

THE

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SOCIALIST STANDARD

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

KEIR STARMER'S ENERGY PLAN

Mouth platitudes,
run out of steam



Also: AUKUS-Pocus
Nationalism:
deadly enemy of socialism
Getting the Betrayal in First

Starmer's plan for
British capitalism
Reformism prolongs capitalism
Wage-Price Spiral?



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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 class war and why there is one

ACCORDING TO the loud-mouthed Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, the rail unions are ‘dinosaurs’ who are ‘motivated by some outdated class war’ (*Times*, 15 August). But if the class war is outdated, why is the government waging it on behalf of the profit-taking class? Why has it given itself powers to allow agency workers to replace strikers? Why has the likely future prime minister promised to place yet more obstacles in the way of union members going on strike without breaking the law?

The fact is that class conflict is built into the nature of capitalism as a society where the means of life – the places where the goods and services to keep society going are produced and provided – are owned and controlled by only a section of society, and where the rest of us, as non-owners of such places, are forced by economic necessity to go out onto the labour market and sell our physical and mental energies

for a wage or salary. But that is not all. As the only way in which new wealth can be produced is by humans using their efforts to transform materials that originally came from nature, the non-work income of the owners – as profits and other property incomes – can only come from what those workers produce.

Capitalism, in short, is based on the economic exploitation of wage-labour for profit. This is why the interests of the two classes into which it is divided are diametrically opposed. How could they not be when the income of one class comes from the work of the other? The interest of the one class is to defend and increase profits; the interest of the other is to minimise its exploitation. Workers form trade unions to try to do this. The owners have the government to defend their interests.

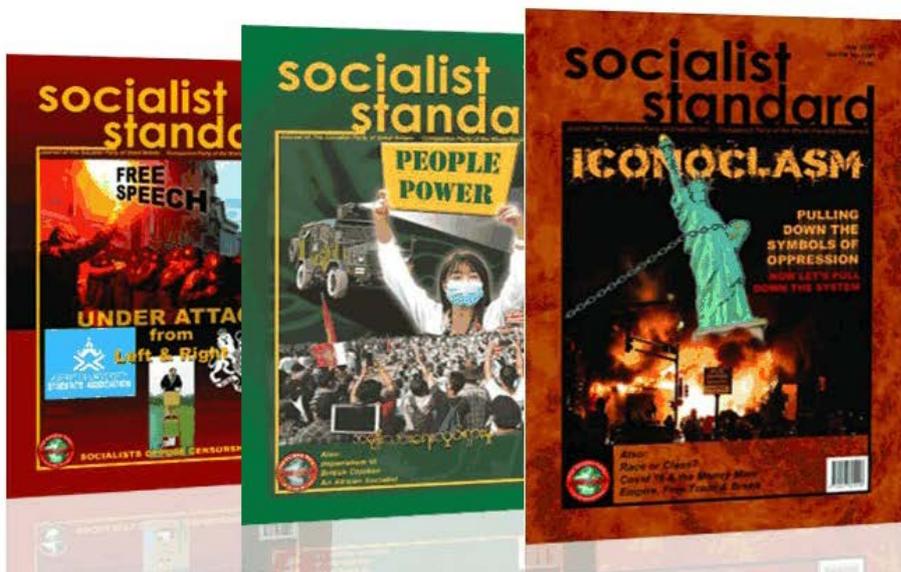
The Tories, as the traditional party of the ruling class, recognise that this is the government’s role and preach class war

against the workers’ unions. The Labour Party have had to learn this the hard way but now accept that in government they too have to give priority to profits and profit-making.

In the current situation, with the rise in the cost of living back in double digits, the unions are not even asking for double-digit wage increases, but only for something more than the 1 or 2 percent that they have been getting. Even non-unionists are changing jobs to get a higher salary so as to try and keep up with the cost of living. It is an almost spontaneous reaction of a class whose standard of living is being reduced. In reflecting this, the unions are doing their job. And in opposing them the government is doing its job.

The class war will only end when workers win political control and make the means of life the common property of society as a whole; when they win the class war and abolish class society.

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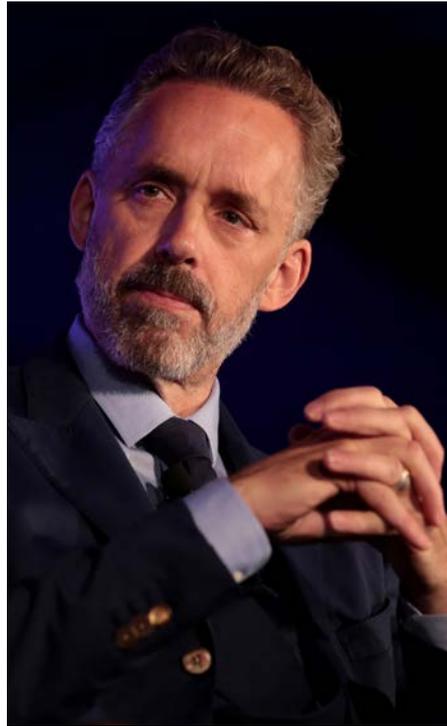
Growing up with Jordan Peterson

A DARLING of the 'alt-light' (that's 'alt-right' without the swastikas) is clinical psychologist and self-help guru Jordan Peterson, whose YouTube videos and podcasts have been blowing up in recent years. To call him a divisive figure is an understatement. He is deplored and denigrated by some as a misogynist, even fascist ideologue bent on spreading hate. He is adored and promulgated by others as an articulate warrior against identity politics, post-modernism and 'cultural Marxism', popular if vague dog whistles that Peterson and his fans have no problem conflating into one toxic conspiracy bundle.

Not surprisingly, his grasp of Marxism is non-existent- Stalin and Mao killed millions, end of. He likes big ideas designed to shock, but without fussing over details. So he argues that order is male and chaos is female, and that chaos is currently winning. This has produced a 'crisis of masculinity' in which men are being turned into feminised weaklings who need to stop being man-children and grow the hell up. At the same time, women who want to get ahead in the world and stop playing second fiddle to men in terms of jobs and pay, should learn to overcome their built-in tendency to please and appease. The world is a hierarchy based on competence, not on discrimination, and the sooner you quit whingeing about how unfair it all is, the sooner you'll start changing your life for the better.

His runaway success has come as a surprise to many who must have thought society had moved beyond caveman capitalism but who, it is argued, have 'underestimated the fury being inspired by modern preoccupations like white privilege and cultural appropriation, and by the marginalization, shouting down or outright cancellation of other viewpoints in polite society's institutions' (bit.ly/3C2rU8j).

To all this, he offers a simple antidote, indeed alibi. Instead of having to fit in with your socially aware friends and pretend you care deeply about the hard lives of underprivileged foreigners you're never going to meet, how much easier it is to say 'Screw them if they can't keep up'. Instead of going to the effort of listening to other perspectives and honestly evaluating criticisms of your own behaviour, what a relief to say 'Go kiss a leper, loser'. Peterson absolves you of all guilt and concern for others. You never have to feel inadequate. You never have to empathise. You never have to doubt. Don't ask, just take. That's what real empowerment looks like, buddy. And what's more, it's the natural order of things, as explained by Science.



Credit: Gage Skidmore

The problem his opponents frequently have is that they share, or at least don't question, the assumptions that underpin his own worldview, so their attempts at criticism start off wide of the mark and stay there. Instead they pick away at him guerrilla-fashion, attempting to bury him in moral indignation or truculent fact-checking. It offends them to think he's right, but they can't see how to argue with him.

A socialist would see through Jordan Peterson in 10 seconds.

It's the circularity of the argument. Suppose you find yourself in a savage kill-or-be-killed environment, and you're unhappy about behaving in a savage kill-or-be-killed way. Your life coach tells you that your sub-optimal behaviour is the problem, and advises you to stop being such a pussy and get out there with guns blazing. He doesn't ask or care why society is savage and kill-or-be-killed. He's a psychologist, not some woke social justice warrior or cultural Marxist. If you suggest that the psychologist and his advice might be the very factors helping to perpetuate the savage kill-or-be-killed society which drove you to seek his advice in the first place, he will accuse you of refusing to take personal responsibility and tell you to grow the hell up.

If you have bought into the capitalist mindset, people like Peterson make a kind of terrifying sense, however uncomfortable that makes you feel. And if it makes sense today, it must have made sense yesterday, and for all previous days. Thus the circularity appears timeless. This is probably why he permits himself to justify human hierarchies by

pointing, not to some historical event or near genetic cousin, but of all things, to lobsters. Lobsters, he says, are tyrannical hierarchs, and because we share some lobster genes inherited from our remote past, we are surely programmed to act the same way.

But you could apply this argument to anything. On this logic, all men should be rapists because, well, just look at ducks. For infanticide, see lions. For cannibalism, check out chimpanzees, hamsters and even hippos. But lobsters? No 'proof' can elude someone who is willing to go back so far along the evolutionary chain they're no longer in the same genus, family, order, class or phylum. The term 'logical fallacy' barely does justice to this kind of thinking.

Jordan Peterson's worldview is essentially a snapshot of the world right now, made to look immortal and unchanging. He doesn't care that it's ahistorical and if anything untypical of human behaviour in deep time, as many anthropologists would be at pains to point out. Indeed he dismisses anthropologists as being infected by the disease of postmodernist cultural Marxism, as indeed are the faculties of sociology, English literature, and ethnic, race and women's studies, all of which, like the equally infected and spurious science of global warming, should be defunded immediately in his view.

Like any snake-oil salesman, he doesn't consider the downstream consequences of the Randian product he is pushing. With the profit-driven frenzy of capitalism already burning the Earth and causing the sixth mass extinction of species, he is quite happy to advise emulating the same behaviour, in order to cash in on gullible people who think their failure is somehow due to not having been ruthless enough.

On the plus side, Jordan Peterson does admit that his popularity is mainly on YouTube and that the YouTube audience is 80 percent young males. Once these young men have had a dose of trying to behave like the callous psychopaths he advises them to be, and finding that it makes them lonely rather than rich, they will perhaps start listening to wiser counsel. But we can't wait that long. We need them to realise, right now, that capitalism is a gigantic and destructive social problem to which the only possible solution is gigantic and constructive social cooperation. That's what growing up really means.

PJS

AUKUS-POCUS



BACK IN 2016 the Australian government entered into a contract with France to supply twelve new submarines to replace its existing fleet. Towards the end of last year, they abandoned this and switched to a new plan to work with the UK and the US in building nuclear-powered subs instead. France was of course not pleased about this, and their foreign minister described it as ‘a stab in the back’.

This is not just an argument about submarines, as there is a new ‘defence’ alliance between Australia, the UK and the US, under the name of AUKUS, which is also likely to cover aircraft and other military technology. It follows from the Defence Trade Cooperation Treaties, also covering the same three countries, signed in 2007, which are intended to make trade in defence articles and ‘services’ more straightforward. These alliances are examples of mini-lateralism, which involves small numbers of countries joining hands and arms in an agreement. These are seen as easier to negotiate than larger multi-lateral agreements, and also more likely to lead to consensus among the participants.

AUKUS is particularly aimed at China, which is seen as having too much power and influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Australia is viewed as a reliable American ally, being the only country that has been involved in every war the US has fought since 1917, including Vietnam. UK industry

will benefit, with contracts already having been placed with Rolls-Royce and BAE Systems, though it is not as yet clear where most of the production work would take place. But clearly it will be the US that stands to gain the most, partly just in economic terms, but also as far as global strategy and ‘security’ is concerned.

In July last year, the UK government published a policy paper ‘Global Britain in a Competitive Age’. This focused on a ‘vision for 2030’, in response to, inter alia, ‘geopolitical and geoeconomic shifts, such as China’s increasing international assertiveness and the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific’. Post-Brexit ideas of a role on the world stage for the UK no doubt play a part too, with a return to the ‘east of Suez’ area after several decades. Overall, AUKUS reflects the UK’s ‘tilt to the Indo-Pacific’, as crucial to British capitalism’s economy, security and global ambition.

AUKUS must also be seen in the context of another, less formal, alliance, known as the Quad, which covers the US, Australia, India and Japan. Officially the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, this was restarted in 2017 after a hiatus, and has included military exercises. There is also the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), established in May this year, with fourteen countries participating (including the US, of course, also Australia, India and

Japan, among others). Among its aims is ‘supply chain resilience’, to ensure as far as possible the availability of raw materials and other supplies.

Part of the aim of all this is to control as far as possible the vital seaway of the Malacca Strait, between Malaysian islands and Sumatra. This has for centuries been the main sea route between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and a large part of world sea-borne goods passes through it, with the extremely busy port of Singapore located there. Oil in particular is a prominent part of this trade, as the strait is part of the shortest route between the Persian Gulf and Asian markets. At its narrowest, the strait is less than two miles wide, so it is a potentially crucial bottleneck.

A spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry said the agreement’s signatories were adopting an ‘obsolete cold war zero sum mentality’. In reality the Cold War has never gone away, in the sense that capitalist states still go in for alliances and military preparations, and some writers refer to the last couple of decades as the ‘Second Cold War’. AUKUS is just the largest instantiation of this. And as Ukraine and other examples show, there are real on-the-ground wars too. In a world beset by global heating and a pandemic, capitalism has plenty of other priorities.

PB

Fairy-tale economics

TRUSSONOMICS – what has also been dubbed ‘fairy-tale economics’ – teaches, even preaches, that if you cut taxes on businesses, they will have more profits and so will invest more, increasing growth and average living standards.

Cancelling the increase scheduled next year in corporation tax from 19 to 25 percent and reducing employers’ National Insurance contributions will increase the amount of retained profits directly and immediately. Cutting other taxes and a corresponding amount of government spending (for instance, as floated, the reduction in the pay of public sector workers outside London and not giving out any more ‘hand-outs’ to people to help them try to cope with the soaring cost of living) would have the same effect but indirectly and over a longer period.

In recognising the importance of profits for ‘growth’, Truss is being realistic enough. Capitalism is a profit-driven system and does run on profits. Every government must take this into account and give priority to profit-making.

Where she departs from reality for fairyland is in imagining that, just because you allow capitalist enterprises to retain

more of their profits, that will make them invest more. This is wrong both in theory and in the light of experience. Businesses will invest only if they think this will bring them more profit; if they don’t calculate that it will, then they won’t invest. And governments can do nothing to change that.

‘Growth’ is the increase in the amount produced in one year compared with previous years. It is conventionally measured by changes in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Most of this – over 80 percent – is consumed in the course of the year by individuals or governments. The rest is invested in expanding or replacing productive capacity. Because GDP includes replacing the wear and tear of existing buildings, machines and equipment (depreciation), the investment part is not an accurate measure of the increase in productive capacity. Net Domestic Product (NDP), which excludes this, is more accurate, the investment part of which is near to what Marx meant by the ‘capital accumulation’ – the accumulation of profits as more capital – which he saw as the driving force of capitalism rather than growth as such.

Fairy Liz imagines that, after cutting taxes on profits, she can wave her magic wand

and, hey presto, enterprises will invest and the economy grow. They tried this in France in the late 70s and early 80s. It didn’t work.

According to *L’Express* (8 September 1979), referring to Raymond Barre who was then the centre-right (the French equivalent of the Tories, if you like) prime minister:

‘One of the prime minister’s disappointments is that the improvement in the finances and profits of enterprises has not produced the expected boom in investment. The bosses are more and more reluctant to take risks. “Give us the money”, they said, “and we will invest.” Today, with their finances in a healthy state, they add “Give us the markets”. You can’t make an ass that isn’t thirsty drink. A head of an enterprise does not buy machines without outlets for the products they make.’

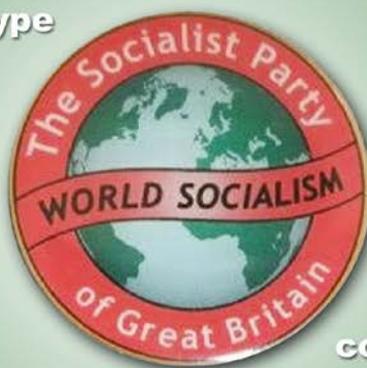
Barre failed because no government can conjure up the markets on which to sell what expanding capital investment could produce. Truss will fail too for the same reason, especially as the IMF, the Bank of England and many others are predicting a world recession over the next couple of years.

If these forecasts are right, what will happen is that businesses will say ‘Thank you very much. We can use the extra profits to increase the dividends we pay our shareholders. If you want us to invest them, give us the markets’. That, the government can’t do. So, no fairy-tale ending.

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Shelley: In His Way, One Of Us



A century ago, this journal carried an article so titled (*Socialist Standard*, September 1922, bit.ly/3IGAvio). Two centuries have passed along with generations of socialists and other workers since Percy Bysshe Shelley's untimely demise. What would he make of the world today? There can be little doubt that for all the scientific advances made since his death he would soon realise that this world remains theirs not ours, and our 'great awakening' has yet to take place. Like Friedrich Engels and William Morris, he '... played his part in the great awakening of men, just as Marx played his, as we play ours, as all our readers can play theirs. The scientist, philosopher, and singer, age by age, so far as the development of Society would permit, have contributed to the freeing of our thoughts. They have given us ecstasy and knowledge. And the selfish ruling class cannot understand this. Ecstasy and knowledge, music and wisdom mean as little to such people as Gallipoli and Russia or work and wages. Shelley liked such people much as we do; much as G.B.S. likes roast pork and a bottle of Bass.'

'The Rights of Universal Citizenship'

'GBS' was the playwright, vegetarian and teetotaler George Bernard Shaw. He is still wrongly viewed as a socialist and supported capitalist conflict (during WWI he declared 'England is a guardian of the world's liberty') and in the pamphlet *Fabianism and the Empire* advocated the right of a capitalist state to acquire territory which it may consider backward, in the name of efficiency. He constantly beat the imperialist drum for bigger armaments; advocated a large army and military conscription. By contrast, Shelley in his *Declaration of Rights* stated 'Man has no right to kill his brother, it is no

excuse that he does so in uniform. He only adds the infamy of servitude to the crime of murder' (Article 19, 1812, bit.ly/3o3sVEM).

We read: 'Latvia's defense ministry said on Monday that the Baltic country is bringing back its military draft to ward off a Russian attack — a move prompted by Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine' ([yahoo](http://yahoo.com), 11 July, yho0.it/3uVIXT).

There is no doubt that Shelley would oppose conscription. And stand with the workers in Russia and Ukraine seeking to avoid working as paid murderers.

'Danila Davydov said he left Russia within weeks of the Kremlin sending troops into Ukraine because he feared having to fight in a war he doesn't support. The 22-year-old left St. Petersburg and is now working in Kazakhstan. "We feared President Putin would declare a mobilization and then everyone, young and old, would be called up to the army. I absolutely didn't want to go and fight". Davydov is among what some lawyers and rights advocates say is an increased number of young Russian men looking to avoid the country's mandatory military service since the conflict with Ukraine, which Russia calls a "special military operation", started in late February. That is despite the risk of facing fines or up to two years in prison. In Russia, military service is mandatory for young men aged 18 to 27' ([yahoo](http://yahoo.com), 8 July, yho0.it/3nRxO3H).

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and
despair!"

Nothing beside remains.

Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck,
boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch
far away'

(from Shelley's sonnet *Ozymandias*, 1819, bit.ly/3II4578).

'There is No God'

PBS had no lack of imagination, yet it is doubtful that he could envision a world of war and want still existing when one of peace and plenty had long been possible. Even Mary Shelley, the author of *Frankenstein*, would likely be shocked by the very real threat of Armageddon. The Shelleys were almost certainly spared nightmares of the MAD contrast between death by exotic weapons or stoning:

'A 20-year-old woman in Sudan has been sentenced to death by stoning for adultery, marking the first known case in the northeast African country for a decade... Iran has the world's highest rate

of execution by stoning and the Middle Eastern country regularly makes headlines for its employment of the practice, which came into force after the 1979 revolution. The Library of Congress believes that around 150 people were stoned to death in Iran between 1980 and 2009, although the reported numbers are probably lower than the actual figures' (*The Week*, 14 July, bit.ly/3uPgZdw).



PBS by contrast thought 'A husband and wife ought to continue so long united as they love each other. Any law which should bind them to cohabitation for one moment after the decay of their affection, would be a most intolerable tyranny, and the most unworthy of toleration' (*Queen Mab*, 1813, bit.ly/3c3fFNF). His blasphemous freethinking got him expelled from Oxford University. And still today such thoughts can result in the death penalty in thirteen countries. For PBS, 'Design must be proved before a designer can be inferred' (*The Necessity of Atheism*, 1811, bit.ly/3OcknBk). He would have been fascinated by our current understanding of human biology. We are an evolutionary hodgepodge made largely of bacteria, viruses, fungi and archaea. Our eyes see less than 1 percent of the light spectrum, and retinas detach easily — even the humble shrimp has better vision. We are also fitted with sub-optimal plumbing (breathing, eating, excretory and reproductive) and, yes, programmed to die — unlike *Turritopsis dohrnii*, the immortal jellyfish.

'The Masque of Anarchy'

We wasted the last century and unless we act, capitalism will likely lay waste to this one. So:

'Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number —
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you —
Ye are many — they are few'
(1819, bit.ly/3aC6Qdm).

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A Forlorn and Forgotten Nation

ONCE DESCRIBED as the 'Pearl of the Caribbean' and known as being the world's first black ex-slave republic, Haiti is now the poorest country in the western hemisphere. According to the World Bank, in 2020 Haiti had a GDP per capita of US\$2,925, the lowest in the Latin American and Caribbean region, less than a fifth of the average of US\$15,092.

Nearly half of the 11.4m population is food insecure including 1.3 million who are facing the UN's level 4 classification. Level 5 is the worst level of hunger classification – famine. Resources for humanitarian aid are running out in Haiti and the World Food Program is already facing a shortage of at least US\$39 million in funding for Haiti operations.

The country is also enduring political instability following the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse compounded by a devastating earthquake that followed in August.

News media in 2021 showed US Border Patrol guards on horseback whipping Haitians desperate to enter the United States via Mexico and many migrants and asylum seekers have been flown back to Haiti despite having nothing to return to. At the time, it led to the resignation of a senior career diplomat, Daniel Foote, who was the US special envoy for Haiti, in protest over the deportations which he described as 'inhumane'.

It is a policy that has persisted. The USA in the first seven months of this year forcefully repatriated more than 20,000 Haitians compared to 19,629 for all of 2021, according to statistics from the United Nations' International Office for Migration.

The numbers of people desperate to flee by attempting the dangerous sea journey to the United States have increased significantly and many have drowned. The US Coast Guard's website notes that migrants intercepted at sea can be returned to their country of origin 'without the costly processes required if they had successfully entered the United States.'

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, herself of Haitian origin, said recently, 'I've known this president for a very long time. This is very personal to him. He cares about the people...' (aol.it/3Qru4IW).

One as young as she may not be blamed for not knowing that back in 1994 when Biden was a senator, he said, 'If Haiti just quietly sunk into the Caribbean or rose up 300 feet, it wouldn't matter a whole lot in terms of our interest.'



Credit: Getty Images

Gang warfare between rival factions, mainly the G9, G-Pèp and the 400 Mawozo in Cité Soleil, an impoverished and densely crowded shanty-town of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, has left many people dead. Outside the urban areas Kokorat San Ras control the highways, extorting and ransoming trucks and buses with impunity, forcing aid agencies to rely on expensive air transport for their supplies.

At least 155 kidnappings took place in the month of June, compared to 118 in May, according to a report released by the Center for Analysis and Research in Rights.

At least 155 kidnappings took place in the month of June, compared to 118 in May, according to a report released by the Center for Analysis and Research in Human Rights. Families have no alternative but to remain trapped inside their homes, unable to go and fetch food or water.

According to the UN, between 8 and 17 July 2022, over 471 people were killed, injured or unaccounted for. Around

3,000 people have also fled their homes, including hundreds of unaccompanied children, while at least 140 houses have been destroyed or burnt down.

Mumuza Muhindo, head of the local Doctors Without Borders, said, 'It's a real battlefield. It's impossible to estimate how many people have been killed' (bit.ly/3zJR07M).

Restricted access to basic health, nutrition and water and sanitation services as a result of escalating violence, coupled with soaring food prices, inflation and food insecurity in Cité Soleil, leave one in five children suffering from acute malnutrition, and one in 20 children living in Cité Soleil at risk of dying.

'We cannot sit idly by and watch children suffer from malnutrition and its complications,' said Bruno Maes, UNICEF Haiti Representative (uni.cf/3Jz6OzW).

But that is exactly what is happening.

Haiti's ruling class are indifferent and do not have a sense of belonging to Haiti, says Leslie Voltaire, a prominent Haitian. 'They don't care, because it's not their country, they have houses in Santo Domingo, Miami, every weekend they go to Miami to buy their things and come back' (bit.ly/3zAliet).

Some small good news is that the UN Security Council belatedly voted to ban the sale of small arms and ammunition to what it calls 'non-state actors' in Haiti.

ALJO

Nationalism: deadly enemy of socialism

TO MANY workers nationalism, like some other prejudices, is just another weird idea left over from the past. However, too many others still identify with countries and nations. Nationalism therefore still plays a large part in keeping workers divided.

Some try to make a distinction between patriotism and nationalism: with patriots identifying with their own imagined country without harbouring any ill-will towards people of other countries and nationalists who, as well as having special affection for their own imagined country, are also more xenophobic.

These concepts are so entangled that it makes no sense trying to disentangle them: it is the unsound nature of these notions which bothers us.

To the nationalists, whether Scottish or English, British, German, Russian, Chinese, American or whatever, the concept of the nation is a very important matter. For some it is the most important matter. Nationalists adhere to the strange notion that the nation, or nation-state, is an entity to which we should have automatic allegiance.

But why should we have such allegiance? And what exactly is a nation, and in whose interests does a nation-state operate?

Until the eighteenth century local feeling was much more important than national feeling. The pre-eighteenth-century community-spirit sense of nationality considered a nation to be composed of people living in a particular area with a common language, culture and history; but not necessarily ruled by the same state.

During the eighteenth century some new countries and nations were created. Great Britain, for example was a nation-state created by a merger between England & Scotland in 1707. This was not a 'hostile takeover' of Scotland by England, but a deal done between the ruling class of England and their counterparts in Scotland. Needless to say neither the working class in England nor the workers in Scotland were consulted.

Certain gentlemen in what was then the North American colonies became rather disgruntled over trade and taxation and their lack of representation in the British parliament. These grievances between the gentleman rulers on either side of the Atlantic eventually led to the American War of Independence. The British gentlemen on the American side of the ocean foreswore their allegiance to the King and declared independence from Great Britain. In their Declaration of Independence in 1776 they called the new country the United States of America.

The French Revolution in 1789 and its aftermath gave impetus to the further development of liberalism and nationalism throughout Europe and by the nineteenth century nationalism had become more important and much more assertive than the hitherto existing sense of nationality.

The new nationalism intertwined with liberalism was really part of the ideology of the rising bourgeoisie.

Eastern Europe was relatively backward but north-west Europe had reached an advanced stage of industrial and trade development. Industrialisation and increased commercial development spread from west to east along with the political ideas of the rising bourgeoisie.

The new nationalism was essentially the idea that the nation, whatever it was conceived to be, is the most important unit of organisation in society and should therefore be equivalent to the state: it was the concept of the nation-state.

Nationalism and liberalism posed a threat to the cohesion of states like the Habsburg Empire which contained Germans, Hungarians, Italians, Czechs, Poles, Croats and Serbs within its boundaries. On the other hand, new states could be established if the idea of nationalism captured the minds of Germans and Italians whose nations were both divided into various separate states. So, sometimes nationalism united territories into new countries and

sometimes it tended to disrupt and divide existing countries.

In 1861 Italy went from being a 'geographical expression' to unification. There was at that time a number of competing notions about what a united Germany might be. The so-called Holy Roman Empire had been dissolved in 1806 leaving a collection of petty states which organised themselves during the course of the 19th century into a number of configurations and confederations which eventually led to unification in 1871.

The old absolutist system of government was diametrically opposed to the needs of a developing and dynamic capitalist economy and it was this antagonism of interests which gave rise to the attack by the middle class against absolutism and the feudal rights of the aristocracy.

Liberalism required the unity, inherent in nationalism, of nationhood in society to ensure the satisfactory operation of a liberal constitution. So bourgeois liberals promoted nationalism to further their own ends. But the acquiescence at least of workers and peasants was essential in achieving national unity and independence.

To maintain national cohesion, nationalist ideology is required. Various paraphernalia like flags and national songs/anthems are used to help indoctrinate the subjects of a nation with the myths and fantasies of nationhood. History books with a twisted account of



how the nation arose and how it has done great things are also very useful.

A measure of how successful this indoctrination is can be seen at international sports events, where the participants go into a trance-like state as they sing the national anthems of what they have been trained to believe are 'their' countries and many are overcome with emotion.

'Scots Wha Hæ'

The Braveheart Legend today owes much to the eighteenth century romanticised view of the Wars for Scottish Independence of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, which culminated in the Battle of Bannockburn in June 1314.

These wars were really struggles amongst the aristocracy, who had lands in both England and Scotland, for political power commensurate with their landholdings and their own perceived greatness.

The song Scots Wha Hæ, by Robert Burns, was ostensibly based on Robert Bruce's speech to his troops before the Battle of Bannockburn, but Burns was influenced just as much by contemporary struggles in Europe and elsewhere when he wrote this song. He also knew that to openly write such a song about the 'radical' struggles of his own time, whether in Britain or abroad, could expose him to prosecution for sedition.

In more recent times the rise of the SNP as a political force results largely from the perceived failures of decades of Labour and Tory governments. It could be said, particularly from the 1970s onwards, that the misanthropic projects of Labour and Tory governments led to growing support for nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales.

To the Scottish National Party the nation is the most important thing. The essence of its argument is that the interests of the 'people of Scotland', whoever they might be, can be served best by a government in Edinburgh rather than one in London.

They claim nowadays that nationality can be defined in such a way as to include everyone who lives in Scotland. A bit like the USA, where you can become an American or a hyphenated one for a generation or two; or perhaps forever.

It sounds much 'nicer' than some of the more virulent and nasty types of nationalism. But unfortunately, many of the SNP's supporters continue to be the more old-fashioned and nasty type of nationalist.

Change of rulers

Since the collapse of the British Empire after World War II, many nations have gained independence from British rule.

None of this has led to any lasting benefit to the workers in these countries. As in the rest of the world the populations of these countries are divided into employers and their wage-slaves.

So, although the nation-state may be a convenient vehicle by means of which a local (national) capitalist class can exploit the workers within its boundaries, it brings no benefit to the workers.

Nationality is therefore something imposed upon the worker. In fact, the workers of the world have no country and therefore should not have any allegiance to this or any other country. Instead of worrying about the interests of the country or the nation to which they belong, their allegiance should be to their own class interests.

Our use of the possessive pronoun with respect to the employers and their wage-slaves was no accident: the countries are theirs – ie, the capitalists – as are we their wage-slaves. But the countries are not ours! We do not own enough of this or any other country to fill a flower pot.

Instead of worrying about the interests of the country to which they belong and its independence or lack thereof, workers should seek independence for themselves: independence from the tyranny of capital and silly flag-waving nations. Nationalism – like sexism, racism, and religious superstition – is anathema to socialists. We can have nothing but antipathy to it. It is totally incompatible with working class interests and the struggle for socialism.

The Scottish National Party argues that social problems in Scotland are caused by London government and that with an independent government in Edinburgh a start could be made in solving these problems.

The Socialist Party argument is that social problems in Scotland are not caused by government from England but, as elsewhere, by capitalism. Re-arranging frontiers or constructing a new state is no more a solution to working class problems than electing a new government of capitalism or changing the Prime Minister.

Such political changes are irrelevant to the working class, since they leave the economic basis of society – the class monopoly of the means of production – unchanged; and it is precisely this that is the root cause of their problems.

Against all nationalisms

The Socialist Party opposes Scottish nationalism just as it does British nationalism which, of course, is supported by the Tories, Labour and the Liberals. We are opposed to all nationalism and insist that the solution to our problems lies in

the establishment of socialism throughout the world.

The First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, has recently proposed holding another referendum on whether or not Scotland should remain part of the United Kingdom. She claims that she has a mandate to conduct one. The SNP together with the Scottish Greens, who have turned tartan in the last few years, constitute a pro-independence majority in Holyrood. Although this majority of nearly 56 percent in the Scottish Parliament is based on only 49.2 percent of the popular vote, it is a greater 'mandate' than Boris Johnson's 43.6 percent of the popular vote which gave him 365 seats out of 650 in the House of Commons and control of the British state.

The question of whether or not the Scottish Parliament has the authority to conduct a referendum has been referred to the Supreme Court. Should the Supreme Court rule that the matter is reserved to the authority of Westminster and if whoever replaces Johnson still refuses to grant Sturgeon permission to conduct a referendum, the SNP will fight the next UK general election solely on one issue: separation. This would, they say, be a de facto referendum on independence.

Therefore the proposed referendum in October 2023 or the next general election in 2024, like past elections, gives us a 'choice': vote yes, get capitalism; vote no, get capitalism! It is like being asked if migraine is better than diarrhoea. Capitalism offers us myriad such 'choices', in an attempt to pretend we are being consulted.

To borrow some of Burns's words: 'Now is the day, and now is the hour', but not for supporting some madcap scheme to create a new nation, or restore an old one. It is time to get up off our knees and face the future: not a fairy-tale future promised by politicians but the future that we will make. Not Scotland for the Scottish, England for the English, Wales for the Welsh, or any other nationalist fantasy world.

A long time ago in the aftermath of a bloody war we claimed the world for the workers and called upon you, our fellow workers, to fight for socialism. Over a hundred years later our claim and demand is the same. By overthrowing capitalism and taking the world for the workers, we will have one world for one people. To do anything else is, just like the proposed referendum, an exercise in futility.

JC

Getting the Betrayal in First

'One day, it seems, Tony Blair is likely to be in Number Ten and, therefore almost certainly, will be in confrontation with public sector workers. He has, in Neil Kinnock's rueful phrase, got his betrayal in first' (Andrew Marr, *Independent*, 19 April 1995: bit.ly/3bIRiVY).

MARR WAS writing about Tony Blair when Leader of the Opposition, but he could just as well have been writing about Sir Keir Starmer today.

We can't claim that Labour leaders have learnt nothing from the experience of the various Labour governments that there have been.

We can't claim that Labour leaders have learnt nothing from the experience of the various Labour governments that there have been. Elected to power on promises to improve the lot of workers and to help trade unions achieve this, every single Labour government has ended up opposing strikes and insisting that priority



be given to profit-making (some have done worse, imposing wage freezes and prosecuting strikers). In that sense they have betrayed the unions who supported them and workers who voted for them.

Starmer sees himself as the Prime Minister of a 'government in waiting' and knows that, in government, he too will have to resist wage demands that

threaten profit-making. In sacking one of his shadow cabinet for going on a picket line without permission, he was sending out a clear message that he was fully prepared to do this.

Sharon Graham, the General Secretary of Unite, reacted by declaring that the sacking incident showed that 'the Labour Party was becoming more and more irrelevant to working people'. But was it ever relevant? The question that should be asked is not 'What has the Labour Party done *for* us' but 'What has the Labour Party done *to* us?'

Starmer is going to behave in office as previous Labour Prime Ministers have. So what did they do to us?

In 1964 after what the Labour Party called 'thirteen years of Tory misrule' they got in and Harold Wilson became Prime Minister.

In 1964 after what the Labour Party called 'thirteen years of Tory misrule'

Socialist Standard September 2022





they got in and Harold Wilson became Prime Minister. His government started by honouring some of its promises. It abolished prescription charges and a national plan was drawn up. Then an economic crisis broke out. The pound was devalued; it maintained its face-value in people's pockets but its purchasing power diminished due to the prices of imported goods going up. Prescription charges were re-imposed and the national plan became a scrap of paper.

From then on, it was downhill all the way as these contemporary headlines illustrate (Ray Gunther was the Minister of Labour and George Brown the Secretary of State for Economic Affairs):

Mr Gunther Condemns Dock Move by Strikers (*Times*, 20 October 1964)

Britain's Attitudes Outdated—Premier.



Country 'cannot afford strikes' (*Guardian*, 25 February 1965)

Profit Motive as Test of Efficiency. Mr Brown's Reply to Directors. "Government Not Anti-Business" (*Times*, 22 May 1965)

Wilson Hits at Rail Go-Slow (*Observer*, 18 July 1965)

Wage Restraint Vital in 1966—Premier (*Financial Times*, 1 January 1966)

Folly To Press For Big Wage Rises—Chancellor (*Financial Times*, 18 May 1966)

Ministers Hint At Permanent Pay Curb (*Observer*, 18 September 1966)

Government Embraces Profitability (*Guardian*, 23 November 1966)

Standard of Living 'Must Fall'. Mr Gunther on Last Chance (*Times*, 29 March 1968)

While the need for profits was accepted, wage demands were opposed. The Labour MP, Harold Lever (later a minister and then a Lord) explained very cogently why:

"Within the terms of the profit system it is not possible, in the long run, to achieve sustained increases in output without an adequate flow of profit to promote and finance them."

'Labour's economic plans are not in any way geared to more nationalisation; they are directed towards increased production on the basis of the continued existence of a large private sector. Within the terms of the profit system it is not possible, in the long run, to achieve sustained increases in output without an adequate flow of profit to promote and finance them. The Labour leadership know as well as any businessman that an engine which runs on profit cannot be made to move faster without extra fuel' (*Observer*, 3 April 1966).

This is still the situation today. A future Labour government under Starmer will have to work (as one under Corbyn would have had to) within the same framework of 'the commanding heights of the economy' being in the hands of private profit-seeking enterprises, whose necessity to make a profit must be recognised. And will be.

The Wilson Labour government was voted out of office in 1970 but Labour came back in 1974, briefly under Wilson, then under James Callaghan. The 1974-79 Labour government was just as much a disaster, provoking the notorious 1978/9 Winter of Discontent. Troops (let alone agency workers) were called out to break strikes by Glasgow refuse collectors (1975), air traffic control assistants (1977), firefighters (1977), naval dockyard workers (1978), and, finally, NHS ambulance workers (1978).

In 1979, as a reaction, the Tories under Thatcher were elected and 18 years of Tory rule followed. Tony Blair became leader of the Labour Party in 1994 and immediately set about making it 'electable'. This involved abandoning even the long-term paper commitment to changing private capitalism into state capitalism (Clause IV) and fully accepting the profit-seeking market economy. As Blair told the *Financial Times* (11 June, 1994):

'We want a dynamic market economy. It is not merely that I, as it were, with hesitation acknowledge that this is the way we have to go. I say that it is positively in the public interest to have a dynamic market economy.'

Labour, under Blair, was returned to office in 1997 and, external conditions being relatively favourable, did not make such a mess of presiding over the operation of capitalism as Wilson and Callaghan had. The main reforms that the Blair Labour government introduced were constitutional rather than economic and so did not impinge on the operation of the profit-driven capitalist economy. The anti-union laws enacted under Thatcher were not repealed and are still in force today.

There is no reason whatsoever to suppose that a Starmer Labour government would be any different from previous Labour governments. The reason why these failed and ended up giving priority to profits over wages was not because its ministers were dishonest or incompetent or not resolute enough. It was because they had set themselves an impossible task. The very nature of capitalism means that it cannot work, or be made to work, in the interest of those obliged to work for wages. It is a profit-making system that can work only in the interest of the profit-takers, whose source of income is the unpaid labour of the wage-working class. Prior to the Blair government, Labour leaders had to learn this the hard way. Starmer, like Blair, knows that, for the reasons explained by Harold Lever in 1966, a future Labour government would have to let capitalism work this way. At least he is being candid about his intentions. Workers and unions should take heed.

ADAM BUICK

Starmmer's plan for **British** capitalism



Credit:Rwendland

THIS IS your periodic (though unnecessary) reminder that the membership of the Labour Party elected as their leader – and thus chief spokesperson – a man who has accepted a knighthood. This speaks volumes about Keir Starmer's attitude to the existing state of affairs, and of the political commitment and understanding of Labour Party members. He is committed to retaining and defending the existing state of society.

On 25 July this year he gave what, doubtless, his publicity team would consider a keynote speech (tinyurl.com/3eh6cwse). After the usual political lambasting of his opponents, he delivered his stunning prescription:

'To give Britain the fresh start it needs, we need a new approach. The goal is straightforward – to maximise the contribution we all make to national prosperity. Every business, every person, every community.'

This is very much going back to the mantra of New Labour and using the state to co-ordinate and promote capitalist agendas. He also makes it clear that he is acting in the name of capitalism in general, because the problem has been:

'The best of British business is the best in the world. But we have geared our whole economy to delivering only for those firms.'

That is, that only some capitalists are benefitting at the expense of others. This has the neat advantage of playing into the essentially apolitical attack line about Tory corruption, absent which, prosperity for all may rain down. It is also notable because it ideologically subordinates economic activity to 'the national interest.' As he says: 'A strong national economy needs everyone making the best contribution

they can.' And '[L]ow growth countries are weaker at standing up for the national interest.'

Starmer sees it as a collective national effort, where the citizens work for 'the nation', but just that the citizens should be justly rewarded, and 'hard work' made to pay. Human freedom and treating people as ends in themselves is a long way from his imagination. So, he says:

'To do all that we need three things: Growth. Growth. And Growth. That's why I have told the Shadow Cabinet that every policy they bring forward will be judged by the contribution it makes to growth and productivity.'

A quick check on Wikipedia gives the following definition: 'Economic growth can be defined as the increase or improvement in the inflation-adjusted market value of the goods and services produced by an economy over a certain period of time.' That is, Starmer wants us to create ever more value. Above all else he is channelling the spirit of capital itself, value as the end in itself, not people; and we are all to be subordinated to that impossible voracious demand.

This is, of course, the essential social-democrat position, seeing themselves as removing the inefficiencies of the market system in order to save it and generate productivity. This saves them a lot of trouble, as they are able to argue against redistribution on the basis that a small (or even smaller) share of a bigger pie can be bigger than a bigger share of a smaller pie. It leaves them relying on the market system to generate increasingly cheap goods.

This comes with a price, though, as it centralises a certain blackmail: the owners of capital get to say that if they don't get their profit, no-one else will get any benefits. Indeed, this claim has become a central mantra of Tory politicians of late, that social benefits depend on economic growth. In this topsy-turvy ideological world, capitalists are able to project themselves as wealth creators, who simply give out the jobs and benefits on which we all depend.

In the hands of Labour Party right-wingers, this is coupled with the liberal philosopher John Rawls' notion:

'That social and economic inequalities should be arranged so that "they are to be of the greatest benefit to the least-advantaged members of society" i.e. an unequal distribution of wealth or other resources can be just when it maximizes the benefit to those who have the lowest

allocation of resources – the Maximin theory?' (tinyurl.com/fjm2yjmd).

So, growth and wealth at the top should be encouraged and help should be targeted at the poorest. Given that without that growth they would have nothing, this allows the argument that letting some people generate huge amounts of personal wealth benefits more than the alternatives.

So Starmer, in his speech promises:

'1. We will be financially responsible.

2. We will be distinctively British.

3. We will work in partnership with business.

4. We will re-energise communities and spread economic power.

5. We will refocus our investment on boosting productivity.'

Leaving aside the blithering nonsense about being distinctively British, whatever that means — that's just branding — financial responsibility means Labour will avoid interfering with property rights, by taxing, borrowing, and using resources within capitalist rules. He even invokes the 'magic money tree' to emphasise that they will be responsible, and to distance himself from his predecessor. He emphasises:

'Modern industrial strategy isn't about growing the size of the state – it's about what the state does.'

So, partnership means partnership with, not state direction of, business; targeted support to help businesses grow, grow, grow. Interestingly he uses the term 'mission-driven partnership' which is suggestive of the ideas of the economist Mariana Mazzucatto, whose work John McDonnell also referenced as a source for his economic ideas (tinyurl.com/2p8wya5f).

She notes that the state is entrepreneurial, and responsible for a lot of long-term investment in the economy; and advocates mission-based projects, akin to the moon landings, where the state can focus economic activity. This is suggestive that Starmer is triangulating talking to the right, while preparing some more Brownite interventionism, but all of this is ultimately dependent upon the grace and protection of the handful of people who own the economy. Ultimately, his plan for capital is about making the system work the way it does in its own imagination. It's an ideological fantasy exercise.

PIK SMEET

Reformism prolongs capitalism

WITH THE threat of spiralling prices, wage decreases and fuel poverty looming the promises of the Left that capitalism could be reformed to fulfil the needs of working people look baseless, empty and downright duplicitous. Add to that the seeming relentless atavistic need of the USA to provoke World War Three and we can see that the world hardly differs from that of 100 years ago when the 'Labour Movement' promised us that we didn't need a socialist revolution because they would preside over some miraculous political and economic transformation of capitalism.

The splintering of the world into little tribal nation states and their continual bickering over borders has inhibited the desperate need for a united response to global warming. Having survived a global pandemic we now find that we owe the parasite class billions for their 'generosity' in lending us the wealth that we created which, with rising interest rates, will take us all a lifetime to repay. Where, in all this chaos, is the evidence that reformism is anything but an empty promise?

Laughably the ex-Prime Minister Gordon Brown has been pontificating on what should be done – you remember him, don't you? The champion of 'New Labour's Third Way' who boasted that he'd personally done away with capitalism's cycle of boom and bust; asking him for economic advice is like asking his partner in crime Tony Blair for advice on international diplomacy. The inevitable accumulation of more and more wealth into the hands of fewer and fewer individuals has produced a world of increasing political instability and economic polarity and poverty.

The initial failures of leftist regimes either in terms of the 'centralised' economic planning of state capitalism or by the Keynesian manipulation of taxes and the money supply led to the rise of 'monetarism' and neo-conservatism which was, in reality, just a repackaged version of the ancient 'lazier-fair' ideology of letting the markets rip to destroy anything that was inhibiting the accumulation of capital in the hands of the parasite class. That too has failed because by selling off the utilities to companies whose only motivation was creating profits for share owners the quality, safety and value of this sector have declined drastically. Britain now boasts the highest prices for the poorest public services, the highest price for fuel and a continuing investment crisis in the NHS together with lower standards, poorer working conditions, ever rising bankruptcies and higher levels of depression and bad general health. No



Credit: World Economic Forum (www.weforum.org), swiss-image.ch/Photo by Remy Steinegger

doubt the cry will go up to re-nationalise the utilities and infrastructure only to have us begin the whole depressing and impotent cycle all over again.

And who were the geniuses who decided to put trade sanctions on Russia without a plan B when they inevitably retaliated in kind? Only the governments of the EU, the USA, Japan and Australasia supported sanctions while the rest of the world (85 percent of the global population) did not. It was pointless and only hurt the already faltering economies of Western Europe after two years of the pandemic.

The Trots will be loving this – their prediction of capitalism's collapse probably seems imminent. But what we know for sure is that whatever replaces the current system it will not be socialism, unless that is what people want and organise for. History teaches us that, without this, the crises of capitalism unleash the monsters of authoritarianism and destruction that characterise extreme leftist or right-wing capitalist governments. Without majority socialist consciousness we are condemned to make the same mistakes of the 20th century again and again until either a nuclear holocaust engulfs us or global warming destroys our species.

Who is to blame for this dire situation? Unequivocally we can say that the abandoning of the socialist revolution by the left, firstly in their support for

prosecuting the First World War (by the Second International in Germany), and then by their subsequent endorsement of the horrific Bolshevik regime in Russia was of enormous influence in the working class rejection of socialism.

Then, the blind faith that, despite all the evidence, capitalism can be reformed to serve the interests of the majority has brought us to this precipice. For many people it is politics itself that has failed. The continual diet of ideological promises from the left and right that come to nothing cannot help but create cynicism and apathy. Looking to career politicians to change things for the better is rather like the making of wishes whilst blowing out the candles of your birthday cake as a child. If you really want change you will have to make it. Don't continue to passively consume the 'news', go out and make 'the news'.

So is this a counsel of total despair? Socialists have been saying this for over a century as capitalism's crises continually erupt and then subside. Will this one turn out to be the same with the massive collateral damage only affecting the majority whilst the rich just go sailing on? Perhaps, but is it wise to continually risk, with the stakes getting ever higher, leaving our fate in the hands of ideologically-driven careerists?

WEZ

... But What About the Wage-Price Spiral?

Foundation of the spiral argument

In nearly every media interview in recent months, RMT Secretary-General Mick Lynch has had to field a question about the dreaded 'wage-price spiral'. The argument, usually presented as a self-evident fact, is that raising the wages of workers to keep pace with rising prices will only drive prices higher, prolonging the agony for consumers.

Lynch has countered the argument effectively by pointing out that rising prices have occurred despite stagnant real wages and long predates his and other unions' industrial actions. He thus exposes the absurdity of blaming workers for prices increases. The culprits he identifies are obscenely profitable companies that use tax havens to resist income redistribution. Here his argument gets a bit fuzzy, as he does not explain exactly how high profits drive up prices. But Lynch does make an important point by emphasizing that a pay rise for workers could be taken out of those profits, rather than employers attempting to increase prices. In this way he points to the central point which this article will attempt to explain: wages and profit are in an antagonistic relation, where the gains on one side come at the expense of the other. Thus, a rise in wages – or (contra the 'Lynchian' view) in profit – does not necessarily result in higher commodity prices.

The commentators bleating about a wage-price spiral, in contrast, take it for granted that the burden on companies of paying higher wages to workers would have to be offset by higher prices. The argument seems not only plausible but common-sensical, and the counter-arguments made by Lynch and others, despite raising important points and being rhetorically effective, fall short of exposing its shaky foundation.

At the basis of the spiral argument is the assumption that commodity prices are the sum of wages, profit, and the means of production, so that if any one of those parts increase in price, the overall commodity price must increase. Again, this seems plausible enough. But more than two centuries ago David Ricardo refuted this sort of value theory by demonstrating how wages and profit are not the component parts of commodity price but the distributed parts of the already existing commodity value. This view is based on the idea that the value of a commodity is fundamentally determined by the amount of labour-time needed to produce it. Here we have a labour theory of value – as pioneered by Smith, purified by Ricardo, and perfected by Marx.

The only way to grasp the counter-intuitive idea that wages are the distributed (rather than component) parts of value is to scrutinize the surprisingly deceptive wage and profit forms, which are usually taken for granted.

The deceptive wage and profit forms

Wages at first glance seem to be payment for labour performed. After all, wages are paid by the hour, week, or month, etc. But if wages are payment for labour, how can we account for the differences in the wages paid for identical types of labour between different places? Car workers in Vietnam, for instance, receive a far lower wage than their counterparts in Germany who are performing similar if not identical tasks. If the hourly wage is determined by the nature of labour itself, why do wages vary to such a degree?

Actually, everyone reading this knows why wages in a developing country like Vietnam are lower than in a developed country like Germany. Those differences correspond to the difference in the cost of living, which reflects the prices for food, clothing, housing, transportation, etc. And similar differences exist within a given country between urban and rural areas – or even between different cities. These obvious facts suggest that what fundamentally determines the level of a wage for a given job is not the labour itself but the value of the commodities a worker must consume to continue living and working. A wage must be sufficient to 'reproduce' that capacity to work.

Marx uses the term 'labour power' to refer to this capacity that is bought and sold as a sort of commodity on the labour market. Like other commodities, the value of labour power comes down to the labour time needed to produce it, but this is determined indirectly through the socially necessary labour time needed to produce the commodities and services a worker consumes to continue working (and raise a family). The wage is payment for this labour-power commodity. Thus, any rise in the prices of the commodities and services consumed by workers will need to be reflected in a higher wage if they are to avoid a deterioration in the quality of their lives and their capacity to labour.

There are of course significant differences between the wages paid to workers who perform different types of labour. An airline pilot or surgeon, for example, receives much more than a shop assistant or waiter. But these differences can also be explained from the perspective of labour power, since averaged into its daily value are the educational and training costs that

were necessary to acquire certain work-related skills and expertise. In other words, although such wage differences appear to be determined by the labour itself, they are in fact a reflection of differences in the value of labour power.

Understanding that 'labour power' and 'labour' are two separate concepts is the key to understanding the source of profit. A capitalist can make a profit when the labour time that workers expend in the production process to create new commodities exceeds the labour time that was necessary to produce the commodities (etc.) they consume. For example, if the commodities consumed by a worker required four hours of labour time to produce, but the worker labours for eight hours in the production process, the capitalist who hired that worker is receiving four hours of labour time for free. The fact that profit comes down to 'unpaid labour' seems counter-intuitive because the wage, calculated on an hourly basis, conceals that exploitation, making it seem as if it is equivalent to eight hours of labour.

If profit stems from the labour time expended in the production process exceeding the labour embodied in the commodities consumed by workers, this means that any increase in the wage to purchase labour power will reduce the amount of unpaid labour pocketed by the capitalist (assuming that labour productivity and other conditions remains unchanged). For example, if wages were increased to the point where they allowed the consumption of commodities that had required five hours of labour time to produce instead of four, the capitalist would only receive three hours of unpaid labour.

It might seem that the capitalist in this case could simply raise the price of the new commodities produced so as to continue siphoning off four hours – and that is indeed the assumption of the spiral argument. But those commodities would continue to require the same amount of labour time to produce and thus have the same intrinsic value as before. Any capitalist who decided to raise the prices of a commodity considerably higher than its value would risk being undersold by rivals, particularly those who had increased the intensity of labour or kept wages in check. Capitalists would not be howling about the price-wage spiral in the first place if wage rises could be so easily offset by higher prices.

Commodities sold at their 'production price'

The labour theory of value provides the most fundamental refutation of the wage-



Credit: Wiktor Szymanowicz/Future Publishing via Getty Images

price spiral, but that theory is at a high level of abstraction and does not directly explain the actual prices of commodities. That is, even though the labour time needed to produce a commodity basically determines its value, commodities are not exchanged at prices that are precisely in line with their value. Due to the averaging of the rate of profit across all sectors of the economy, commodities tend to sell at their cost of production ($c + v$) + average profit (p), what Marx called their 'production price'.

So it is necessary to consider what, if any, effect an increase in wages would have on actual prices.

This point can best be understood by considering a numerical example, such as the following where the rate of profit is 33.33 percent (c = constant capital ie, machinery, tools, raw materials etc. v = variable capital ie, wages. p = profit).

Sector A: $9,000c + 3,000v + 4,000p = 16,000$

Sector B: $3,000c + 3,000v + 2,000p = 8,000$

The intensity of labour is different in each sector, reflecting differences in production conditions. The two sectors represent different conditions of production, each with a different intensity of labour. Sector A is less labour-intensive, since three times more capital is invested in constant capital (c) to purchase the means of production than is invested in variable capital (v) to purchase labour power. In contrast, for the more labour-intensive Sector B, the capital invested is equally divided between constant and variable capital.

The 'law of value' is still operating – albeit now in an indirect way – since the average rate of profit is premised on the amount of surplus value that exists, and total value equals total production price, just as total surplus value equals total profit. (The connection between

value and production price, clarified by Marx, is something that eluded Smith and Ricardo – the former often slipped back into a composition theory of value, while the latter tried to directly apply his labour theory of value to explain prices.)

Effect of wage rise on production prices

Based on the concept of production price, it is now possible to consider more closely what effect a wage increase to counter inflation would have on prices. An increase in wages by 20 percent, for example, would reduce the rate of profit. Variable capital would increase in each sector from 3,000 to 3,600 (totalling 7,200) while total profits would shrink proportionally from 6,000 to 4,800.

On this basis, the average rate of profit would fall from 33.33 percent to 25 percent, as the result of dividing the total surplus value by the sum of the total variable and constant capital:
 $4,800p \div (12,000c + 7,200v) \times 100 = 25\%$.

At the new average rate of profit of 25%, the actual profit for Sector A would fall to 3,150, and for B, 1,650. This would be the basis for new production prices:

Sector A: $9,000c + 3,600v + 3,150p = 15,750$

Sector B: $3,000c + 3,600v + 1,650p = 8,250$

As a result of the wage increase, the production price for Sector A thus decreases from 16,000 to 15,750, while the production price for Sector B increases from 8,000 to 8,250. (However, the combined production price of both sectors remains equal to value, at 24,000.)

Recall that Sector B was the more labour-intensive sector, where production price was lower than value, while the opposite was the case in Sector A. This example thus shows that in production sectors with a relatively high proportion of variable capital, such

as Sector B, a wage increase may increase prices, but it would tend to decrease prices in the less labour-intensive sectors.

The fact that prices would go up in some sectors and down in others should already call into question the nightmare scenario of a wage-price spiral. But to give the spiral argument the greatest benefit of the doubt, we could assume that the majority of the goods consumed by workers are produced in Sector B, where the production price rises after the wage increase.

The higher prices of goods in Sector B would counteract the wage increase (to counter inflation) somewhat. But the unlikelihood of this leading to spiralling inflation should be clear if we consider the difference in scale between the 20 percent wage increase and the increase of production price in Sector B. In our example, wages (variable capital) rose from 6,000 to 7,200 (by 20 percent), whereas the production price only rose by about 3 percent, from 8,000 to 8,250. Moreover, considering that at least some goods for workers would be produced in Sector A, where the production price fell, the possibility of an inflationary death spiral seems even less likely.

However, a rise in wages would further increase demand for commodities consumed by workers, so it is probable that the market price of such goods would rise above production price. Such a price rise, however, would simply be the result of temporary disequilibrium between supply and demand, only lasting as long as supply and demand were out of balance.

In short, the price-wage spiral (presented as a self-evident fact) is just a self-serving argument wielded by the capitalist class to defend their ill-gotten profits.

MIKE SCHAUERTE

Can banks create wealth?

THOSE WHO believe that a bank's business model is to create money out of thin air, lend it at interest, and make a profit as the difference between the interest they receive and their running costs, must have been mystified by an article in the *Times* (6 July) which reported:

'The Bank of England has warned the City against making 'excessive' cuts in lending to households and businesses as the economy slows because of the risks of exacerbating a downturn.'

If banks make loans out of thin air, why would they cut back on lending? One reason, compatible with this belief, might be an absence of credit-worthy borrowers; although it wouldn't cost the banks anything to conjure up the money to make a loan, it would be pretty pointless if the loan wasn't to bring in any interest.

This already shows that bank lending (whatever the source of the money to lend) depends on the state of the economy. If this is contracting there is less opportunity to make loans (even out of thin air). On the other hand, if it is expanding there is an incentive to make more loans. This suggests that theories that a boom is caused by banks lending

too much put the cart before the horse. Bank lending depends on the state of the economy, not the other way round.

Ignoring for the moment where the money for a bank loan comes from, what is the source of the interest? With big loans to capitalist enterprises to invest in expanding their business, the interest comes out of their profits. As these profits come from the unpaid labour of workers, the source of the interest is human work. Smaller loans are given to individuals, such as to buy a house. Here the interest is paid out of their wages but, since wages are a share (the paid share) of what workers produce, in this case too the source of the interest is human work.

The belief that banks create money out of thin air assumes that banks can create wealth by a few keyboard strokes. If that were true it would indeed be amazing, on a par with alchemy let alone magic. It might be said that what banks create from nothing is a claim on wealth. But that doesn't hold water either. That claim would be transferred to the borrower. As soon as the borrower uses the claim to actually acquire wealth by buying something, the bank has to honour it; it

has to produce a corresponding amount to transfer to the person or business that the borrower used the loan to buy something from. These won't be satisfied with thin air. They will want the real thing. The bank will either have to have the money already or get it fairly quickly. In other words, it is already existing money that is the source of what banks lend, which will be the monetary representation of actual wealth produced by human work in the past.

Banks are not financial alchemists but intermediaries between those with money they don't want to spend for the time being and those without money who want to spend some. This is why the banks are wary of lending when the economy is contracting. If they lend to people or businesses that may not be able to pay it back, they risk losing not just the interest but also the money they lent.

The Bank of England can no more cajole banks into lending money when the economy is contracting than they can to lend less when it is expanding. Not that that stops them trying.

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A Problem Not Registering

IT WOULD be nice to assume that as knowledge and technology carry on improving, so would healthcare, as more and better treatments become possible. But as we know, the National Health Service has always struggled to provide enough of what's asked of it, despite the hard work of its staff. One aspect of the NHS where it's sadly become realistic to lower our expectations is dental care. In a recent documentary on BBC News, *Disappearing Dentists*, presenter Dominic Hughes highlighted some of the issues.

The programme includes some distressing interviews with people who have been unable to register with a NHS dentist and unable to pay for treatment privately. One woman was left without a dentist when the practice she was registered with closed and there were no other ones taking on new NHS patients available nearby. Since then, she has lost 13 of her teeth because of receding gums for which she can't get any treatment. Another woman has resorted to making substitute dentures from mouldable plastic herself because there are no dentists she can access. A father is unable to find a practice which will accept his children, who need treatment for painful cavities and misaligned teeth.

The programme's researchers got in touch with nearly 7,000 dental practices who have contracts with the NHS. They found that in England, Wales and Northern Ireland around 90 percent of practices said that they were not registering new adult NHS patients, and 80 percent were not accepting children. A quarter of practices had waiting lists to register, with most being a year or more long. Many areas, especially much of the north of England and all of the west country, have become 'dental deserts' with virtually no chance of being able to newly register. The situation isn't quite as extreme in Scotland, where 82 percent of dentists are not accepting new NHS patients, and nearly everyone has already registered, according to the Scottish government.

The NHS manages dentistry different to other aspects of healthcare. Most dentists operate as independent contractors rather than being employed by the NHS like GPs and hospital staff. Therefore, dentists are able to treat both private patients who pay for this directly and patients registered through the NHS, which subsidises the cost. NHS patients themselves are charged between £23.80 and £282.80 for a course of treatment, with children, pregnant women, benefit claimants and some



Credit: Getty Images

other groups having all costs covered. Only treatments which are deemed clinically necessary are available through the NHS, so cosmetic procedures are only performed privately.

The programme-makers spend a couple of days at the emergency clinic at Newcastle University's School of Dentistry. Drop-in clinics like this treat people who are in pain, without them having to be registered or charged as private patients, although there aren't enough of them to cover much of the country. Many of the people who come in and are interviewed didn't expect they would need to go there as they thought they were registered at their local practice. When they tried to make a booking for their current problem they were told that they had been taken off the register because they haven't had an appointment recently. Being in pain, they couldn't take the option of joining a long waiting list to re-register, and without other practices able to enrol them as NHS patients or the means to pay privately, they headed to the emergency clinic.

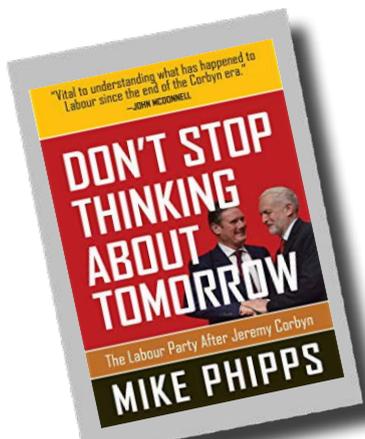
One dentist interviewed for the documentary said that the current crisis is the result of reforms to the way that dentists take on NHS work brought in during 2006. The type of contract a dentist had with the NHS changed from them being paid for each piece of work they did to having a block contract with their Primary Care Trust which pays them for a set number of 'units' of treatment each year. One given reason for the reform was that the system of charging individually for each treatment was believed to encourage more work than was necessary and discouraged preventative advice. Dentistry was already in a bad way when the contracts changed in 2006, with an ongoing shortage of dentists, especially in more economically deprived areas. The situation is even worse in 2022, as

illustrated by the documentary. The dentist interviewed says that his current contract fails to meet the costs of NHS treatments because it caps the budget available for them. His income from private patients covers the gap to some extent, but this reduces his overall revenue which isn't in his economic interests. Having a maximum number of NHS treatments paid for means that the practice can't expand its NHS work. And as the population increases, more people will want to be registered, leading to rising demand which isn't being met. Alongside this longer-term trend are the more recent disruptions due to the pandemic, which are still having an impact.

The crisis in NHS dentistry provision has got to compete for attention among all the other crises going on at the moment. There's no appetite for structural change, according to Nigel Edwards, chief executive at the Nuffield Trust. He says that there's a risk of dentistry becoming a two-tier system, but this has already happened with the difference between NHS and private patients. Like everything else, dentistry is commodified, and the NHS is an inconvenient complication of this for the capitalist class. It's easy to think that NHS dentistry is being deliberately neglected by the Tories in order to promote the private sector, although it was under a Labour government that the contracts blamed for exacerbating the situation were brought in. Regardless of how it's funded, basic dental care is always going to be an awkward fit into the capitalist economic model: it's a product which requires expensive highly-skilled staff and decent equipment and also one which we don't want unless it's needed. The documentary ends by saying 'there's no quick fix for NHS dentistry', but it would be more accurate to say that there's no real fix at all within capitalism.

MIKE FOSTER

No vision



Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow. The Labour Party After Jeremy Corbyn. By Mike Phipps. 220 pages. OR Books, 2022.

Written by a Labour left-winger, the first part chronicles how Starmer reneged on the promises he made during the Labour leadership elections to get left-wingers to vote for him and then, under pressure from Blairites and party bureaucrats, turned on the Left, withdrawing the whip from Corbyn and reintroducing bans and proscriptions (leading to the expulsion of Ken Loach); in fact to make a complete break with the Corbyn interlude.

In the second part Phipps offers left-wingers some hope – hence the book's title – but at local council rather than national level. He talks of 'municipalism', where left-wing Labour councils do something to improve the lot of the people there, a revival of the "municipal socialism" of yore, even though today local councils have much less power and are much less democratic than they used to be.

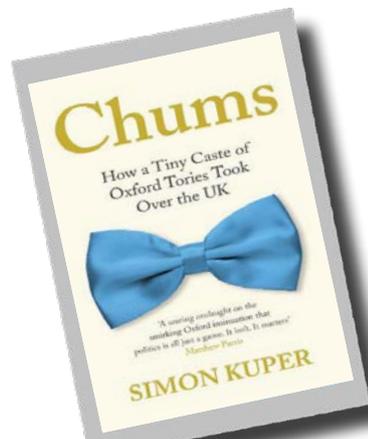
Judging by this book, the Labour Party's left-wing is not what it used to be either. At one time they would say that they stood for 'socialism', even if for most of them it was state capitalism (full-scale nationalisation), but at least they envisaged socialism as a system of society. Today's Labour left-wingers, although they still refer to themselves as socialists, no longer see socialism like this. For them, the word doesn't exist as a noun but only as an adjective as in 'socialist policy', ie, particular reforms intended to benefit the workers under capitalism (if they work). In short, visionless reformists.

Phipps devotes half a dozen pages to why those who joined during the Corbyn interlude should stay in the Labour Party. His argument is basically that, if you are to have any chance of achieving the reforms

you want, you need to be in a party that is in a position to form a government and implement them. He has a point - if reforms are all you want. If, however, you are looking for anything more your place is not in the Labour Party.

ALB

The Chumocracy



Chums. By Simon Kuper. Profile Books. 2022. £16.99

Simon Kuper is a writer and columnist for the Financial Times, specifically the FT Weekend magazine. He was also the co-author of *Soccernomics*, which analysed the finances and tactics of modern football as they have emerged in western Europe in recent decades.

Kuper is an excellent writer, arguably one of the best, and while his politics is not ours, he is a provocateur who thinks seriously about current affairs and trends, always looking for unconventional angles to analyse familiar issues. And in *Chums: How A Tiny Caste of Oxford Tories Took Over the UK*, he has done it again.

For a start, 11 of the 15 post-war Prime Ministers (at the time of writing) went to Oxford. And five of these went to the very same school, Eton. In the 1980s and early 90s a group of politically minded students were at Oxford at similar times and Kuper – who was at Oxford himself then – has dissected their influence, political trajectory and growing power.

The incubating role of the Oxford Union debating society for toffs and aspiring toffs is paramount, the infamous and elite Bullingdon Club that Johnson, Cameron and Osborne were part of arguably less so, but Kuper chronicles it warts and all. His key insight is about Brexit, because in many ways it was at Oxford at this

time that Brexit was conceived. Patrick Robertson, the founding secretary of the Bruges Group, was prominent at Oxford in this period, as was fellow Tory and later MEP Daniel Hannan, who set up a similar organisation of his own and was also to help Michael Spicer found a grouping of anti-EU MPs that became the European Research Group. Alongside these came Dr Alan Sked's Anti-Federalist League, the forerunner of UKIP – and hence an entire Brexit ecosystem was formed.

The later role of Boris Johnson and Michael Gove in Brexit has been well documented and Kuper does not spare them:

'Brexit was the sort of grand cause that Johnson and Gove had lacked all their political careers. It would give them a chance to live in interesting times, as their ancestors had... It would be a gloriously romantic act, like the Charge of the Light Brigade, only with less personal risk. The Oxford Tories would reclaim parliamentary sovereignty, the birthright of their caste, from the Brussels intruders. In private, they understood that Brexit might not work out brilliantly, but Britain had no natural predators and would survive even a blunder' (p.160).

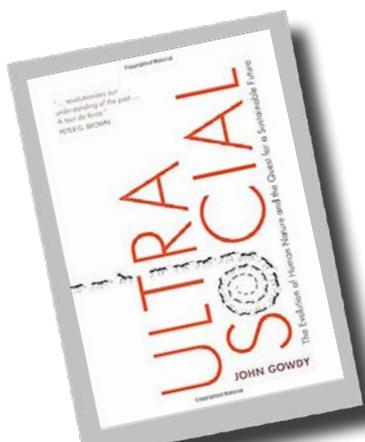
Whatever we may think of the Brexit/ Remain debate and its ultimate futility, Kuper spots trends that others have missed here. Fascinatingly, there is a close alignment between the subjects that Oxford politics studied and their subsequent position on the issue. Of the prominent Remainers that were at Oxford nearly all studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) – Cameron, Hunt, Hammond, Hancock, Truss, etc as well as the Milibands, Ed Balls, Yvette Cooper and in an earlier period, Mandelson. Yet as Kuper explains:

'By contrast, all the leading Tory Brexiters studied backward-looking subjects: classics for Johnson, history for Rees-Mogg and Hannan, and ancient and modern history for Cummings. Gove's degree was English, which mostly meant the canon' (p.40)

The overwhelming sense here is of a group of privileged Tory students who thought of themselves as rule-makers not rule-takers, and who were looking for the next grand project once Thatcherism was complete, and one that could hopefully restore their birthright and entitlements. That they succeeded as much as they did is a remarkable testament to the UK's enduring class system and its networks into business and the press. But as they say, all political careers ultimately end in failure – and this cohort of political careerists has clearly been no exception.

DAP

Social nature



Ultrasocial. The Evolution of Human Nature and the Quest for a Sustainable Future. By John Gowdy. Cambridge University Press. 2021.

This is a book supporting the view, as many others have recently, that human nature is not an entirely fixed phenomenon but largely an expression of the material and social situation in which human beings find themselves. It draws upon a vast range of sources to show that, until, around 10,000 years ago when we started to adopt settled agriculture, human beings lived largely cooperative and egalitarian existences as hunter-gatherers with mutual aid and empathy as the social and cultural norm and without destabilising their habitats. The transition from hunter-gathering to agriculture was not, however, as the author points out, a rapid, simple or inevitable change. Rather it was a long-term, incremental process taking place for different reasons in different areas. It was 'stumbled into' in a sort of 'tyranny of small decisions' for what seemed like practical reasons at the time, but with unanticipated consequences. Yet wherever it did take serious hold, there was no going back and it inevitably led to stratified societies in which a small number controlled the surpluses that were produced and ruled over the vast majority whose lives were made poorer and less secure than before ('Human society made a critical leap from small-scale cooperation to top-down coordination and coercion'). This led to the development of hierarchies, belief systems to support them and condition their subjects and, eventually, the states that dominate the world today with the elite few possessing most of the wealth.

But Gowdy goes even further than others in arguing that, with the advent

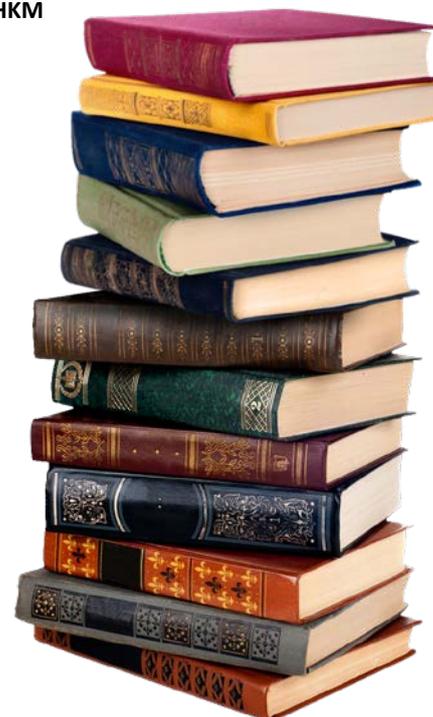
of agriculture, human society not only broke away from its purpose of serving its individual members and groups to eventually become what it is today, but embarked on becoming an impersonal 'superorganism', which today we see in its most advanced form, the global market, subordinating the interests of the humans who exist under it to its own survival and furtherance. To this 'autonomous' superorganism he attaches the label 'ultrasocial', in that it operates very much like a huge colony of ants or termites in which the requirements of the whole take precedence over the individuals within it. Unlike ant and termite societies, however, the human superorganism exhibits gross social and material inequality, even if this is often justified as a necessary consequence of the 'freedom' of the individual in a 'free market'. A further consequence of this, the author argues, is rapacious environmental degradation and a catastrophic loss of nature, since no group, state or individual is in a position to prevent the interest of the 'superorganism' from dominating and in modern capitalism that means profit is always the ultimate goal whatever the effect on the biosphere. He holds out no hope, therefore, of capitalism being able to regulate itself to prevent ongoing environmental decline and eventually disaster but does hope that such an occurrence will eventually lead to a lifestyle for the humans left after that catastrophe that is closer to the kind of society that existed for the vast majority of humankind's 300,000 years' history before it was put paid to by agriculture, states serving the interest of controlling elites, and capitalist production ('the commodification of people and nature').

Gowdy's arguments about all this are complex, many-faceted and multi-layered and it is difficult to do justice to such a 'grand narrative' in a short review. So it may seem churlish to highlight certain elements that are less than convincing. But it needs to be said that, despite his pessimism about the ultimate future of humans within a system in which he sees us as trapped, like cogs in a wheel, and his reference to the futility of 'limited measures within a business-as-usual framework', the author does propose palliative solutions ('a minimal bioeconomic programme') which he considers might show the way to at least less harsh social arrangements than exist at present and enable us, as he puts it, 'to start down a new evolutionary path compatible with basic human needs and our place in nature'. These include, perhaps predictably, various social reforms such as guaranteed basic income, tax changes, maximum limit to income and wealth, old-age security, etc. While perhaps reflective of laudable sentiments,

these, we would argue – even if they were somehow or in some form to be implemented – would clearly make little impact on the gross inequality that the profit system, portrayed so well by the author himself, inevitably brings with it. He also falls into the 'overpopulation' trap suggesting that the earth cannot, whatever the circumstances, sustain the current and increasing population. And he does not consider – and has perhaps never heard – the socialist remedy. We are referring here to majority political action via the ballot box to take control of the system of production and distribution of goods and services and then to operate it in a sustainable, environmentally sound way. This would have to mean harnessing the human propensity to cooperate on the basis of need not profit in a moneyless, wageless society of free access, arguably with the same kind of social relations as – if on a more secure level of technology than – the hunter-gatherer societies that Gowdy describes so graphically and admiringly, and argues 'human nature' is best geared to operate within.

Despite these reservations, what we have here is an important book of great insight about human nature and economic and political organisation and one which above all contests powerfully the commonly held 'evil-human-nature' notion, Hobbes's infamous 'war of all against all'. It adds to the increasing body of unequivocal evidence that 'human nature', though selfish, acquisitive and violent behaviour can be part of it, is not a fixed quantity and that, as the author puts it: 'Our current predicaments are not gene-based. They have risen out of the material base of human economies and the associated cultural adaptations and supporting institutions'.

HKM



The Five Jailed Dockers

THE DOCKERS are worried about their jobs, or rather about the drop in standard of living they will suffer if they lose them. Since 1967 the number of dockers has fallen by a third, from 60,000 to 40,000, mainly as a result of the so-called container revolution. One aspect of this problem has been that much container work, even in dock areas, has been done by workers other than dockers, some non-union, some members of other unions, but all generally at lower wages.



at least £55,000 and, eventually, five dockers sent to prison for 'contempt of Court'.

The reaction to the jailings shows that working-class, or at least trade-union, solidarity still exists. Besides other dockers, thousands of newspaper workers, miners, train drivers and others (including those at the blacked Midland Cold Storage depot) stopped work. Such was the pressure that even

It is the policy of the dockers' unions, the Transport and General Workers Union and the rival National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers (expelled from the TUC in 1959 for 'poaching' TGWU members), that the work should be done by dockers, at dockers' wages. To this end, the dockers have taken various forms of industrial action, official and unofficial, legal and illegal, from blacking container firms to a national docks strike.

A number of the blacked container firms took the TGWU and some of the shop stewards (from both unions) to the National Industrial Relations Court complaining that the blacking was an 'unfair industrial practice'. The Court agreed: the TGWU was fined

the TUC would have called a one-day general strike of all its ten million members if the five dockers hadn't been released, an unprecedentedly daring move from the Knights of Congress House. And of course they were released, obviously as a result of this working-class resistance. The government itself may not have directly influenced the Courts, but the workers on strike did. The House of Lords and NIRC were left with no alternative but to hurriedly concoct some legal excuse for letting the men out.

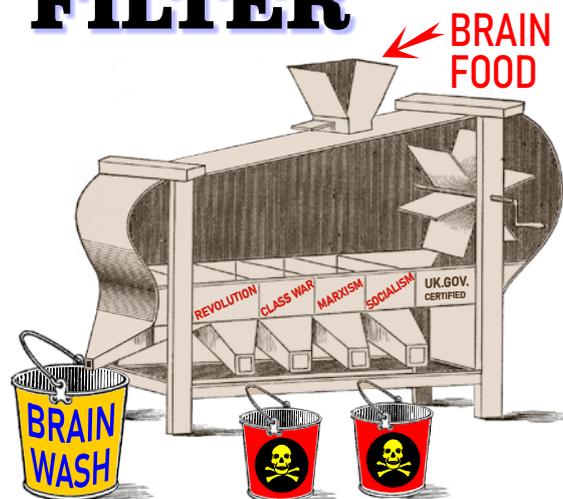
This was a successful defensive action by the working class and one which the Socialist Party of Great Britain welcomes just as we would have supported the one-day TUC general strike. (*Socialist Standard*, September 1972)

Obituary

Oliver Bond

OLIVER BOND, one of our most active members, died suddenly at the beginning of August as a result of an unsuccessful emergency operation. He was 66 and had not yet got round to claiming his state pension. Oliver was born in Canada but was brought up in Scotland. He joined the old Islington branch in 1980 during its very active period. He worked as a programmer on mainframe computers but was made redundant in his 50s and was never employed again. Some of his work colleagues could only find jobs working in a call centre, such was the reduced demand for workers with their particular skills. In the Party he was involved in a whole range of activities, street selling, pub selling, writing (his last contribution was the editorial in the June issue), even speaking occasionally, and also as an election candidate and agent. At the time of his death he was on the ballot committee, the member responsible for subscriptions to the *Socialist Standard*, and Treasurer of the South & West London branch. Outside the Party he was a keen member of CAMRA. He was a quiet, thoughtful and diligent man, generous to a fault and who could never say 'no'. He will be sorely missed by his friends and comrades. Our particular condolences go to his brother and sister in Canada.

EDUCATION FILTER



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Ensures streamlined production of obedient wage slaves.

World Socialist Movement Online Meetings

To join Discord contact the
Administrator on
spbg.discord@worldsocialism.org.

SEPTEMBER 2022 EVENTS

World Socialist Movement online meetings

Sundays at 19.30 (IST) Discord

Weekly WSP (India) meeting

Sunday 4 September 11.00 BST (GMT + 1) Zoom

Central Branch Meeting

Anyone wishing to join the meeting contact spgb.cbs@worldsocialism.org to get an invite.

Friday 2 September 19.30 BST (GMT +1) Discord

Regular Friday evening discussion meeting

Friday 9 September 19.30 BST (GMT + 1) Discord

Regular Friday evening discussion meeting

Friday 16 September 19.30 BST (GMT + 1) Discord

Did You See the News?

Host: Mike Browne

Friday 23 September 19.30 BST (GMT + 1) Discord

Manufacturing Reagan

Speaker: Kevin Cronin

At the end of the 1976 presidential campaign, Ronald Reagan's political career was regarded as being washed out. He was looked upon as being too elderly and his opinions too right wing for contemporary America. Yet four years later, he beat the incumbent president, Jimmy Carter and went on to win a very convincing re-election contest in 1984. Even today, more than 40 years later,



he remains an icon of conservative politics in the United States. The transformation in his political fortune from being an electoral liability to a popular vote-winner did not occur because he moderated his conservative views and moved to the centre. Rather he became a figurehead for a political movement that deliberately and successfully set out to 'move the dial' and propel America rightwards. Examining this phenomenon shows much about how democracy and capitalism interact.

Sunday 2 October 11.00 GMT Discord

Regular discussion group + brief introduction to Zoom meetings

Socialist Party Physical Meetings

Manchester:

Saturday 10 September, 11.30am-6pm

Stall at Wigan Diggers, The Wiend, Wigan

Saturday 17 September, 2pm

Talk on Winstanley's 'Law of Freedom'

Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, central Manchester

Cardiff: Every Saturday 1pm-3pm (weather permitting) Street Stall, Capitol Shopping Centre, Queen Street (Newport Road end).

Glasgow: Second Saturday of each month at The Atholl Arms Pub, 134 Renfrew St, G2 3AU Let's get together for a beer and a blether. 2pm onwards. 2 minutes walk from Buchanan Street Bus Station. For further information call Paul Edwards on 07484 717893.

Yorkshire: Discussion group meets monthly either on Zoom or physical meetings. Further information: fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk

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.

Too Many People?



THERE'S A FACEBOOK group I'm a member of called 'Moneyless Society'. Recently someone posted the following message: 'We could sustainably feed, clothe and house the world five times over. Overpopulation arguments ignore the elephant in the room, which is unequal distribution and consumption of resources. The Earth can support billions but not billionaires.'

This statement, as per usual on social media sites, gave rise to many different and contrasting comments. Samuel Wascuteh, for example, disagreed: 'The Earth cannot support billions of people living a first world lifestyle, including billionaires. I'd like to see the numbers on the sustainability claim'. Carly Morgan wrote: if every human went back to a hunter gatherer lifestyle, the Earth would still be stripped of its resources faster than they could be replenished'. Eric Fernandez's reply to this was: 'Based on what? What in the world are you talking about? Do you realize the entire human population of Earth can live in Texas?' Derrick Seeto weighed in: 'Most of our resources are renewable and recyclable. We need to stop using fossil fuel, that's the only major problem. The second problem is waste, and making sure it's recycled and gases recaptured. The third is at some point, livestock will have to be limited because of how much it limits food productivity. But none of this has to do with sheer numbers. Our food is solar powered. The limits are probably at least 100 times more people than we have now'. Dave Luxemburg seemed to agree but came at it from a different angle: 'Population size has nothing to do with it, it's unequal resource distribution that's the problem'.

Population bomb?

These opinions probably reflect the kind of divergent views on this topic we find both in the media and among so-called experts. As far back as 1968 a book called *The Population Bomb* by Paul and Anne Ehrlich latched on to talk of 'population explosion' by predicting that the two decades to come would bring mass starvation due to overpopulation. That didn't happen and doesn't show signs of happening now, but it hasn't put an end to widespread fear of things falling apart owing to there being too many people for available resources. That is illustrated in some of the social

media posts above and also argued by such well-supported and 'respectable' organisations as 'Population Matters' (David Attenborough is one of its patrons).

The population has of course grown considerably since the Ehrlichs wrote their book. Then, over 50 years ago, it was close to 4 billion compared with 7.7 billion now. But growth has been slower than they predicted, and of course the development of technology has brought an increase of resources and production to help provide, at least in part, for the increase in the number of people. And most well-evidenced predictions now are that, in the years to come, population growth will be slower still owing to factors such as the spread of methods of birth control and increased education for and empowerment of women, the latter being the strongest determinant of falling birth rates. The United Nations' forecast is that by 2100 humans will reach peak population of 10.9 billion, while a study from *The Lancet* last year suggested that global population will peak at 9.7 billion in the 2060s and be well below 9 billion by 2100.

Unequal access

But is the supply of goods and services nevertheless being outstripped by the growth of population, as Thomas Malthus, in his famous 1798 *Essay on the Principle of Population*, wrote would always happen? Will there always not be enough to go around? Is evidence of this that even today (according to a Food and Agriculture Organisation estimate) 9 percent of the global population is suffering extreme hunger with an estimated 11 people every minute dying from malnutrition? And is overpopulation the cause of this? Or is the 'elephant in the room' mentioned by one of the Facebook writers (i.e. 'unequal distribution and consumption of resources') the important factor here? In other words, is enough actually already available to feed, clothe and house the world perhaps many times over, but without there being equal access to it?

Many believable sources say that this is the case and that this needs to change. But can it change in a system where production and distribution take place with the aim of selling goods and services for profit on the market? All experience suggests that it cannot and that decent survival will always be limited to those who have the means to buy what is essential for them to live comfortably. The supermarkets

may be groaning with goods, but we can only get them if we have money. It's can't pay, can't have. This brings us back to Dave Luxemburg's point that 'population size has nothing to do with it, it's unequal resource distribution that's the problem', a point emphasised in even stronger terms by another, so far unmentioned, contributor to that Facebook discussion. Thomas Fouquet St Clair states flatly, and perhaps somewhat despairingly: 'The problem has never been overpopulation but in fact mismanagement of the Earth and its resources. I have said that forever, but now it seems that people are still brainwashed to see otherwise'.

Mismanagement and brainwashing

And this comment on 'brainwashing' seems to hit the nail on the head. People's attention is easily diverted from the real problem – the way society is organised. The 'overpopulation' problem is really a misuse-of-resources problem. Capitalism, as a system of rationing via the market, is justified in people's minds by a belief in scarcity and the idea that 'there isn't enough to go around'. Yet, whatever the future rate of population growth, what is abundantly clear is that, if resources were utilised rationally on the basis of production for use rather than profit in a properly democratic system of moneyless, wageless co-operation, everyone's reasonable needs could be satisfied the world over.

So 'overpopulation' is just another distraction from the need to focus on the real problem – getting rid of the senseless, irrational system that builds in rationing of goods and everything else according to the money an individual happens to have in their pocket or their bank account. Socialist society will use the resources of the Earth to ensure that every man, woman and child is amply fed, clothed and sheltered. The current system of society – capitalism – cannot do this, quite simply because it does not exist for that purpose.

HOWARD MOSS