and protests we would surely be disappointed. Since the first

Conference of the Parties (COP) in 1995, carbon emissions by 2018 had risen by 40 percent. The measures currently proposed by COP participants are expected to result in a 3°C warming since the mid-18th century, with some leading scientists forecasting at least 4°C. Some members of the Socialist Party are planning to be in Glasgow for the COP26 in order to present our view of what needs to be done. According to Neil Faulkner of Anti-Capitalist Resistance, 'Industrial pollution destroys our eco-system and agribusiness generates wave after wave of killer pathogens... globalised, financialised monopoly capitalism has become an existential threat to life on Earth.'

How many individuals even noticed that 5 June was World Environment Day? Established by the UN General Assembly in 1972, 49 years ago, this year's theme was 'Ecosystem Restoration' – also declared to be the decade for ecosystem restoration. Put it in your diary and check it in 2030. In April, the Nobel Prize Summit 'Our Planet, Our Future' announced a threat to 'the enormous gains we have made in human progress' and that 'The 'next decade is crucial: Global greenhouse gas emissions need to be cut by half and destruction of nature halted and reversed'. Unfortunately, participants are clearly and firmly enmeshed in capitalism's mind-set. How else should we interpret this nonsense from their agreed statement? 'Economic, environmental, and social externalities should be *fairly* priced' (our emphasis) and 'Complement GDP as a metric of economic success with measures of true well-being of people and nature.'

Meanwhile, recent UN Food Systems Summit meetings (Rome, New York) flew in delegates from all over the planet to stay in some luxury hotels. We wonder how much they contributed to the health of the environment.

JANET SURMAN

Indian Naval Ships Decorated for World Environment Day 2017



What is



Are you a kind person? You can find out, it appears, by filling in an online questionnaire compiled by psychology researchers from the University of Sussex and sponsored by the BBC. We won't know the results of *The Kindness Test* till February next year, but, from the various articles and interviews about this in the media over recent weeks, it's hard not to get the impression that the researchers expect the answer to be 'yes' and to show that human beings are a kind species generally prepared to cooperate with and help one another in their daily lives and activities.

In talking about this, the psychologists have suggested that, if we consider all the interactions we have with other people over a period of time, the vast majority are likely to be of a kind and collaborative nature, even if we do not necessarily notice this or register them as such. These include simply smiling, saying hello or chatting to others, often people we don't know, giving priority to other road users when driving and thanking them for doing likewise for us, opening doors for people, helping elderly people or children to cross the road, etc. Such acts, it seems, vastly outnumber examples of 'non-kindness', i.e. uncaring actions or acts of hostility.

At first glance, this may not seem to be the case, for, as we all know, what is much more likely to 'make news' is negative, uncooperative and, especially, violent forms of behaviour, while the caring, cooperative activities tend to get taken for granted and go unmentioned. So the most common 'news' items are about disagreements, arguments, abuse of various kinds and violence, sometimes extreme murder. These far outnumber any 'kind' actions reported.

Not that acts of kindness and cooperation aren't mentioned sometimes but it's usually only when they seem 'spectacular', featuring for example outstandingly brave and selfless actions by people without thought of consequences and potential risks for themselves. Rescuing others from fires or saving people from drowning are obvious examples, as in the recent, much publicised case of two brothers diving into deep water to rescue a child who had fallen from a wall into the sea and risked being swept away. The brothers delivered the child back to the parents and then walked away without waiting

to be thanked. Only when the parents went to considerable trouble to find the rescuers later via social media did the brothers come forward producing a heart-warming story of thanks and reunion among those involved as well as inevitable feelings of happiness and human solidarity in those reading about it. So many people are prepared to make sacrifices to 'do the right thing' even if this means helping total strangers and endangering themselves. And most other people will admire those who behave in this way.

All this of course conflicts with the idea held by many that human beings are by nature selfish, uncooperative, and even cruel and violent, and so any attempt at establishing a world of social harmony is doomed to failure. This is an idea that has been expressed or implied in much that has been said, written and published over the years, both in commentary on human behaviour and in writings of fiction. The Christian doctrine of original sin is one example. It was reiterated in more secular form in the 'all men are evil' statement by Machiavelli in his sixteenth century work *The Prince*, taken up again in the following centuries by Thomas Hobbes who argued in his *Leviathan* that human beings are greedy by nature and human life is 'a condition of war of all against all', and then repeated in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, where private interest or 'self-love' is seen as the primary mover of human action. This view of humanity was taken up again in the twentieth century by writers with more 'scientific' pretensions such as Robert Ardrey (*The Territorial Imperative*), Konrad Lorenz (*On Aggression*) and Desmond Morris (*The Naked Ape*). And it has seemed to receive confirmation in widely read works of fiction such as William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and, according to your interpretation, George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

But the tide, so it seems, is turning. In recent years much study has drawn the quite contrary conclusion that not only are human beings capable of manifesting peaceful and cooperative behaviour rather than being hostile and competitive with one another but are more likely to behave in that way if conditions allow it. It all depends on the circumstances. According to this argument humans are eminently flexible beings who will always prefer to make

common cause with their fellow creatures unless they are pushed into doing otherwise by conditioning or situation. And they will do this because it is likely to benefit them in a practical way (i.e. one good turn is likely to deserve another) and also because human beings derive satisfaction out of being of assistance to others and enjoy the approbation of their fellow creatures that this is likely to bring.

This is more or less the argument about 'human nature' (or more correctly, human behaviour) that the Socialist Party has been putting ever since its inception close to 120 years ago. It has done this despite all attempts to deny and decry it by both religious and secular 'authorities'. And now it is truly coming of age, both among those carrying out scientific studies of human behaviour and those talking and writing about it in the media and elsewhere. Albert Einstein's statement of over 80 years ago that 'human beings are not condemned, because of their biological constitution, to annihilate each other or to be at the mercy of a cruel, self-inflicted fate' has been echoed in many compelling and authoritative studies in the present century such as *A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and its Evolution* by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (2011), *Team Human* by Douglas Rushkoff (2019), *Sitopia* by Carolyn Steel (2020) and *Humankind* by Rutger Bregman (2021).

Consideration of this raises two significant implications. The first one is that the society we live in today, capitalism, has both a way of organising and an ethic that run directly contrary to the 'normal' human tendency to help and cooperate with others. It encourages people to compete with one another, to try to get the better of them and to do them down if necessary. It does this by tempting people with the lure of gain or reward, often financial, and so pushing them to behave in a way that divides them from their fellow humans, often making the 'success' of one into the 'failure' of others. Herein is the obvious answer to one of the questions in The Kindness Test, the one which asks 'What prevents people from being kinder?'. An inbuilt feature of the capitalist system we

all live in is that we are constantly driven to compete with others in a variety of ways and, while that system continues, this simply cannot be changed, otherwise capitalism would not be operating according to its nature. Yet, given this reality, what is truly remarkable and significant is that, despite the overwhelmingly powerful pressures capitalism places on people to get the better of others and so not be 'kind' to them, in so many of the actions and connections in our daily lives, and even in the 'competitive' situations that are created for us, we still manage to be kind to others, to cooperate and to share.

The other implication is that, in a society organised in an entirely different way from capitalism, the society that we call socialism, people would not have the slightest problem in operating in a harmonious and cooperative way most if not all of the time. In such a society, one of common ownership, free access to all goods and services and democratic organisation, the natural human tendency to share and cooperate would truly come into its own. Nor would this mean bland uniformity, or lack of initiative or creativity it has sometimes been suggested. On the contrary in such a society individuality would come into its own, as people are free to express their talents and creativity in a way that would vastly outstrip the limitations laid upon them today by the need to conform to the rules of a society which puts competition between all humans as a way of realising profit for the few at the forefront of its preoccupations and so drastically limits the way in which human imagination and inventiveness could and should be at the service of all. In a socialist society, immense satisfaction will be experienced by huge numbers of individuals as on the one hand they will be able to contribute their mental and physical energies to increasing the commonly held wealth of society, whilst on the other hand they will be satisfying their own self-defined needs from the common store.

HOWARD MOSS



COOKING THE BOOKS

The limits to tax and spend

'Raising tax on businesses will kill off investment, CBI says', was the headline in the *Times* (11 September) about a speech to be delivered that day by Tony Danker, the Director-General of the employers' organisation, in which he said:

'I am deeply worried the Government thinks that taxing business... is without consequence to growth. It's not. Raising business taxes too far has always been self-defeating as it stymies further investment' (tinyurl.com/y5trf9vx).

He would say that, wouldn't he? Yet businesses have to be taxed, whether directly or indirectly, to pay for the upkeep of the government and the services it renders them as a whole. Capitalist enterprises recognise this and Danker himself qualifies his statement by saying that it is raising tax 'too far' that risks discouraging investment.

He does have a point. There are limits to how much tax governments can raise from businesses. The capitalist economy is driven by business investment for profit and, if governments tax too much, this will provoke an economic slowdown or even downturn. It is

something Keynesians learned the hard way but which has yet to be learned by the 'Modern Money Theorists' and the Green New Dealers.

Danker went on to make another point: 'It's clear that consumption is likely to rage in the short run. Consumers have saved and will spend... But unless investment catches up, rather than falls behind, that story will be short lived'.

True again. If investment doesn't pick up, the post-lockdown consumer boom will peter out when all the pent-up demand has been spent.

We don't suppose that it will contribute to Danker's 'rage' in consumer spending, but if you live in Northern Ireland you're lucky. Well, sort of.

The devolved administration there is giving away £100 to anyone who claims it under its 'High Street Voucher Scheme'. Actually, it's not a voucher that they will be given but a plastic card with £100 pre-paid on it which they can use in local shops and eating places to pay as they would with their bank card. The money has to be spent by the end of November.

It is not exactly the 'helicopter money' that some economists propose as a way

to get the economy out of a recession. Not that that would work anyway since what drives the capitalist economy is not consumer spending but business investment, as the CBI's Director General pointed out. The aim of the scheme is simply to support local businesses. It will to a certain extent.

When Marxists hear the word 'voucher' they tend to think of the Labour-Time Voucher Scheme that Marx mentioned in passing a couple or so times. Under this, people, in the early days of socialism, would be issued with vouchers based on the amount of hours they had worked and which they could redeem for consumer goods at the local distribution centre. It wouldn't have worked and Marx didn't go into any detail (it wasn't his idea anyway) about how the goods to be redeemed would be 'priced'.

In any event, given the tremendous development of the forces of production since his day, socialist society should now be able to go over very rapidly to free access and free distribution and there would be no need for vouchers. Or plastic cards.

Religion and Freedom?

SOME EXPRESSIONS are on the face of it contradictory, *military intelligence* being one. Another possible example would be *liberation theology*: what can possibly be liberating about belief in a hierarchy of religious leaders and a god that influences events on earth? Nevertheless, so-called liberation theology has had a reasonable amount of influence within the Catholic church, though it has declined in popularity and influence since the 1990s. Its impact has been especially felt in Latin America, home to nearly one third of the world's Catholics, and where the traditional church was seen by many as part of the social and political establishment. The Spanish conquest of the Aztecs and other peoples was often justified in terms of missionary endeavour, even if its main aim was plunder.

Liberation theology is of course controversial within Catholicism. It has been described as 'a social and political movement within the church that attempts to interpret the gospel of Jesus Christ through the lived experiences of oppressed people' (Kira Dault in uscatholic.org, 14 October 2014). But for another writer, it is a 'combination of Marxist philosophy with certain biblical motifs' and involves 'radical revisions to every

traditional Christian doctrine' (John Frame at thegospelcoalition.org). In the words of Ernesto Cardenal, a Nicaraguan priest, 'For me, the four Gospels are all equally Communist. I'm a Marxist who believes in God, follows Christ and is a revolutionary for the sake of His kingdom.' Cardenal was at one time the Sandinista Minister of Culture, though he later left the movement, describing it as a dictatorship, and saying that he preferred 'an authentic capitalism' to 'a false Revolution' (Wikipedia).

Overcoming poverty is a central aspect of liberation theology, with a decent life on Earth seen as at least an alternative to freedom in the afterlife. In one formulation, it 'advocates orthopraxis (right action) over orthodoxy (right belief)' (philosopherkings.co.uk). Critics within the church see liberation theology as advocating people gaining salvation through their own efforts, rather than from god, which is for some reason seen as objectionable. Many liberation theology supporters regard Marxism as a set of ideas that can be partially adopted or agreed with, so they do not see Marx's critique of religion as a problem for them.

Another criticism is as follows: 'The missing link in liberation theology is the

absence of a concrete vision of political economy. It refuses to say how safeguards for human rights, economic development and personal liberties will be instituted after the revolution' (Michael Novak in nytimes.com, 21 October 1984). But this point can be taken much further, in that liberation theology has little concrete to say about how society should be organised at all. Wanting to do away with poverty is something that few people would disagree with, and the appeal to Marx's ideas is at best confused and probably better described as being as much of a distortion as Leninism.

And *liberation theology* is indeed a contradiction in terms. Religion of all stripes teaches reliance on a supreme being of some kind, on prayer, on submission. Catholicism in particular involves the rule of the pope, oppression of women and rigid social policies. Liberation of the ninety-nine-plus percent of the earth's population must come from their own efforts, to gain control of the planet and its resources, not from the mystification of religion and some confused supposed mix of religion and Marxism.

PB

PROPER GANDER

Remoulding The Activist

LURKING AS embarrassments in the TV archives are the series cancelled after a few episodes following complaints from offended and disgusted viewers, such as the 1930s Berlin-set sitcom *Heil Honey I'm Home!* and the disturbing *Minipops*. One recently made show has managed to get pulled due to negative reactions even before its first episode has aired, CBS's *The Activist*.

Initial publicity bragged that *The Activist* would be 'a first-of-its-kind competition series that will inspire real change'. Six specially selected activists campaigning for health, education and environmental issues would 'go head-to-head in challenges to promote their causes', with tasks such as 'missions, media stunts, digital campaigns and community events'. Their efforts to win each episode's challenge would be judged by singer Usher, actor Priyanka Chopra and dancer Julianne Hough, and their success would be 'measured via online engagement, social metrics, and hosts' input'. The series climax would see the activists attending the G20 summit in Italy to 'meet with world leaders in the hope of securing funding and awareness for their causes'. 'The team that receives the largest commitment is celebrated as the overall winner at the finale, which will also feature musical performances by some of the world's most passionate artists.'

The programme-makers and whichever focus groups they tested their ideas on didn't think that setting important issues against each other and turning activism into Reality TV would sound tawdry and exploitative. Yet this was the overwhelming response from critics and commentators on social media when the series was announced. Several tweets pointed out that the show was like the plot of a *Black Mirror* episode. One Alejandro Villegas tweeted 'How corporate America appropriates and trivialises advocacy... monetising the imagery... channelling dissent into meaninglessness' and made a comparison with the derided Pepsi advert launched during the Black Lives Matter protests which featured model Kendall Jenner healing rifts by handing a cop a can of cola. Some of those involved with

The Activist joined in with the criticism by saying how its approach sought to simplify and mould the activists' work. Clover Hogan of climate change campaign group Force Of Nature withdrew her application for a part on the show when she realised that they wanted marketable activists. She said 'having been gaslit by this whole process personally, I can absolutely understand why you could be manipulated into saying yes to this type of opportunity', adding that the competitive element of the format was downplayed when she was interviewed. The backlash against the programme led to Chopra resigning from her role as a judge, while Hough said 'the judging aspect of the show missed the mark, and furthermore... I am not qualified



to act as a judge'.

The series, due to air in America on CBS in late October, was produced by Global Citizen, an international education and advocacy organisation aiming for extreme poverty to be eradicated by 2030, and Live Nation, mostly known for ticket sales. When all the criticism went viral, they released statements solemnly stating that 'It has become apparent the format of the show as announced distracts from the vital work these incredible activists do in their communities every day', adding that 'global activism centres on collaboration and cooperation, not competition. We apologise to the activists, hosts, and the larger activist community- we got it

wrong'. For the programme-makers to do a complete U-turn on their stance shows how out of touch with their target market they were, particularly awkward for Global Citizen, which promotes itself as an international educator and advocate. Presumably the lure of publicity and money clouded their judgement.

The programme, which has already been filmed, will now be remade as a one-off documentary, removing the competitive aspect, with the same activists who took part originally. 'We hope that by showcasing their work we will inspire more people to become more involved in addressing the world's most pressing issues. We look forward to highlighting the mission and lives of each of these incredible people' grovelled Global Citizen, CBS and Live Nation. They'll now be hoping the new version of *The Activist* showcases, inspires and highlights enough to rebuild any reputational loss, as they would call it.

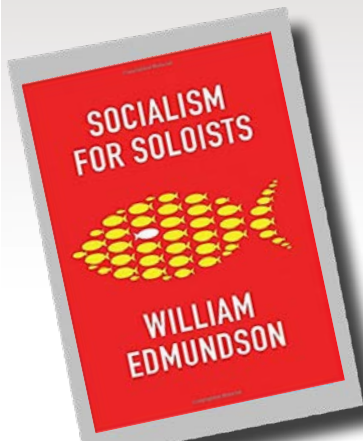
The Activist's original format was scuppered because of how distasteful it sounds for campaign groups to be set up to compete against each other for influence, through corporate-driven media. But this is exactly how they have to function in the real world. Campaign groups have to compete for funding, hoping to convince us to support their single-issue campaign rather than any of the other countless single-issue campaigns. If they can package their message so that it's acceptable enough, without any threat of fundamental change, they can attract more mainstream exposure. They become part of the marketplace because they're only aiming to work within it and not challenge the system itself. Commodifying activism further by turning all this into a TV show weirdly makes the reality clearer. Writer Naomi Klein made the point with her sardonic tweet, 'I'm confused: Is this an advanced Marxist critique to expose how competition for money and attention pits activists against each other + undermines deep change? Or just the end of the world?'

MIKE FOSTER

Credit: Getty

REVIEWS

Philosophy for reformists



Socialism for Soloists.
By William Edmundson.
Polity. 2021

This is an attempt to present a case for socialism – as a society without private ownership of means of production – on the basis of classic liberal-democratic political philosophy. Edmundson's 'soloists' are individualists, what in the US are called 'libertarians', people who believe that individuals have natural rights that no government should override. He imagines them in a 'state of nature' (as this philosophical tradition does) and sets out to convince them that it would be logical for them to sign up to a 'social contract' which would exclude private ownership of means of production. His basic argument – which is valid – is that such private ownership is incompatible with political equality and democracy as it gives the owners more say in decision-making than non-owners.

However, he has a peculiar definition of 'means of production'. Normally this means the materials (which will all have originally come from nature) and instruments (buildings and machinery) used to produce wealth. His definition is that they are production facilities that can neither be 'commons' to which everyone has free access nor be operated by separate individuals. Besides large-scale manufacturing plants this includes transport, utility and communications networks and also online sales platforms and banks.

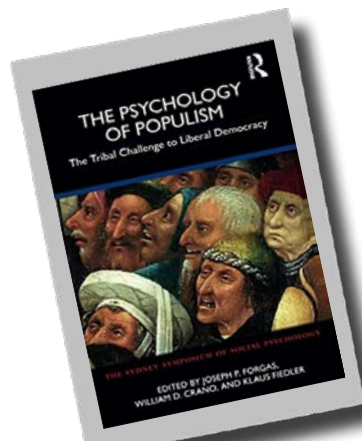
So he ends up, if by a different route, advocating what the Labour Party used to years ago, namely, the public ownership of 'the means of production, distribution and

exchange'. He writes that 'one common misconception about socialism is that it dispenses altogether with markets.' This is wrong on two counts. It is not a misconception and, unfortunately, is not that common. His ideal society still involves the continuation of production for sale, working for wages, and unequal money incomes. The blurb on the back calls it 'market socialism' but that's a contradiction in terms. In fact, it would still be capitalism.

Unlike many academic books, this one is easy to read and might perhaps be of some use to philosophy and politics students to refute some of the arguments in favour of private ownership that they will be taught.

ALB

More on Populism



The Psychology of Populism.
The Tribal Challenge to Liberal Democracy. Edited by Joseph P. Forgas, William D. Crano and Klaus Fiedler. Routledge, 2021. 386pp.

The stated aim of the 19 essays making up this book is, according to its editors, 'to contribute to a better understanding of the nature and psychological characteristics of populist movements'. They further state that they 'hope to highlight the fundamental threat that collectivist popular beliefs and strategies, both on the left and right of the political spectrum, present for the core values and the very survival of liberal democratic systems'. The shared understanding, implicit where not explicit, of all the authors is that the combination of the market with capitalist civilisation in human history, and that modern populism, arising from both left and right, has certain common features such as rejection of liberal democracy,

ethnocentrism, tribalism, xenophobia, emotional and/or identity-based politics, and feelings of personal impotence.

Current examples of governments considered populist whose features are analysed here are those of Poland, Hungary, Turkey and Russia, while strong populist movements in countries like France, Germany, Austria and the US are also subjects of study and discussion. Support for populism in these countries is seen as arising from such sources as simplistic beliefs, feelings of frustrated self-importance, 'self-uncertainty', a 'need for personal significance, and the 'human search for a meaningful world view'. And the detailed supporting analysis is often interesting and well evidenced.

But even though much of the analysis in these essays is acute and telling, many of the authors are too quick to identify what they term as left-wing populism with 'Marxism'. In their introductory chapter, for example, the editors refer to Marxism as one of the 'clear and well-articulated populist ideologies' and the sworn enemy of any kind of individualism or tolerance. Referencing writers from the past with particularly strong pro-capitalist and anti-Marxist agendas such as Arthur Koestler and Karl Popper, they describe Marxism as featuring 'the same degree of authoritarianism, dogmatism and intolerance also found in right-wing totalitarian movements'. The problem here, as with the 'authorities' they quote, is that by Marxism is meant dictatorial states which bear no relation to the thinking of Marx, regimes such as the Soviet Union or Mao's China (well described as 'a famine-wracked disaster') and, in more recent times, countries often referred to as 'Marxist' such as Cuba and Venezuela, but again representing a travesty of any lesson to be drawn from Marx's writings. And, again, on the ideological front, they refer not to Marx's own writings or prescriptions but to Lenin's distorted version or implementation of these and to modern-day theorists, often self-styled 'Marxists', who 'share a strongly critical attitude to Western liberal values, a romantic attachment to anti-enlightenment communalism, and a cold-eyed focus on power as the major social issue of interest'.

The trouble is that what the authors are describing here has nothing to do with the analysis and theory which is at the root of Marx's writings, seeking as it does to transcend so-called 'liberal values' and pointing to the need for a world society of common ownership and democratic control and of free access to all goods and services,

where human beings, far from their individualism being denied or oppressed, are in ultimate control of their own choices and their own individual existence.

While this volume contains much that is instructive and thought-provoking for an understanding of how populism arises and is practised, it fails on the whole to see that it is the political and other divisions produced by capitalism's so-called 'liberal democracy' that are the real lightning rod for the very populism it is dedicated to exploring and critiquing. And the notion with which it is shot through that individual freedom is incompatible with collective organisation is fundamentally wrong-headed. The 'collectivism' it continually refers to and deplores is that of dictatorial or semi-dictatorial regimes or ideologies, not that of a world society organised democratically to satisfy everyone's needs.

HOWARD MOSS

Exploited and Spat Out



The Undocumented Americans.
Karla Cornejo Villavicencio:
Swift £12.99

There are eleven million 'undocumented' people in the US, mostly Latinx (a term that covers both men and women). The author was one, having followed her parents to New York from Ecuador aged four, though she has since received her green card, which makes her a permanent resident (her parents still aren't). Her book gives a vivid and personalised account of the lives of undocumented workers.

The undocumented have no access to health care (other than Emergency Rooms), and an example is given of a man who died of brain cancer after being turned away by a number of hospitals. They have no retirement plans and few savings. Many come in order to send money back home for their children to get an education, but find themselves barely able to make ends meet: 'This country takes their youth, their dreams, their labor,

and spits them out with nothing to show for it.'

Several thousand undocumented workers are forced to be day-labourers, waiting on street corners for contractors to choose them for a day's work. They are often cheated of their wages, and even left stranded in the middle of nowhere. Some worker centres have been set up to try and give them some kind of protection. Lots of undocumented immigrants were killed on 9/11, though it is impossible to say who or how many, and many helped to clear up in the aftermath, and working there has left some of them with severe medical conditions, from cancer to arthritis.

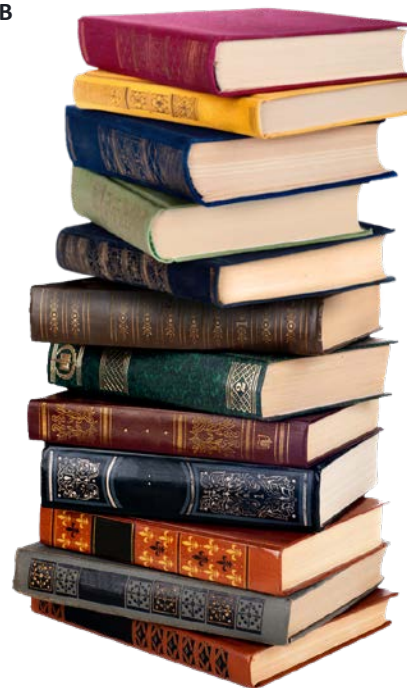
A chapter deals with Flint, Michigan, former centre of the car industry and notorious for having lead in its drinking water. Flyers on this were issued only in English, and when people went to houses to tell residents not to drink the tap water, many undocumented did not open their doors, for fear the visitors were from the immigration authorities. Distribution centres handed out bottled water, but only to those with a state ID, which the undocumented in Michigan were barred from having. A mother with lead poisoning breastfed her baby, and this resulted in the child being temporarily blind. She regained her sight, but nobody knows the possible long-term effects on her.

The main government body that creates problems for the undocumented is Immigration and Customs Enforcement

(ICE), 'the creation of 9/11 paranoia'. Some 'vultures', as Cornejo Villavicencio calls them, claim (for a price) to invoke spirits that can protect against ICE. The threat of deportation is, however, real, and a few seek sanctuary in churches, which ICE do not enter.

The author agrees with the statement that Americans treat their pets better than they treat immigrants. Her book demonstrates how much US capitalism makes use of cheap labour power and how the whole system regards people at the bottom of the heap.

PB



While charging you for your own education, the UK government would also like to ban ideas against capitalism



spgb.net



50 Years Ago

The death of Krushchev



The former dictator of Russia, who died last month, was not a member of the SPGB so this is not that kind of an obituary. Nor is it a salute to the passing of a “great man” in the manner of the capitalist press (whether so-called left or right). Rather do we take the opportunity of the passing of the former despot (one of the rare cases in the Soviet Union of an ousted top man who managed to die of old age), to point out that this man, who started to climb the ladder of Russian power nearly fifty years ago, has contrived to die with his country as far from justifying its assumed title of socialist as ever it was. In fact it is probably true to say that nowadays there are far more people around who fail to register shocked surprise at our contention that Russia is a capitalist country, like all other countries in the modern world. The fact that it is state-capitalist (instead of only partly thus and partly private enterprise capitalist like England) is a matter almost of indifference compared with the salient fact that it is not socialist and has never remotely justified its claim to that title. Khrushchev’s country is just as much a wage-slave economy as the USA.

The capitalist papers (such as the Morning Star and the New Statesman) can safely be left to recount the career of the Stalinist today who danced the gopak for his master (and also acted as his henchman in the slaughter of untold thousands of his fellow countrymen). (...)

There is no Socialism in Russia and all the millions of deaths have been merely to establish a capitalist tyranny where, pre-Khrushchev and post-Khrushchev, the propagation of Socialism is punished as treason. A grisly and tragic story.

(Socialist Standard, October 1971)

Obituary Tim Hart

Tim Hart discovered the Socialist Party only after he had retired, when he saw an advert for it in a newspaper. He was originally from Sussex but at that point was living in South Wales and soon became a member of Swansea Branch (now South Wales Branch) of the Party. He quickly became convinced by the Party’s case and also took a keen interest in its history and development. He often said he only regretted that he’d come so late to his political home and the clear, rational understanding of the world it gave him. He’d been involved in various causes and organisations but inevitably became unsatisfied with the illogicalities and inconsistencies of their ideas and actions and above all with their ‘single-issue’ approach to things according to the particular issues and circumstances of the day. He found the ‘all-round’ approach of the Party – the way it took on capitalism as a whole and not just its symptoms – a far more satisfying way of looking at the world.

Once in the Party he quickly became involved in various activities, including being its Assistant Treasurer, a member of its Executive Committee and writing articles for the Socialist Standard. So interested did he become in the Party’s history that he had plans for making sure that knowledge of all its activities and publications could be made available electronically for future record and reference. A project that he had in mind but didn’t come to fruition was to interview some of the Party’s longest-

standing members, so that the interviews could then be published in the Socialist Standard.

Yet, though he espoused the Party’s ideas for the explanation they gave him of history and the current world, he never lost his ‘doubt everything’ mindset and was never anything if not fiercely independent. In his life he had changed jobs and occupations a number of times (e.g. banking, management consultancy, law, teaching, landscape gardening), often because he found it impossible to tolerate the submission to authority and frequent abuse of power inherent in employment. And indeed, even while agreeing with the fundamental tenets of the Party’s case, he differed, for example, from the Party’s view that the liberal democratic type of capitalism represented an advance on the more ‘backward’ one-party state forms, considering them all at bottom equally authoritarian and oppressive. He also had a more draconian view of the climate crisis than usually expressed by the Party, considering that it was probably too late now, whatever action was taken, for the environmental situation to be rescued.

He was a kind person to have a discussion with and you always knew that anything you said, whether he agreed with it or not, would be responded to in a comradely and tolerant way. He was a keen swimmer and cyclist, activities he continued with even during his short final illness. He was also a marvellous grandad to Luke and a devoted father to Elaine and Della, to whom we convey our sincere condolences.

Howard Moss
South Wales Branch

World Socialist Movement Online Meetings

OCTOBER 2021 EVENTS

Friday 1 October 19.30 BST (GMT + 1)

Did you see the news?

Host: Paddy Shannon

General current affairs discussion

Sunday 3 October 12 noon (BST)

Central Branch: Regular first Sunday of the month meeting

Sundays at 19.30 (IST)

Weekly WSP (India) meeting

Friday 8 October 19.30 BST (GMT + 1)

Who will pay for Social Care?

Speaker: Adam Buick

The Tory election manifesto promised no rise in income tax, VAT or National Insurance but the government has just announced an increase in this last to pay for social care. Who will pay for this in the end: wage-earners, the young, employers?

Friday 15 October 19.30 BST (GMT + 1)

No Meeting. ADM the next day.

Saturday 16th October 10.30 – 5.30 (GMT +1)

Sunday 17th October 10.30 - 4.30 (GMT + 1)

Autumn Delegate Meeting

This can be followed live on Discord.

Friday 22 October 19.30 BST (GMT + 1)

Is socialism becoming fashionable?

Speaker: Paddy Shannon

For various reasons including global warming, job and housing insecurity, and pessimism about the future, young people are increasingly turning away from capitalism and towards socialist and Marxist ideas, at least according to a right-wing think-tank. Is

To join contact the admin at
spbg.discord@worldsocialism.org.

this a real trend, or a false dawn being touted by excitable media commentators?

Sunday 31 October 10am (GMT).

Reading Capital as Crisis Theory

Speaker: Mike Schauerte

Marx never completed a planned book on crisis, but the three volumes of Capital can be read as a theory of crisis that reveals the fundamental contradictions that explode (and are temporarily resolved) in a crisis.

The Socialist Party's Autumn Delegate Meeting

is being held on at our offices in 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 (nearest tube station: Clapham North) on

Saturday 16th October 10.30 – 5.30 and

Sunday 17th October 10.30 - 4.30

Like all our meetings, this is open to the general public. It can also be followed on Discord.

Yorkshire Discussion Group

Party members, sympathisers, readers of this journal, we are pleased to advise the formation of a Yorkshire Discussion Group. If you are living in the Yorkshire area and are interested in the Socialist Party case you are invited to attend our forums which currently alternate on a monthly basis either on Zoom or physical meetings in Leeds. For further information contact: fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk

Cardiff Street Stall,

Capitol Shopping Centre,

Queen Street (Newport Road end). 1pm-3pm every Saturday, weather permitting.

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.



From Keir I to Keir II

The evolution of the Labour Party over 115 years from Keir I to Keir II is a practical confirmation of the theoretical case against reformism. The Labour Party, instead of gradually transforming capitalism in the interests of the workers, has itself been gradually transformed from a trade union pressure group into an instrument of capitalist rule.

Which of these three statements about Keir Hardie is correct?

i: '... Labour Parties association with Marxism and a little understanding of the Labour Party's roots, after all its founder Keir Hardie was a Marxist' (Labour Heartlands, 13 August.tinyurl.com/6z8vsutu).

ii: 'A pacifist, Hardie was appalled by the First World War ...' (en.wikipedia.org, accessed 1 September).

iii: '... his efforts to reform society were driven by a deep faith in Jesus and a commitment to the principles set out in the Sermon on the Mount' (evangelicalfocus.com, 26 August).

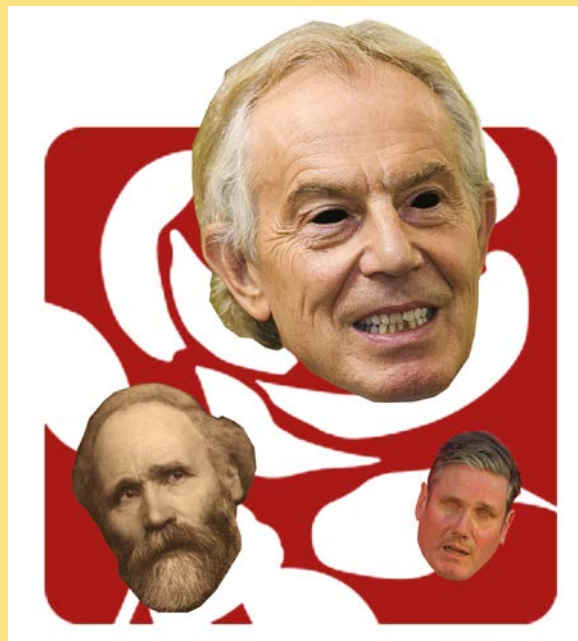
Neither Marxist nor pacifist

Hardie stated in his 1892 election manifesto that he was '...in agreement with the present programme of the Liberal Party.' Biographer Kenneth Morgan elaborates: 'I found him a man who was not only an idealistic crusader, but a pragmatist, anxious to work with radical Liberals whose ideology he largely shared, subtle in building up the Labour alliance with the trade unions and the other socialist bodies, and supremely flexible in his political philosophy, a very generalised socialism based on a secularised Christianity rather than Marxism... He was no economist and was ill-informed on many issues, but he had uniquely the charisma and vision that any radical movement needs.' Hardie's 'supreme flexibility' may explain why he is often portrayed as a pacifist, yet told his electorate in Merthyr: 'May I once again revert for the moment to the ILP pamphlets? None of them clamour for immediately stopping the war. That would be foolish in the extreme, until at least the Germans have been driven back across their own frontier, a consummation which, I fear, carries us forward through a long and dismal vista... I have never said or written anything to dissuade our young men

from enlisting; I know too well all there is at stake... If I can get the recruiting figures for Merthyr week by week, which I find a very difficult job, I hope by another week to be able to prove that whereas our Rink meeting gave a stimulus to recruiting, those meetings at the Drill Hall at which the Liberal member or the Liberal candidate spoke, had the exactly opposite effect' (*Merthyr Pioneer*, 28th November 1914).

Labour's dismal record

Labour has supported all major wars, including WWI, initiated the British atomic bomb, sent troops to smash strikes, established the vicious Special Patrol Group, passed racist immigration laws, imposed 'monetarist' expenditure cuts leading to the closure of hospitals and other vitally needed services... In the



light of such evidence, how can anyone claim that Labour is anything other than a Party seeking to reform capitalism rather than end it through majoritarian social revolution? Not Philip Snowden, Labour MP: 'The British Labour Party is certainly not Socialist in the sense in which Socialism is understood upon the Continent. It is not based upon the recognition of the class struggle; it does not accept the teaching of Marx...' (*Manchester Guardian Reconstruction Supplement*, 26 October 1922). Nor Arthur Greenwood, Labour's Lord Privy Seal: 'I look around my colleagues and I see landlords, capitalists and lawyers. We are a cross section of the national life, and this is something that has never happened before' (*Hansard*, 17 August 1945). Labour

MP Douglas Houghton was impressed by his Party's achievements: 'Never has any previous government done so much in so short a time to make modern capitalism work' (*Times*, 25 April 1967). Tony Benn, in a candid confession to the *Independent* (17 May 1989), wrote: 'Past Labour governments have always worked within the limits set by market forces (as when the cabinet capitulated to the International Monetary Fund in 1976); have always supported nuclear weapons (as when Callaghan authorised the Chevaline without telling parliament); and have regularly confronted trade unionism (as with rigid wage policies)... We must add... a clear recognition that the Labour Party is not — and probably never was — a socialist party, and its individual members do not decide its policy, nor are its election pledges apparently meant to be taken seriously.'

The rich man in his castle

Did Hardie read Emma Goldman's *The Failure of Christianity*, published two years before his death in 1915? Where she wrote: 'The idea conveyed in the Sermon on the Mount is the greatest indictment against the teachings of Christ, because it sees in the poverty of mind and body a virtue, and because it seeks to maintain this virtue by reward and punishment...' Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' What a preposterous notion! What incentive to slavery, inactivity, and parasitism! Besides, it is not true that the meek can inherit anything. Just because humanity has been meek, the earth has been stolen from it. Meekness has been the whip, which capitalism and governments have used to force man into dependency, into his slave position. The most faithful servants of the State, of wealth, of special privilege, could not preach a more convenient gospel than did Christ, the "redeemer" of the people...

Marxian socialism aims at taking from the masters the power they wield and the wealth they have stolen. Its object is to raise the workers from slaves to free men and women. It is therefore opposed to Christianity.