

THE

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SOCIALIST STANDARD

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

**CAUTION:
FLAMMABLE MATERIAL**
Money must go



Also: Letters
How political power works
A world without money
Shamima Begum, the demon bride

Striking
Socialist morality and war
The same old lethal delusion



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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'

Sweep away capitalism

AT THE beginning of another new year we in the Socialist Party express our solidarity with all those striving to resist the attacks and cuts from capitalism.

Working people are bearing the brunt of capitalism's multiple crises around the world. Time is running out for the planet and there could be a risk to human civilisation itself. Capitalism divides people rather than unites them — worker from worker, men from women, blacks from whites. It teaches competition not cooperation.

The world has a capacity to bring forth riches beyond the wildest imagination of people. Instead, this prospect has been used primarily to bring death and destruction. As in Ukraine, where capitalism has set workers to fight workers, to kill, maim and destroy in order to determine which set of bandits should prevail and rule over those living there.

Our use of terms like 'production for use', 'moneyless society', 'abolition of the wages system' and 'free access' may

sound like a word-salad to people. But all we are trying to do is to describe the society we are aiming to see achieved. While we can accept that for some people it may sound somewhat abstract, we would be remiss if we did not make it absolutely clear what our objective was. But the question is not what words to use to describe what is needed, but how to put it into practice.

Workers possess the potential to change the world and the ability to run it in the interests of humanity where freely-associated men and women share the means of wealth production and use them to supply the needs of all, freeing everyone from the source of their sorrows.

We wish to see a mass socialist party but we reluctantly acknowledge that our own limited attempts can't hope to make a great impact. But the development of socialist consciousness does not depend solely on our small numbers but more generally on the conditions people live

under in capitalism and the need to change those.

We do not submit to the notion that it is impossible for workers to reason for themselves about where their interests lie. How did ideas of socialism develop in the first place at a time when they were illegal and savagely suppressed?

We are socialists because we hold that socialism is the sole hope of working people. Our New Year's commitment is to take revolutionary politics to workers everywhere and to do what we can to hasten the coming of the socialist world cooperative commonwealth. That is our New Year message to all our fellow workers. Is that so hard to understand? It is in fact the very essence of simplicity.

So, we deliver this New Year message as we have done before to say to working people that they can control their destinies once they have shed their delusions about capitalism, and cast off the burden they have carried upon their backs for so long.

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More Tales from the Crypto



IN AUTUMN last year youthful fintech whizzkid Sam Bankman-Fried, proprietor of FTX, one the hottest crypto-exchange companies in the world, was boasting about pouring billions of dollars, yes billions, into the Democrat war chest to fight the 2024 US presidential election. Then his chips got fried in 'one of the largest corporate collapses in history, including the implosion of Enron in 2001' (nyti.ms/3FhREgH). FTX stock value went from billions to nothing in the blink of an eye. Hundreds of thousands of customers lost their money. The aftershock hit other crypto exchanges like Swyftx and Bybit who immediately laid off nearly half their staff (bit.ly/3haWNiR). And all this followed a gigantic crypto market crash in May after South Korean firm Terra-Luna went down, resulting in two thirds of global crypto value – about \$2 trillion- being wiped out including for market 'bluechips' like Bitcoin and Ethereum. Though the currencies were virtual, the disaster was real enough. 20 people reportedly committed suicide and South Korean police were ordered to patrol known suicide bridges in Seoul to stop more people jumping.

To borrow a crypto phrase, the worldwide trade in crypto 'went to the moon' in 2021-2, with \$275bn traded daily in over 16,000 currencies on more than 400 exchanges and platforms (tmsnr.rs/3Br1oEi). Non-fungible tokens (NFTs), crypto art tradables considered a nerdy joke a year before, ballooned into a \$40bn global market, not far off the \$50bn value of the total fine-art market (on.ft.com/3HqCglc). How did all this happen? Essentially it's Tulipmania or the South Sea Bubble, based on 'next sucker' logic, where people invest in 'assets' on the assumption that they will be able to sell on to the next sucker at a higher price. Forget the original rationale of crypto as digital

money alternative, that was never very practical anyway and is now irrelevant. Forget the silly notion that speculator commodities ought to have some intrinsic value. That matters not one jot. One of them, Dogecoin, was created by software engineers as a joke solely to poke fun at Elon Musk, but was subsequently endorsed by Musk and wound up becoming the world's fourth-largest crypto, valued at \$80bn. The runaway momentum behind this global Ponzi scheme is not real wealth, but that it can make some people fortunes. Until, one day, it doesn't.

The May 2022 crash should have been to crypto what the R101 was to hydrogen airships, but market disasters never dent the faith of the capitalist faithful. And crypto traders have a vested interest in not letting crypto die. Instead they're desperate to keep promoting it in order to draw in the next consignment of gullible buyers, so they're not left holding the bag in their own multi-level marketing trap. Meanwhile governments have been slow to regulate this crazy casino despite it being a gift to money laundering, smash-and-grab hackers, ransomware and organised crime. Indeed even the politicians have got pound signs in their eyeballs. In December the UK government introduced a set of gloves-off banking deregulation measures including a 'nod to developing the UK as a centre for crypto assets' (bbc.in/3FEJfph).

But crypto advocates aren't just about the money, they are ideologically motivated, hailing crypto as the future of money and even the future of the internet. While real revolutionaries ask the big question, what if we abolished capitalist trading and money entirely, crypto fans obsess over the pseudo-radical question, what if we have a money system that's not mediated through any centralised state agency, and what if we roll that peer-to-peer architecture out to other centrally controlled systems like the web. They are essentially techno-libertarians, in love with the screw-you-Jack premise and get-rich-quick promise of capitalism, but with a deep-seated animus against the state regulatory apparatus that normally goes with it. They want football without the referee, the Wild West without the sheriff, trusting in invisible Adam Smith woo-woo to make it all work. Now they also want Web3, a decentralised blockchain version of the web which supposedly frees it from the power of the Big 4, Facebook, Apple, Google and Amazon, who reap

the benefits from user-generated content while cutting the artists and creators out of the revenue stream. The fact that the Silicon Valley venture capitalists behind the Big 4 are the same ones now backing Web3 should be a big clue that the technology might be decentralised but the power certainly won't be. If anything it will be the opposite, as Web3, just like the crypto casino, is based on using blockchain tokens. As web blogger Molly White points out, in a podcast series by *Financial Times* journalist Jemima Kelly, 'When there's a token involved, there is a speculative financial component', to which Kelly adds 'Web3 isn't really about making the internet any fairer, or less easy to exploit by fatcat Silicon Valley investors, it's... about introducing yet another layer of financialisation to the web' (apple.co/3HyRhB8). None of this apparently matters to crypto ideologues with their warped notion of freedom. To them, the blockchain has become a fetishistic emancipatory totem.

To recap, the blockchain is simply a ledger system distributed across multiple computers that records digital transactions. All participants have a copy of this ledger, making it theoretically (though not actually) impossible to alter afterwards. The point of this is to prevent double accounting without relying on some central checking mechanism. What use is this in capitalism, a system entirely built around centralised hierarchical control? Many would say none at all, given that the technology is currently grotesquely inefficient in terms of energy use, requiring at least eight orders of magnitude more energy than a standard centralised alternative (bit.ly/2Kew9QE). Might it be useful in socialism, perhaps as a way to reduce the load on central administrative hubs involved in production and distribution? It's possible, because the heavy power consumption involved is mainly caused by the current need for crushing layers of encryption, hash functions, public-private keys and all the rest of the paraphernalia of capitalist secrecy. Socialism, being a trust-based sharing cooperative, wouldn't need any of that. Even then, blockchains might still be seen as overpowered, overengineered and overcomplicated in a society that may set more store by keeping it simple, stupid.

PJS

Dear Editors

I'd like to take up a couple of points made in the 'Transgender Issues and Capitalism' article from the November *Socialist Standard*.

Whilst I agree with the first half of the article that gender is a social construct and gender roles are learned, I would argue that biological sex is significant. Women the world over tend to be smaller physically, obviously with exceptions, and is the sex that, if she chooses to, carries a pregnancy and breastfeeds a child, which, certainly in this society affects an equal place in the workforce.

Further into the article, I read what appears to be a contradiction. 'Many binary transgender people often seem to not challenge capitalist gender at all but rather perform its stereotypical features aggressively to make themselves the gender they identify as'. But the writer then goes on to say 'A person who is willing to cross the lines of socially conditioned gender is revolting against ideas of womanhood and manhood' As if being transgender is a revolutionary act.

I also agree with the latter part of the article in that 'capitalism as always sets people against each other', but the writer gives a one-sided example of this with the story of Lily Cade calling for the lynching of transwomen. No mention is made of the hundreds of death and rape threats from trans activists against prominent feminists whose crime is to fight to preserve women-only spaces.

The mainstream media and capitalist hegemony deliberately endorses and encourages identity politics as a way of dividing the working class. Instead of obsessing over personal pronouns workers should be promoting class consciousness with a view to ending this oppressive and divisive system that we live in.

C. Dee

A defence of Christmas

Call it Yuletide or Winter Solstice festival if you like. I am aware that many socialists don't celebrate Christmas. Do they know that in disdaining it, if for different reasons, they are behaving like the evangelical protestants today, and the early Christians too?

Every society cosies down for Winter and marks the season with festivity. In the Roman world, Christmas was the Saturnalia, where revelry was practically compulsory. Christians disdained it, and the Church Fathers banned Christians from garlanding their homes with holly, ivy and mistletoe. Pagan homes were lavishly garlanded.

In the Middle Ages Christmas lasted the whole Winter, from November 11th until February 2nd. All garlanding was in, including Christmas trees, holly, etc. No one did any work, except for castle servants, and to replenish firewood. The serfs had got in the harvest and, unlike today's wage-slaves, had no clock to tick, but plenty of time for festivity.

With the rise of the bourgeoisie came Christian puritanism and the cutting down of Christmas. Wage-slaves cannot be allowed too long without producing surplus value for their masters, whose only god is money. The churches complied.

The old festival was always about excess and revelry. People today who moan, 'Christmas has lost its meaning', blah, blah, are Christians who want a Christian-based memorial to the Jesus myth along Puritan lines. They are not, in their moaning, going

back far enough! Yuletide isn't Christian.

I don't see why socialism wouldn't retain Yuletide. Regions of the Earth will have inherited cultural traditions, and I don't see why those which are harmless wouldn't continue- especially the universal one of being cosy and festive over Winter.

Anthony Walker

Reply:

We tend to agree. Socialists for obvious reasons concentrate their current fire on the ills of capitalism, but we are not the fun police, and think it very likely that people in a post-capitalist free society will find any and all excuses for festive celebrations, whether based on celestial calendars, harvests, anniversaries or some other pretext. – *Editors*



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Profit restraint

IF A group of workers demand and get a wage increase this doesn't mean that the business they work for can then simply increase its prices to compensate. If businesses had the power to increase their price at will, why would they need to wait for a wage increase to exercise this? Why wouldn't they have already done it? Wouldn't that bring them more profits?

That's not how it works. Businesses fix prices by what the market for their product will bear, ie, the highest price they can get that will secure them the largest profit. If they fix it above this level they will lose sales to their competitors and so make less profit, and if they fix it below they will not be making as much profit as they could. If the market will not bear it, they cannot raise their prices without jeopardising their sales and profits. Sometimes they may be able to raise them without doing this, sometimes they can't; it all depends on market conditions.

With rising energy costs, business are currently in the same sort of position as they would be in the face of increased

wages and so face the same dilemma of whether or not to raise their price in response and, if so, by how much. Writing in the *Times* (1 November) Ed Warner, billed as sitting 'on a number of company boards', gave the benefit of his experience:

'I have seen businesses agonising over pricing decisions recently, wondering how much their markets will bear.

Faced with a sharp rise in input prices, including labour, it's understandable that these debates are about how big a jump is justifiable and achievable.'

No automatic ability, then, to pass on the whole increase in input prices ('including labour'). What is likely to happen is some increase but not by the full amount of the increase in costs. This will mean that their profits will take a hit. In the longer run, they will find ways to reduce their energy or labour costs. In the latter case, they will typically seek to get their workers to work harder and/or introduce machinery to replace them.

While some, probably most, businesses will currently be taking a hit on their profits,

others, especially those selling energy, will be reaping more profits than usual.

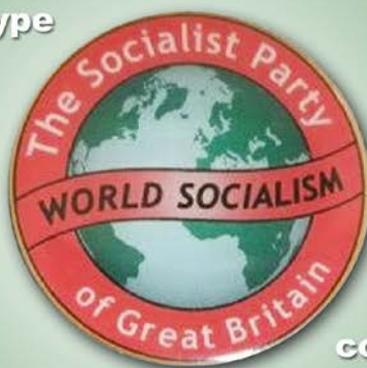
The TUC is calling for 'profit restraint': 'Businesses had tremendous support from taxpayers during the pandemic. They should now help to counter inflation with greater profit restraint – especially energy firms' (tinyurl.com/4pxpxnc6).

This may be a good debating riposte to calls for wage restraint, but it's not going to happen voluntarily and a Labour government, which the TUC wants to see in office, won't impose it. Firms are not going to restrain their profits more than they are already forced to by what the market will bear. And the energy firms are going to make hay while the sun shines, even if they know the government will tax away a part of their extra profits. The logic of capitalism is that all firms seek the maximum profit they can and that's what they will do. But that does not mean that they have a free hand in fixing what profits they make by raising their prices at will.

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'I believe we are on an irreversible trend toward more freedom and democracy, but that could change' – Dan Quayle



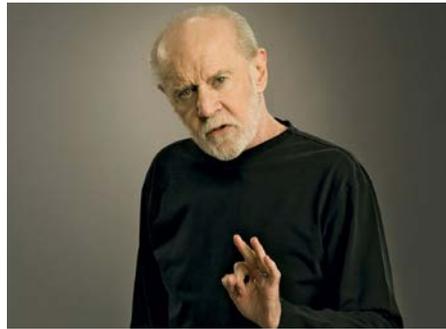
Andy Borowitz's new book *Profiles in Ignorance* divides America's recent history into three phases. In the first, "ridicule", ignorant politicians do their best to pretend they are smart. This is the age of Ronald Reagan and Dan Quayle. A fellow California politician said: "You could walk through Ronald Reagan's deepest thoughts and not get your ankles wet". Of Quayle — who, as George HW Bush's vice-president, was most famous for having told school children to spell "potato" with an "e" at the end — one professor observed: "When I looked into his eyes I could see to the back of his head." In an effort to appear smart, Reagan once tried to quote America's second president, John Adams, on facts being stubborn things. Instead, he said: "Facts are stupid things"....' (*Financial Times*, 3 November, on.ft.com/3UtDcZ2).

The sad fact is, before these jokers were born let alone elected by our class, socialists were already asking 'In the light of experience, why should you vote for either the Republican or Democratic parties?' (Eugene Debs, Quotations from Speeches Made on the 1908 Campaign Trail, bit.ly/3zMOyj3).

Today, the vast majority of the working class blindly support capitalism. None of them can escape responsibility for the consequences. For the power wielded by the rulers of world capitalism is a reflection of the political ignorance of the working class everywhere. Some dictators are homegrown and elected. They include the likes of King & Queen Ortega, Turkey's ever power-hungry president Erdoğan, Rodrigo Kill 'em All Duterte of the Philippines and his replacement Marcos Jnr. Other odious examples include Hitler, the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front, Meloni, Orbán and Trump. Former Democrat Debs was clear: 'I am not a Labor Leader; I do not want you to follow me or anyone else; if you are looking for a Moses to lead you out of this capitalist wilderness, you will stay right where you

are. I would not lead you into the promised land if I could, because if I led you in, some one else would lead you out. You must use your heads as well as your hands, and get yourself out of your present condition; as it is now the capitalists use your heads and your hands' (1908).

'It's called the American Dream, because you have to be asleep to believe it' – George Carlin



'President Biden on Saturday said people holding signs calling him a socialist were idiots...' (*The Hill*, 5 November, bit.ly/3U7yYXu).

Correct. Do his Republican opponents really believe that Joe understands and accepts that capitalism is based on the legalised exploitation of the wealth producers by those who own and control the means of wealth production and distribution, that the state only exists to protect the power and privilege of the exploiting class and that he urges workers to abolish the wages system and establish a classless, moneyless society? Is Joe nothing less than a social revolutionary who wants to destroy civilisation as we know it where war and want are endemic and billions are compelled to accept wage slavery? Of course not.

Actually, the Marquis de Sade, a contemporary of the Founding Fathers, who died over 200 years ago in an insane asylum, has better claim to the label socialist. He championed democracy, was opposed to every form of punishment ('it is far simpler to hang men than to find out why we condemn them'), saw the class-divided nature of society and sided with 'those who can only get a living by their labour and sweat.' Indeed, Geoffrey Gorer in *The Revolutionary Ideas of the Marquis De Sade* (1964) points out that Sade stood in opposition to contemporary philosophers for both his 'complete and continual denial of the right to property,' and for viewing the struggle in late 18th century French society as being not between 'the Crown, the bourgeoisie, the aristocracy or the clergy, or sectional interests of any of these against one another', but rather all of these 'more

or less united against the proletariat.' Gorer thus argued, 'he can with some justice be called the first reasoned socialist.'

'Slavery was never abolished, it was only extended to include all the colors' – Charles Bukowski



"at a time when half of American workers are living paycheck to paycheck, and millions of people earn starvation wages and struggle to put food on the table, the wealthy and powerful have never had it so good,' wrote Bernie Sanders (*Common Dreams*, 4 November, bit.ly/3UbyLIS).

Fine sounding, but let us not be deceived. He went on in an email: 'What we are seeing all across the country and in every sector of our economy is that working people are standing up in the face of corporate greed, demanding fairer wages, better working conditions, and the dignity and respect on the job that they deserve'.

De Sade again: 'you can only govern men by deceiving them; one must be hypocritical to deceive them; the enlightened man will never let himself be led, therefore it is necessary to deprive him of enlightenment to lead him as we want...' Sanders' occasional use of revolutionary rhetoric should not obscure the fact that he has voted with the Democrats 98 percent of the time. Let us put his qualified support for \$18/hour into context:

1865: 'Instead of the conservative motto, A fair day's wage for a fair day's work, we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, Abolition of the wage system' (*Marx, Value, Price, and Profit*).

1928: 'Earning a wage is a prison occupation' (*Wages*, DH Lawrence).

1965: Workers still 'don't realise that they can abolish the wages system' (*Socialist Standard*).

2009: Current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour introduced.

2022: 'Bernie Sanders Backs Historic \$18 Minimum Wage' (*Common Dreams*).

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London regional branch. Meets last Saturday in month, 2.00pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Contact: 020 7622 3811. spgb@worldsocialism.org

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Yorkshire Regional branch.

The SPGB is pleased to announce the formation of a new Yorkshire Regional branch (YRB) of the party. See below contact and meeting venue details.

Contact: Fredi Edwards, Tel 07746 230 953 or email fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk

The branch meets on the last Saturday of each month at 1pm in the The Rutland Arms, 86 Brown Street, Sheffield City Centre, S1 2BS (approx 10 minute walk from railway and bus station). All welcome. Anyone interested in attending should contact the above for confirmation of meeting.

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Kent and Sussex regional branch. Usually meets 2nd Sun. 2pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ or online. Contact: spgb.krb@worldsocialism.org or 07971 715569.

South West regional branch. Meets 3rd Sat. 2pm on Zoom. For invite email: spgbsw@gmail.com

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The pimps of war

Come, you masters of war
 You that build the big guns
 You that build the death planes
 You that build all the bombs
 You that hide behind walls
 You that hide behind desks
 I just want you to know
 I can see through your masks
Masters of War, Bob Dylan

For a capitalist, Winston Churchill's saying 'never let a good crisis go to waste' has never been so apt as in the case of the Russia-Ukraine war. Businesses are making profits from the conflict in Ukraine from the increase demand for liquefied natural gas. Cheniere Energy, America's largest LNG exporter, says about 70 percent of shipments from its facilities in Texas and Louisiana have gone to Europe, compared with roughly 30 percent last year.

'The country that is most profiting from this war is the US because they are selling more gas and at higher prices, and because they are selling more weapons,' observed a senior European Union official (politi.co/3OYBXj8).

As Europe attempted to reduce its reliance on Russian energy, the reduction in gas from Russia meant acquiring new suppliers. In stepped the United States but the price the Europeans have to pay is almost four times higher than the price for American customers.

Beatrice Mathieu, head of the economy department of the French magazine *L'Express*, explains:

'Washington's unwavering support for Ukraine makes the United States the big winner in the global stage without a single soldier needing to set foot onto Ukrainian soil,' with undeniable geostrategic, economic, military and political gains, she said (bit.ly/3gWhLBT).

This view coincides with the Russian Ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Antonov, who accuses the United States of prolonging the conflict because of economic reasons:

'The desire to skim the cream through the mass sale of military equipment and LNG supplies: nothing personal, just business' (bit.ly/3H5D1Qa).

Mere Moscow propaganda, one could easily suspect, if it was not for the fact that President Biden has also rebuked oil companies for 'profiteering' from Russia's invasion of Ukraine:

'It's time for these companies to stop war profiteering... At a time of war, any



company receiving historic windfall profits like this has a responsibility to act beyond the narrow self-interest of its executives and shareholders' (on.ft.com/3H5DbqK).

It's all got too much for the EU. Germany's economy minister has called on Washington to show more 'solidarity' and help reduce energy costs. French president Macron said high US gas prices were not 'friendly' and has talked of a 'double standard' being created by the 'super-profits' of energy producers (on.ft.com/3UuA8M3).

The war in Ukraine has reinforced America's role as the arsenal of the world. American arms manufacturers and many other armament corporations expect a big-time bonanza by providing weaponry to countries eager to boost their defences against Russia. There is likely to be a rise in orders to replenish military stocks, from various European countries, in particular for rockets and artillery.

Germany, for example, has announced an extra €100bn to modernise its military capability. Finland, an aspiring new candidate member of NATO, decided to grant an additional €1.7bn to arms and other defence material purchases this year alone:

'A very significant share of it will go to purchases from the US' Governmental Counsellor Iikka Marttila from Finland's Defence Ministry said (yhoo.it/3uigdoW).

American isolationists such as Marjorie Taylor Greene have claimed too much money is being spent on Ukraine: 'Under Republicans, not another penny will go

to Ukraine' and 'Our country comes first'. But that is just exactly it. War is proving very profitable for the USA and its business leaders know it.

Russia's war on Ukraine, both of them major food exporters, the effect of less abundant harvests in Ukraine, and the financial complications imposed by sanctions upon Russia have resulted in American producers increasing their exports of maize to Europe.

This calls into question whether food price inflation can be attributed solely to a shortage. The world is experiencing a food price crisis rather than a food supply crisis. Huge multinational food corporations are reporting record profits (bit.ly/3H3taup).

War tends to establish hegemony rivalries among nations in a certain geographic area. Russia paints the US and EU as its main adversaries with Ukraine portrayed as a pawn in a proxy war. In response Russia, as an imperialist superpower, used its military might to impose its will upon Ukraine to defend its 'privilege' to dominate the region. Western interests proclaim their 'right' to expand their influence where they deem fit, bringing nation-states into conflict. And while politicians prattle on about the morality and ethics of a 'just' war, corporate investors view the cost and pain through the prism of profits and dividends.

ALJO

How political power works: what we can learn from the fall of Truss



Credit: Mark Hall / NationalWorld

THE SHORT-lived tenure of Prime Minister Liz Truss is a case study of how political power works in the United Kingdom. By any institutional measure, Truss was in a strong position: her party had an unassailable majority in the House of Commons, she could wield the power of the Prime Minister over the civil service and the power of considerable patronage was hers. She also had the option of the Prime Ministerial megaphone: everything she could have said would be newsworthy and reach every home in the country. All she had to do was play the cards she had been dealt tolerably well and she would have been set for a minimum of three years in office.

As she misplayed that hand, though, it became clear how the might of political office is constrained by a series of golden chains, each interlocking and pulling together to ensure that political power (backed, ultimately, by the military force of the state) does not threaten the dominance of the section of society that owns its productive wealth. These same chains ensure that no one individual or faction gets to turn the state into its private property.

The Establishment

To be clear: there is no secret cabal of capitalists directing the state – different groups and factions of wealthy individuals and institutions compete to try and bend political power to serve their interest. Which means, incidentally, that the space is open for the working class, organised

consciously and politically, to wrest control of that same machinery and convert it to our own ends.

Truss came to power after an election among Conservative Party members. Thousands of ideologically motivated people joined the political party to advance the cause they believe in. She won because she promised them the policies they wanted – most importantly, lower taxes. In this case, the wishes of the lay membership did matter, and their expressed preference was conveyed by Truss into government policy. She could, indeed, have reneged on that promise, but activists matter because they operate the machinery of competing for elections on the ground: they can only be disregarded so far before it starts to have an effect on the electoral chances of a party.

Truss was, herself, a relative outsider within the networks of UK power. She was a former Liberal Democrat activist, who went to a Leeds comprehensive school. She did, however, go to Oxford, and gained the advantage of the network building opportunities there. By contrast, her Chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, was educated at Eton, just like two of the last three Prime Ministers before Truss. The small number of elite schools providing for the upper class in the UK helps build the personal and social bonds and networks that lead to common understanding and a form of trust between them. Truss herself supplemented these general networks by specific links to the Tufton Street set of libertarian lobby groups whose ideas she put into place.

The wider electorate

Politicians, however, also need the votes of the wider electorate: and so, rather than cut government spending to allow tax cuts, with all the economic and social pain that entails, Truss and her Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng chose to cut taxes and borrow to maintain government spending. They argued the tax cuts would incentivise economic growth (and thus allow the spending levels to be maintained medium term, even as the tax take falls as a share of the national effort). This argument wasn't entirely without merit, and could, in theory, pay off.

Cutting taxes would raise savings and mean there would be more money in the system available to invest in growth. Likewise, cutting taxes might make what had previously been unprofitable business models work (for their owners, at least), and so spur economic activity. The downside is that by borrowing, the government would still be soaking up a lot of the investable wealth (probably pushing up interest rates across the board), and the rate of profit for businesses might remain so low as to continue deterring growth and investment. Truss and Kwarteng might have been able to sell such a plan, given time, but their proposals were put forward as a response to a weak position in UK government finances, and so it looked more like a panic response, rather than a considered and carefully prepared plan.

Market forces

This in turn brought the great machine of class rule into play: market forces. Investors and speculators responded by moving their money away from the UK: fewer people wanted to do business or hold assets denominated in pounds, and so Sterling fell against the Dollar. This, in turn, led to the Bank of England putting up its interest rates to try and attract them back, and to restore (or at least defend) the value of the pound. Had the Bank failed to act, it would have meant significant increases in the cost of imported goods (and the UK economy depends on imports very much). Although UK exports would have become more competitive, that would not necessarily happen fast enough to offset the immediate pain and cost of living changes people would have experienced.

Again, there was no meeting of

capitalists to decide this although undoubtedly, the common ideology, background and prejudices of fund managers may have played a part. They would have met and discussed this in the course of their daily activity; but, fundamentally, they would be acting in the interests of themselves, their funds and their clients by responding to the British government's policy in this way. By forcing up interest rates, with the government planning to borrow more, this was a devastating blow. The national debt, and the requirement for governments to behave in a manner which will satisfy lenders, is a key means of ensuring the general financial probity of the state.

Another related – and nearly disastrous – consequence of this was that the Bank of England was also forced to intervene to protect the UK pension fund markets. Pension funds have to hedge against a potential fall in their incomes, since they must guarantee pensions to their beneficiaries. The rapid rise in interest rates led to a nominal fall in the value of the bonds they were holding as security (so called Liability Driven Investments, LDIs). So they had to start selling off assets in order to pay the collateral on their hedges, since there was immediate demand for funds. As this happened to many valuable funds at once, this led to systemic risk to the whole pension industry: in turn, the Bank of England had to spend £65 billion in order to shore up the system and prevent collapse.

This was a devastating reputational blow to Britain's financial system, and also to the Prime Minister, since her policy had endangered the pension provision of much of her core electorate.

The Members of Parliament

This brought into play Conservative MPs. Prime Ministers, although nominally appointed by the monarch, in reality serve at the confidence of their party in the House of Commons. Truss did not have the support of the majority of Tory MPs in the first place, leading some liberal commentators to opine that allowing party members to elect the Prime Minister is an affront to democracy and the Tories should go back to a leader simply 'emerging' from within their ranks, or having MPs only voting in a ballot. Keeping the pool of electors small promotes stability and predictability, and benefits the ruling class, but the demand for party members to be involved has drawn that power away, and it looks unlikely that it will be done away with completely – if and when possible, instead we'll probably get 'managed' coronations,

like that of Sunak or Brown before him.

Added to this weakness, in Truss's case, was that the Tory MPs feared that their seats were now at risk en masse, and that Truss was a threat rather than an asset to their political careers. This is a feeling that would have been reinforced financially as various Tory donors made their displeasure felt. In the UK, the party that wins elections is usually the party that spends the most money. This isn't necessarily a direct result of spending, because the party that looks like winning attracts the most donors and so has more money to spend in any case, but it is clear that funding of political parties is another means by which the wealthy section of society can exert influence over the political direction of the government.

In this case, they were helped by changes in the positions of the opposition party – the fact that Labour was now, again, a safe party for business people to invest in, means it could be used as a threat to the careers and aspirations of Conservative politicians. After all, it doesn't matter what party is in power, for the truly wealthy, as long as their policies are at least congenial. During the Corbyn years, they could not be sure of the Labour Party, and this helped solidify elite support for the Tories, whatever their other misgivings about them. Now Starmer is in place, and Labour is 'Pro-worker, pro-business', they can be used to discipline the Tories. Some large Tory donors even came out of the woodwork to support higher taxes, as necessary to stabilise the economy, ie looking at their long-term interest, rather than the short-term rewards of tax cuts.

The mass media

Finally, the mass media, particularly the newspapers, played a big role, both before and after the rise and fall of Truss. *The Daily Mail* played a significant part in getting her elected in the first place, emphasising that she was the front runner (and exaggerating her support in the wider party, compared to the actual rather close race between her and Sunak). *The Times* and *The Sun*, the Murdoch papers, were typically more sceptical, and intensified their periodic attacks when she was elected. The focus of the press on the failure of her budget exacerbated the crisis, and clearly indicated that they would turn their considerable fire power against the Tories at any coming election while Truss was in charge.

Most people rely on the mass media for their

information on how to place their votes. It is indicative that Boris Johnson, who just one year ago seemed utterly invincible, vanished in a puff of smoke the second the press began to focus like a laser on his behaviours. The press is certainly not all powerful, but it typically generates the headwinds which can push up and pull down political careers.

Elections and voting are thus, contrary to the anarchist saying that 'if voting changed anything, they'd get rid of it', key to political success or failure, and they involve considerable management to win the ongoing support of the majority of the public for government policies.

To take a counter-factual: if Truss had just won an election, her MPs would probably have stood by her longer. If she had a more connected background, she might have been able to ask informal favours of people in other institutions, or had more trust from important market agents. She would have been able to face down the press more convincingly and might even have been able to stand up to the market pressure (blaming spivs and speculators for the short-term harm) and stabilise the situation. If there had been an election's worth of debate and policy documents talking up the planned budget, the markets may even have reacted differently. But she had none of that – she had a party divided, a press divided, and a risky, short-term emergency response to the situation with the public finances.

What is clear is that although the power of the state is very great indeed, in practice it cannot challenge the overall balance of class power, international market forces and the inbuilt advantages that accrue to the owners of capital. No secret cabal, no grand conspiracy: but the collective capitalist class lost confidence in their chief executive, and so as a result she was removed by the management board.

PIK SMEEET



Credit: Getty Images

A world without money

IT'S ENCOURAGING that the free access moneyless system of society that's fundamental to socialism has recently been the subject of several books from different parts of the world. The *Socialist Standard* has already reviewed *Beyond Money. A Post-Capitalist Strategy* by Anitra Nelson from Australia and *Description of the World of Tomorrow. A World Without Money or Barter or Exchange: a Civilisation of Free Access* by Jean-Francois Aupetitgendre and Marc Chinal from France. And now we have another new book on the subject, a sort of 'blockbuster' from the United States, *Moneyless Society: the Next Economic Evolution* by Matthew Holten.

How we live and how we could live

The author has let it be known that he worked on this book for five years. So perhaps it's not surprising that he succeeds in bringing together a detailed and well-researched set of arguments for getting rid of the inefficient life-destroying system we live under – capitalism – and replacing it with a new efficient life-affirming one based on cooperative production and

distribution and free access to all goods and services. We would call this socialism (the author doesn't, but never mind). His book moves from a thunderously powerful critique of the current world system to a well-explained and thoroughly credible scenario of a different kind of life for the earth's population, one in which no one need fear poverty, want or futility. It dismantles the profit system and then moves to constructing in its place a compellingly believable world without markets, without buying and selling, without rich and poor in which all lead comfortable lives based on from each according to ability to each according to need. His arguments are a thoroughly convincing model of 'How We Live and How We Could Live', signposted in clearly labelled sections and expressed in down-to-earth eminently readable language.

The problem

The author divides his book into two broad parts: 'The Problem' and 'The Solution'. In the first part he sketches a history of money across the various human societies in which it has been used right up to present-day capitalism. He then

focuses on how the money and profit-driven nature of the capitalist system has created – and continues to create – a whole range of negative, and often unforeseen, consequences for the planet and its people. At a very basic level, he points to the 'exploitative relationship between employers and employees' and 'the never-ending struggle that many of us endure daily to work, pay our bills, and survive'. That is, of course, he goes on, if we can find paid work at all, since many can't, and, he continues, 'according to the UN, 25,000 people die from hunger every day' and 'one out of every three people on the planet still lacks access to safe drinking water'. This 'scarcity', he concludes, is entirely artificial and due to the chaotic nature of capitalist production and distribution.

At the same time, he has much to say about what he calls 'resource overshoot', the way in which 'capitalism exploits and destroys the Earth and everything that depends on it' and how such ecological devastation, which includes deforestation, overfishing, and desertification, leads to phenomena such as ocean dead zones, bleaching of coral reefs, biodiversity loss,



pollution, wildfires, droughts and climate change. He talks, with compelling rhetoric, of ‘the roar of anguish of burning forests, the animals who cannot flee infernos and flooding, sea creatures drowning in oceans of plastic and chemicals’. Even when capitalism seeks remedies, at best, he says, it ‘treats symptoms’ and even then ‘often exacerbates issues it may seek to address’. Above all, he sees it as militating against ‘two of human society’s core elements, cooperation and empathy’. This is a theme he will take up in more detail in the second part of this book where he lays out his plan for change to a society based not on money but on those ‘core elements’ and for how that society might be established and operate.

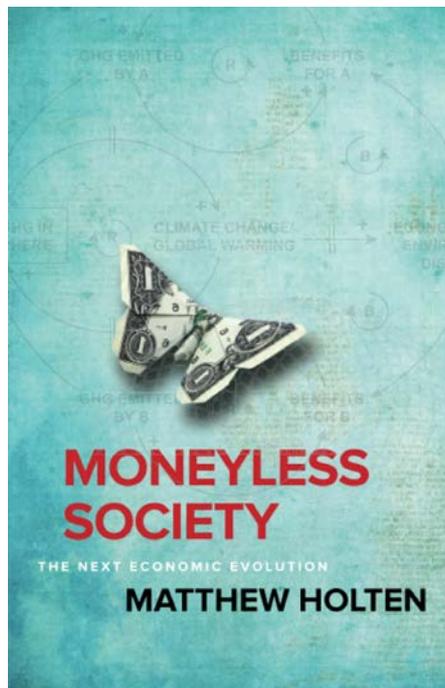
The solution?

So the second part focuses on how a new moneyless society could be established and work and how many features of that society can already actually be seen existing in the world today - in spite of the constraints the current system imposes on their optimal use. He refers to these features as ‘future systems in action’, focusing in particular on the way capitalism’s advanced technology, which has built a world ‘ripe for the next phase of our socioeconomic evolution’, can be put to use. It can develop for example, he argues, a ‘super-grid’ (ie, ‘a large-scale electric grid... enabling the transfer of renewable generated electricity over long distances’), automatic manufacture and assembly of goods by 3D printing, and democratic organisation and decision-making by use of advanced, user-friendly data systems. He is insistent that ‘we already have the systems and technology to create real, lasting abundance and sustainability’ with resources capable of providing ‘all necessities and more for every living person on the planet’.

Witheringly critical in particular of the way in which capitalism plunders the environment in its search for profit, he sees a moneyless society as capable of establishing what he calls an ‘ecological balance’, building ‘a life-supporting ecology’, which would ensure ‘a world that respects the limits of nature, the interconnectedness of everything in our environment, and the dignity of all life’. He expresses conviction that ‘new and existing technologies, managed with care and with respect to maintaining balance in our environment, can provide all our necessities and more’ and also ‘create real, lasting abundance and sustainability’.

Objections and call to action

Socialist Standard January 2023



He goes on to discuss the ways in which he sees the transition to a moneyless society taking place and then poses and answers, in convincing fashion, some of the most common ‘objections’ (many of which socialists are used to hearing) to a free access society of voluntary cooperation without money and wages. These are objections such as ‘don’t we need money as a motivator?’, ‘aren’t human beings intrinsically lazy and selfish?’, ‘would there be enough to go round?’, ‘how could we operate an economic system without a pricing mechanism?’, etc. Finally, he issues a ‘Call to Action’ urging those who agree with the need for a moneyless society and see it as possible to share their views with others and ‘get this information into the world’, thereby helping to put into the mainstream an idea that may currently seem ‘extreme’ to many. He also encourages people to communicate, cooperate and associate themselves with other movements with similar ideas, listed in a ‘Resources’ appendix to the book. Here he includes some 50 organisations, including the World Socialist Movement, as well as, for example, his own ‘Moneyless Society’ group, the Auravana Project, the New Zealand Money Free Party and the Zeitgeist Movement.

Gradualism or the ballot box?

All this is immensely encouraging to organisations like the World Socialist Movement which have the same fundamental objective as the author. There is one area, however, in which the WSM would have to part company with Matthew Holten. That is in his view of how the objective can be achieved. The author of *Moneyless Society* sees that in terms of a gradual transition over several generations

within the capitalist system. He anticipates a relatively long period of the ‘winding down of capitalism’ during which ‘the disparity between the least and most privileged will largely vanish’ but ‘people will still be paid to work’. He posits a model for this to happen incrementally, calling it ‘The Five Stages of Transition’, seeing it as a period during which support for a global moneyless society increases and plans for its operation are being laid out.

While socialists too would foresee plans for the operation of a socialist society being made within capitalism ahead of the establishment of socialism, we would not, for example, see this, as the author does, as being assisted by ‘world leaders’. Rather we would see ‘world leaders’ doing their best to head it off by offering all manner of reforms within capitalism to try to deflect and restrain the growing spread of socialist consciousness and the call for a new society. After all, the function of governments is to be the executive committee of the capitalist class, to manage capitalism as well as they can in the interests of those who own and control the means of production, not in the interests of society as whole. This can never be any different, but in the end they would have no choice but to succumb to the outcome of elections which saw candidates advocating a moneyless, wageless, leaderless society based on voluntary cooperation and free access to all goods and services gaining majority support and then taking control of society and putting into practice the democratic organisational forms which the majority has agreed.

It does not seem to have occurred to the author, highly commendable as his vision is, that a mass democratic movement using the ballot box to win the political control needed to coordinate the change effectively is the most likely and most practical way to achieve a moneyless, marketless society. This once the necessary spread of consciousness has been achieved and plans to democratically organise that society are in place. However, this divergence between the author’s view and that of socialists can perhaps best be seen not as a difference in overall vision but rather one of strategy. And in that sense what we have here is an important and highly refreshing book putting centre-stage ideas and discussions about how to dispense with capitalism and establish a new society based on a sustainable balance between cooperative production for use and ecological stewardship of the planet.

HKM

Shamima Begum, the demon bride



Credit: ITV

'JIHADI BRIDE' Shamima Begum and her fight for repatriation are back in the news. This time there appears to be evidence to suggest she and her two companions were trafficked, with various newspapers carrying the latest story. It may come as no particular surprise that Shamima and her two school friends Khadiza Sultana, now dead and Amira Abase, presumed dead, were recruited and helped with their journey from the UK via Turkey to Syria in February 2015. All the girls were between 15 and 16 years old.

A BBC online news article on 30 August reads 'Shamima Begum and her two friends were smuggled into Syria by an intelligence agent for Canada' (<https://bbc.in/3h7Cbdb>). In Reuters Europe (21 November) it says: 'Likely a victim of child trafficking her lawyers also said that Begum and her friends entry into Syria was "facilitated" by a Canadian agent working for ISIS' (<https://reut.rs/3VUKFB7>). It seems that the information for those articles comes from a claim made in the

book *The Secret History of Five Eyes* by Richard Kerbaj. Five Eyes is the network of intelligence sharing between Britain, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This information may have been known as early as 2015.

There was a Reuters (Ankara) news article on 12 March 2015 by Tulay Karadeniz in which the writer states: 'A spy who worked for a country in the US-led coalition that is fighting Islamic State had helped three British girls to cross into Syria to join the militants has been caught, the Turkish Foreign minister said on Thursday' (<https://reut.rs/3iJGLN5>). This information came only a month after the girls left the UK. The British public will have heard about this only recently.

Shamima is now 23 years old and is still languishing in a detention camp in Northern Syria. Her UK citizenship was revoked in March 2019 by the then Home Secretary Sajid Javid. The British government is not in theory allowed to deprive a British citizen of their citizenship

if that is the only form of citizenship they have. Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that 'Arbitrary deprivation of nationality which means deliberately moving to make a citizen stateless is prohibited under these instruments'.

The UK government contended Shamima could apply for Bangladeshi citizenship as her parents were Bangladeshi nationals and as she was under 21 at the time she supposedly could automatically qualify for Bangladeshi citizenship. Bangladesh has continuously denied that possibility. In any case Shamima was born in the UK and has never even been to Bangladesh, her culture is British.

Shortly after arriving in Syria she was married to a Dutch fighter and convert to Islam and went on to have three children who all died young. Her youngest was born in a refugee camp and died within a month of a lung infection. The conditions in these camps were appalling, with temperatures reaching 50 degrees Celsius in summer and

below freezing in the winter, bad sanitary conditions and almost non-existent healthcare.

Responding to the death of her last child in the camp Jeremy Hunt stated 'Shamima knew when she made the decision to join Daesh she was going to a country where there was no embassy, no consular assistance, and I'm afraid those decisions awful though it is, they do have consequences' (<https://bbc.in/3iLmkzi>). But how could a 15-year old have had any idea of what was in store for her when she left the UK?

What makes a girl not yet 16 willingly leave her home, travel to Syria to marry a man she had not even met? Is it romantic notions of marriage and children of her own, a life away from the boredom and monotony of Bethnal Green, or the seduction of going to help her religious compatriots in the face of perceived injustice and alienation, or was it just an ill-thought-out teenage adventure? Shamima maintains she was just a housewife looking after the house and children and said she was assured they (Isis) would take care of her and she would have a perfect family life, but whether she was just a housewife as she claimed or she allegedly sewed explosives into suicide bombers' vests we probably will never know.

The hypocrisy of accepting that girls of the same age and older were trafficked and abused in the Jeffrey Epstein case but not for Shamima and her even more unfortunate school friends is striking. She has been vilified and demonised

in the press, and the British public seemed to be in agreement with her being made stateless. Could it be that women are traditionally regarded as the caring nurturing sex and Shamima was an abomination, or was she made the scapegoat, an example of the government showing it was doing something, picking on the easy target of a young girl?

Since the fall of the Caliphate, the international community was faced with dealing with more than 52,000 'foreigners' stranded in Syria. Thousands returned to their respective countries independently and unmonitored and thousands of others were repatriated to some, including women facing arrest and imprisonment. Out of more than 400 former fighters believed to be back in Britain only about 40 (in 2019) have been prosecuted, most have been placed in rehabilitation schemes. It not as easy for women and children to make their way back home.

The *Guardian* (26 November 2020) reported that 35 children and 15 British women were being held in barbaric conditions at a camp in Northern Syria. A report by the Rights and Security International charity described conditions as inhumane and degrading, unsafe environments, physical violence common and psychological trauma. Children living in the camps suffering from malnutrition, dehydration and hypothermia with the effect on these children of starting the whole cycle of alienation again. You have to wonder what kind of society turns a blind eye to deliberately causing suffering

to women and children, somehow making them responsible for nationalism and war.

The Shamima Begum situation brings up so many issues. The fact that the government can take away what we consider fundamental rights but which turn out to be mere privileges which can be given or taken away arbitrarily. What constitutes a danger to security and the state, your political beliefs, like being a communist in McCarthy's America? What constitutes an illegal organisation, one that is contrary to the status quo? The misogyny of not only the Islamic fighters wanting what could be described as 'comfort women' and the attitude of the British government towards making an example of a young girl. Islamophobia and nationalism rearing its ugly head, seeing them as the savages, fanatics, the "other" dividing workers with god on both sides. The state's lackeys, the media, constantly pushing the official narrative, hiding news from the public, guiding our opinion to suit the state agenda. We have no idea what is 'fake news' anymore.

The world is divided with constantly changing borders, constant wars. The arms industry is the second biggest industry in the world. How many other Shamimas are out there? It does not have to be like this, we could live in a borderless, stateless moneyless society where we co-operate rather than compete. All it takes is a little imagination and the belief that we humans are not the greedy aggressive creatures we are told we are. We are family after all.

CARLA D



Credit: Getty Images

Striking

PRESENTLY, NEWS broadcasts carry frequent reports of ballots indicating a growing willingness of unionised workers to take strike action in pursuit of better wage deals. This is reflective of inflation running at double percentage rates, while pay offers remain in single figures.

Since the financial crisis of 2007-8 and the subsequent austerity policies, the real value of wages had stagnated at best or even markedly declined. However, this had been masked to a certain degree by inflation being at reasonably low levels.

The ebbing of the Covid 19 crisis to be replaced with greatly increased international tensions served to raise expectations just as inflation gathered momentum. What this lays bare is that all the pre-lockdown problems not only still exist, but are being exacerbated.

As examples, the NHS and social care continue to have rising funding and recruitment issues as those employed in these sectors, in line with workers generally, continue to see wage levels falling in real terms. At the same time there's increasing demand leading to individual workloads becoming heavier.

Hardly surprising then that industrial disputes are becoming more commonplace. Crisis for capitalism is integral. As always it is the working class who will be expected to accept the consequences through reducing living standards.

The economics are simple and clear: inflation at 10 percent, wage increase of 5 percent means a pay cut, not a rise. The size of the figure on a wage slip is itself meaningless until it is reckoned against what can be bought with it. In crude terms, can more or less be purchased?

No surprise then that workers are reacting with their most potent means within the limits imposed by capitalism. It is also no shock to hear from a range of commentators condemning this as unreasonable militancy by union members.

The last fruit on the money tree has withered and fallen off, or the financial well has run dry. Pick your preferred metaphor; the message is clear. If workers succeed in 'inflation busting' pay rises, to use another common cliché favoured by politicians, it will only worsen the situation.

Meanwhile, those 'selfish' strikers will be careless of the suffering they inflict

through their actions on their fellow workers. After all, we are – hard-pressed nurses and hedge fund managers alike – in it together.

The media, in its role as necromancer, raises the spectre of the 1970s, the ghost of the winter of discontent is conjured to haunt society. After all, striking workers and rising inflation are the twin demons ever lurking in the shadows.

They were eventually exorcised by Saint Margaret of Grantham and subsequently held at bay by each prime minister, Conservative or Labour, who came after her. They ensured the market place was not possessed by the dark forces of organised workers and capital's values were enshrined and realised.

One of the prevailing myths is that higher wages are a cause of inflation. This is indeed a wondrous act of prestidigitation, as the outcome precedes the cause. Firstly, prices begin the rise rapidly to the point where wages are being seriously devalued and then, and only then, workers demand higher wages. The impoverishment of workers is therefore somehow caused by workers after they have already become poorer.

One solution some politicians offer to make workers better off is reducing taxation. This is the myth of the state acting as the mugger of the wage earner. Wages, profits, expenditure and investment in all parts of the economy come from a single source, the value created by the workers collectively. The proportion going to each of these factors does change, but the source remains the same.

If there is an increase in taxation, while this might be collected from each worker's income, the actual source of it is that the worker created value. It may cause an alteration in the distribution of the value, a little more to wages to pay for the taxation, a little less to profit or investment.

This can then be adjusted at some point, taking back from workers the little gained. This might be through reducing services workers use, thus lowering state expenditure and taxation. However, this does not make workers better off, except in the short term at best. Access to required services becomes limited as wages stagnate.

Inflation also, in effect, recoups from the

proportion received by workers as the real value of what they earn falls, even if the monetary amount rises. Some workers may feel relatively comfortable financially with seemingly well-paid employment, home ownership and savings.

Should such workers make the mistake of living into old age and infirmity, the value stored in their property and savings will soon be absorbed by the social care charges levied by profit-making care companies.

Socialists, of course, support workers organising to defend their present living standards. But, no matter how successful the action they take, it will not, cannot, be a long-term solution. Most likely, gains made will eventually be taken back. Any graph of wages and salaries will show peaks and troughs, never a consistently ascending line.

Strikes also have a dual nature in regard to other workers not directly involved in the action. On one hand those who, in whatever manner, lend solidarity to those on strike show an enhanced level of class consciousness. An attribute that needs to develop further if socialism is to be achieved.

However, strikes can also become divisive when those inconvenienced, or worse, by strikes become oppositional. The pro-capitalist media uses all its influence to exacerbate such reactions, an ideological prophylactic aimed at preventing the germination of class consciousness.

Industrial action is an inevitable response to the imperative of capitalism to maximise its profits at the expense of the workforce. It is a necessary palliative, but not a solution to the economic precariousness of the wider working class.

There is one present aspect that gives the lie to the return to the 70s myth. Even if the trade union movement was to be successful in achieving inflation matching (or busting) wage rises, that would leave many millions of workers no better off. Membership of unions is half, possibly less than half what it was in the 1970s. Even then not all workers, by any means, were members of unions.

There is plenty enough wealth created by workers throughout the world to fully meet the needs of everyone without any need for strikes. After all, a strike is not all bad for capital as it saves on wages for the duration.

The only true cure for inflation is the abolition of prices through creating a socialist society in which money has no part. The myth of things as they are at present being the only way they could be needs to be countered by an increasing understanding of the potential workers have together to democratically create, worldwide, a commonwealth of co-operation.

DAVE ALTON

Socialist morality and war

SOME BELIEVE that the struggle for socialism is a moral crusade against the evils of capitalism or, more usually, against the promoters and practitioners of capitalism. Bankers, hedge fund managers, media moguls, multi-national CEOs, City traders, politicians etc. have all taken their turn as incarnations of immorality and even evil. Every morning you can hear that archetype of leftist moral outrage called James O'Brien indulging in his endless diatribes denouncing the latest demons of the right on his LBC radio show. Is this merely an impotent exercise in self-indulgence or are political debates, at their heart, always primarily a conflict between right and wrong or even good and evil?

Moral sensibilities seem to have always been part of the human psyche. Perhaps because, as a social species, we are aware that our individual survival depends on the survival of our communities we have developed a level of interaction that demands the ability to empathise with others. When we suffer, or perceive the suffering of others, we seek the cause. If this cause is the activity of another we can regard them as antisocial and immoral. This perspective insists on us all being moral agents who have a level of free will which enables us to choose between right and wrong. Although there have been infinite cultural varieties of what constitutes moral values all of them derive from the belief in the individual's potential and actual ability to control his or her actions. Control is the key concept here because if we deny its existence on a personal level we are in danger of delegating it to others who are considered to be our moral superiors and so create a religious hierarchy. The conscience (Freud's super-ego) and its malicious companion guilt together with the fear of eternal punishment still haunt even the most secular of moral value systems. So what effect has this ideology had on politics and what is the historical evidence for its efficacy?

One of the more interesting historical attempts to synthesise morality and politics within one ideology was that of Christianity. The control it offered to the Roman empire proved to be so seductive that it was adopted by Constantine and the successive Germanic 'barbarians' who took over during the 'dark age' and later medieval period. All through its rise Christianity had many glaring contradictions with the realities of power in the warrior states that adopted it. One of the most obvious was the

commandment that 'thou shall not kill'. Sanctions against violence and murder are universal in any moral system worthy of the name so how could this be coherently absorbed by a society based on violent exploitation (slavery, serfdom) and imperialist expansion (destruction and pillage). This came to a head as Europe suffered the depredations of warlords whose bands of knights terrorised everything and everyone. The Pope came up with an ingenious solution – he would send these troublesome knights to Palestine to reclaim the 'Holy Land' where the murder of the indigenous population was not only rewarded, it guaranteed the forgiveness of any previous mortal sins and promised eternal paradise in the next life.

A moral system had been manipulated to serve the needs of the powerful, and today we see the same justification for war. Russians are demonised and the defence of Ukraine is considered a crusade against the evil of Putin. Lines on a map drawn by the powerful constitute a 'sovereign state' which is regarded by many as a kind of moral absolute that must not be violated. Of course this is nonsense since wars are continually fought in defiance of borders created by others. But it proves just how pliable a moral system can be when faced with political reality.

Again we see that the central conceit of a moral approach to politics is the illusion of control. Socialists see political, religious or moral systems as just elements within an ideology that seeks to justify

the power and wealth of a parasitic minority that has historically emerged in private property society. These systems develop independently of those who make them work, and the values and struggles of those people are irrelevant unless they become conscious of this. Such consciousness can only develop when they become aware that the system they are part of is not in their interests. They can finally liberate themselves from the shackles of history and have a chance, for the first time, to impose true and authentic moral values. The anger and frustration caused by trying to impose such values on an amoral economic system like capitalism is replaced by conscious participation towards resolving the class struggle, which alone can make this possible.

Socialists seek to understand the origin of power, who has it and how it is legitimated. There is no legitimacy to be found in the relationship between wealth and power, as the morality of property relations pretends. We can transcend the superficial and superstitious origins of that morality and replace it with a fully democratic system within which a mature community can decide what rules and values it wants. The voice of the individual will finally be heard and the shrill hypocrisy of the defenders of amorality will be silenced.

WEZ



The wage-price spiral myth

POLITICIANS AND ministers are opposing wage demands on the grounds that conceding them would start a ‘wage-price spiral’. It is not only socialists who are exposing this as a myth. Economic commentators are too. For instance, an article by the *Times* economics editor, Mehreen Khan, on 29 November was headed ‘Forget the mythical wage-price spiral and get to grips with reality’. An earlier article, on the Conservative Home website on 22 July by Ryan Bourne, was headed ‘The wage-price spiral explanation of inflation is a dangerous myth’ (tinyurl.com/9w9mmjxe).

Khan wrote that ‘the “wage-price spiral” myth persists despite most evidence pointing to the contrary’ and called it a ‘zombie trope that refuses to die’. Bourne explained why it is impossible for a wage increase to cause prices generally to rise:

‘Economically, showing that wage demands do not create inflation is fairly simple. Take a hypothetical company with a big, unionised workforce. Suddenly the union demands a competition-busting 20 percent pay rise, and the firm reluctantly acquiesces, raising its prices to compensate. For a given level of total money expenditure in the economy (what we might dub “aggregate demand”), the business’s higher relative price loses some custom. As the

business cuts back on production in lieu of higher prices, workers are laid off. Yet this increases the pool of labour available to other firms, reducing wages elsewhere. Lowering costs of production, this greater worker availability ultimately feeds through into lower prices for other businesses. In other words, without an increase in economy-wide spending, workers in one firm demanding wage hikes don’t generate price rises across the board. Inflation cannot originate from certain trade unions or greedy workers at particular companies’.

What he is saying is that a wage increase can lead only to a redistribution of demand, with some prices going up and other prices going down but having no effect on the ‘level of total money expenditure in the economy’.

Bourne works for the Cato Institute, which is an American free-marketeer think tank funded by Big Business, but he is making the same point as Karl Marx had made in 1865 in his address to British trade unionists published after his death as *Value, Price and Profit*. Instead of ‘aggregate demand’ Marx spoke of the total new value produced by the working class:

‘This given value, determined by the time of his labour, is the only fund from which both he and the capitalist have to draw their respective

shares or dividends, the only value to be divided into wages and profits. (...) Since the capitalist and workman have only to divide this limited value, that is, the value measured by the total labour of the working man, the more the one gets the less will the other get, and vice versa. Whenever a quantity is given, one part of it will increase inversely as the other decreases. If the wages change, profits will change in an opposite direction’.

Bourne’s example is a wage increase in a particular company but even a general increase in wages could not cause prices across the board to rise. It, too, would merely redistribute paying demand; the demand for goods that workers consumed would go up increasing their price, while the demand for goods bought by capitalists and their hangers-on from profits would go down decreasing their price. Some workers would have to change jobs but the overall demand for goods and services would remain the same.

This is the real reason why employers and governments oppose wage demands – wages can only increase at the expense of profits, whether at company or economy level. The ‘wage-price spiral’ myth persists because it’s useful as an apparently more plausible argument against wage demands than baldly saying they will reduce profits.

Article

The same old lethal delusion

AN ELDERLY tired man and his dog walk for miles out of Mariupol. They walk by burned out buildings and over the rubble of bombed roads. All around them is burning and devastation.

An old lady bent over her shopping trolley pushes it to a sparsely stocked grocer’s. She lives on the frontier and has heard neighbours abuse her as the ‘enemy.’ A man and his family flee from the bombardments. He carries his crippled German Shepherd over his shoulder, struggling with the weight; but he will not leave his dog behind.

This writer cannot ignore the plight of the other animals caught up in this misery, for they are part of, not separate from, the human tragedy.

There are innumerable true and personal stories in this war, swallowed up in the overall suffering of thousands, and most will never be known. They do not interest those who are blasé about war; who talk about advances and retreats, ‘victories’ and defeats, strategic interests and geopolitics.

We socialists are never blasé about war. We know as members of the world’s working class that to participate in the murder of each other at the behest of our exploiters is to be deluded.

With capitalism in overdrive, poisoning the Earth, threatening life with extinction (including the human race), destroying climate balance, pushing us all militarily toward nuclear annihilation, it has never been more urgent for us, the world’s working class – who form 99 percent of the human population – to unite and democratically get rid of the world capitalist system before it gets rid of all of us. Yet in the midst of global disaster, we are still doing the bidding of the 1 percent’s obsession with profit and capital accumulation. This includes fighting their wars, killing one another, in the delusion that we have ‘countries’ to kill and die for. The same old lethal delusion.

We urge the workers of Ukraine and of Russia, and of all places in bloody and senseless capitalist conflict, to realise they

have much more in common with their exploited brothers and sisters on ‘the other side’ than they can possibly have with their exploiters at home. We urge them to stop inflicting misery on one another at the behest of heads of state, and to pool their energies in union with one another to overthrow this defunct and deadly world capitalist system – an overthrow which, when we are once united in our millions, can be achieved with relative ease.

So that we can at last, as a united humanity – free from the profit system with its warfare, poverty and devastation – solve together and reverse the damage which world capitalism is now causing.

Let us no longer subject ourselves to lethal delusions such as nationalism. Let us claim the world for all of us, ending wars and frontiers forever.

World socialism, now!

A.W.

The richest and poorest

CHANNEL 5 doesn't draw much attention to itself, but it occasionally reminds us that it's there by showing something memorable, such as *How The Other Half Live*. This two-part documentary is presented by actor Brian Cox, currently most known for playing 'churlish billionaire' Logan Roy in the American comedy-drama series *Succession*. His acting career was an escape from his early years growing up in a struggling family of shopkeepers in 1950s Dundee. He found opportunities among the bright lights of London and 30 years ago relocated to America. He says that his work is lucrative enough for him to be 'comfortable', denies being one of the rich and says that money is his 'own personal demon' because of the difficulties of his upbringing.

So, 'Brian goes on a personal quest as he explores our relationship with money and wealth', as Channel 5's website puts it. He talks with people about how their lives are shaped by the amount they have, while infographics pop up to give some wider context.

Cox meets a model and social media influencer who gets paid for her posts about fashion and her lifestyle by companies whose products she promotes to her 4.5 million Instagram followers. When asked whether she's encouraging her fans to spend money they don't have she replies 'I am motivating people to work on themselves to afford that things [sic]'. In Miami, Cox visits a property developer who has made millions in commission for selling high-end apartments. New developments of luxury dwellings are shunting out people who would never be able to afford to live in them. Cox talks with Elsa who is facing eviction after the downmarket apartment block she lives in was sold to developers to be knocked down and replaced. Most of those being pushed towards homelessness by this kind of gentrification are low-paid people from immigrant backgrounds.

Another area where poverty disproportionately affects non-white people is Harlem, where homelessness is almost as prevalent as during the depression of the 1930s. New York is a magnet for homeless people as it provides 'the illusion of care', being the only state which has a 'right' to shelter enshrined in law. But for many, this 'right' is only to a space in a grim dormitory where people get stuck for years. The CEOs of these shelters receive an income which those living in them will never get close to. Data from the Institute of Policy Studies is quoted saying that for every dollar an



Credit: Channel 5

average worker makes, a CEO receives 600, with Amazon's head raking in 6,474 times as much as someone on an average wage.

The 'American dream' says that if you're poor it's because you haven't tried hard enough in the land of opportunity. Those who are born into wealth don't have to try hard, such as Sam Logan, whose family's fortune clocks up at 8.5 billion dollars. It's not clear why he agreed to be interviewed on the programme, as he doesn't like to talk about growing up being able to have whatever he likes. More vocal is Chris Smalls, who found that hard work doesn't lead to living the dream. After he led a protest about unsafe working conditions and low pay at Amazon's Staten Island warehouse he was fired from his job and went on to form an activist group of workers and later a union. Amazon refuses to recognise the union and Smalls quotes reports that the company has spent 4.3 million dollars trying to restrict its influence, which he suspects is an underestimate.

Returning to the area where he grew up, Cox visits a community larder near Dundee, a charity which sells stock donated from supermarkets which has gone past its best-before date. This service is the only way which the two hundred people who go there each week can afford enough food. The larder charges a small fee so that the people who use it don't feel ashamed at getting handouts, which somehow makes the situation even more tragic.

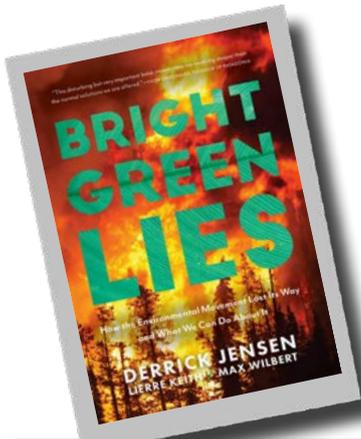
Cox reacts with frustration and anger

when he sees that poverty similar to that which he lived through as a child is still found in Dundee. In a shot which the programme makers deserve some credit for not editing out, he says that the documentary could feel mercenary, and he worries about it crossing a line. This would be into the genre of 'poverty porn', where depictions of the poor are used as entertainment or to generate an emotional response which prompts a purchase or support of a cause. The difference between this kind of propaganda and drawing attention to a problem is in how an issue is covered. 'Poverty porn' implies a selective impression, probably for cynical motives, rather than reportage. Cox's documentary is blunt, and doesn't aim to deeply analyse the reasons behind the wide disparities in wealth, but it gives those interviewed enough space to talk to avoid being exploitative.

Predictably, what *How The Other Half Live* lacks is any decent proposed solutions to the problems highlighted. A 'fair wealth tax' is supported by none other than John Caudwell, the 115th richest person in the UK (and who arrives by helicopter), and he perhaps says this while knowing it can never happen. But apart from that Cox only comes up with the vague directive to 'stop loading the dice in favour of the rich and find a sense of unified purpose'. He says this right at the end of the programme, although it would have been a more interesting starting point.

MIKE FOSTER

Green Lies



Bright Green Lies. How the Environmental Movement Lost Its Way and What We Can Do About It. Derrick Jensen, Lierre Keith and Max Wilbert. Monkfish Publishing, 473pp.

'Instead of a movement to save the planet, we have a movement to continue its destruction.'

The quotation above sums up the theme of this book which casts its glance, both politically and ecologically, way back into the past as well as projecting fascinatingly into the future. It's definitely a must-read, a powerful, eloquent and thought-provoking indictment of industrial capitalist society, in fact of all the hierarchical human societies that have developed over the last 10-12,000 years. In compelling terms it explains- and offers incontrovertible evidence of- how, since the advent of settled agriculture and the surplus production, oppressive hierarchies, urban settlement and militarism that came with it, the Earth has been massively and increasingly despoiled in the name of human exceptionalism. Now is the end game, insist the authors, unless, that is, immediate and widespread consciousness of what humanity is doing in the name of economic growth takes over and leads to action. Yet this is something, so the book's title asserts, that forms no part of the current 'green' agenda, which is seen as no less harmful than fossil fuel use in continuing to extract from the environment resources that it cannot afford to lose and in destroying in the process the earth's geological fabric and its non-human living creatures and organisms.

The authors bring to bear a mass of sobering evidence to show that even the most proclaimed 'bright green' policies and actions can never be more than a sop to the growth mantra of industrialised capitalism which can see the Earth only as a target for commodification – for producing goods for sale on the market. They go about systematically – and in

many cases scathingly – dismantling the arguments put forward to remedy this by 'deep green' gurus such as Naomi Klein, Lester Brown and Mark Jacobson (the latter described as 'someone working hard to kill the planet in order to save it'). And, in the process, they exhibit a breathtaking knowledge, both wide-ranging and detailed, of why all the many attempts at apparently environment-friendly activities amount to anything but and can only serve to add further to both climate change and the destruction of the environment. None of the 'green' policies widely presented as beneficial escape forensic – and damning – analysis under their gaze. So their book, in its various sections, takes apart and condemns as 'lies' the proclaimed virtues of, among other green 'solutions', solar panels, wind turbines, green energy storage, recycling, LED lights, electric cars, hydropower, biomass (described as 'cutting down and burning forests'), and geothermal energy.

In all these cases, their fundamental argument, backed by abundant evidence and analysis, is that the complex infrastructure needed to set up, deal with and maintain all these 'renewable' activities and technologies actually relies on fossil fuels involving at least as much savage exploitation of the Earth's fragile resources, both biological and geological, as that involved in 'non-green' methods of production. In other words these 'green' technologies will carry on with what they term the 'orgy of planetary destruction'. They will continue to rip the Earth apart to procure materials for their projects, will continue to hack to oblivion the planet's natural structures formed over millions of years, and will continue to blow up mountains, turn forests into mines and poison water, air, soil, wildlife and the human population. These are all, in the authors' words, 'assaults against the living world' causing 'industrial-scale devastation', and all claims for saving the environment by their use are dismissed as 'green veneer', as 'cherry-picking' of the facts and the available evidence.

The point, they argue, is that, much as the 'bright greens' may be genuinely concerned for the environment, the reality of what they propose and may do can never amount to more than 'greenwashing', given that the current system of industrial production cannot by its nature do other than subordinate real care for the Earth and its flora and fauna to the imperatives of growth and production for profit. It prioritises 'fuelling the economy over saving the real world'. Attempts to suggest otherwise are, the authors insist, 'green fantasies', no more nor less than delusions providing

comfort at the expense of reality. All this is summed up in their dictum 'Our way of life doesn't need to be saved. The planet needs to be saved from our way of life.'

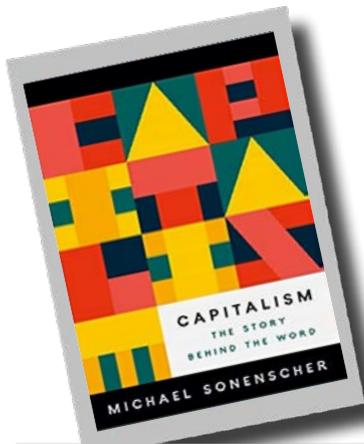
So are we going to hell in a handcart no matter what? Well, sort of, according to this book, except that there is a chapter toward the end entitled 'Real Solutions', in which the authors do suggest how we might reverse or at least mitigate part of the increasing mess they have so painstakingly and passionately detailed and evidenced. The trouble is that this is the least satisfactory and least convincing part of the book. That's because what they mainly have to offer are appeals to individuals or groups to get together in forms of environmental action ('find something you love and defend it. A stream, a stand of trees, a struggling songbird'), or a call for 'massive movements... using every tactic: political pressure, legal challenge, economic boycotts, civil disobedience and whatever else becomes necessary', or, above all, appeals to governments to adopt various policies that will curb both industrial growth and population growth (eg, 'governments need to stop subsidizing environmentally and socially destructive activities'). This after apparently recognising that governments are an integral part of the problem in their role of managing and supporting the growth/market system that leads to the very problems they abhor and so will not and cannot 'act against the profit motive'. Or perhaps, despite such words, they somehow don't take it fully on board and think it can somehow be different, perhaps in the same way as the 'bright greens' they criticise don't want to believe that the profit system will brook no alternative to economic growth and unbridled exploitation of the Earth's environment. Perhaps, in fact, at bottom Jensen, Keith and Wilbert do think, or at least hope, that governments can somehow be neutral and possess the power to regulate to their heart's content the system of production for profit and buying and selling.

The reality is that capitalism with its commodification of everything has, as this book so trenchantly informs us, seriously damaged and may well be on the way to completely destroying the natural environment. But the way to prevent this going any further and reversing it as necessary is not via tweaks to the way we live and work today but by a democratic political movement expressing a majority will of the world's people to collectively organise a leaderless, stateless society which will recognise the necessity to produce and distribute sustainably while being sensitive

not just to the needs of the human species but to the whole environment of which we are a part, including its geology and its flora and fauna.

HKM

Political and Moral



Capitalism. The Story Behind the Word. By Michael Sonenscher. Princeton University Press. 2022.

This short book – the author calls it an essay – in the field of political and moral philosophy explains that the words ‘capitalist’ and ‘capitalism’ originated in France.

Capitaliste was the name given in the 18th century to those with money – capital – who lent it to the government to pay for its wars. *Capitalisme* was the name given to this as a system and ideology by royalist opponents of the French Revolution in the early 19th century who didn’t like the power and influence of these financiers. It was later taken up by those on the left such as the reformist Louis Blanc (the person credited with first saying ‘from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs’). Sonenscher quotes him as saying that capitalism was the enemy of capital and advocating the state ownership of capital, a form of state capitalism that would have abolished ‘*capitalistes*’ and that had a future before it.

Sonenscher remarks that the word ‘capitalism’ does not appear in Marx’s *Capital*. This is true. Marx uses the term ‘capitalist mode of production’ by which he meant the system where capital was invested in production and which had quite different results than when it was lent to governments and whose abolition would end not only the social role of capitalist but also the whole system of investing money in production for sale on a market with the aim of making a profit.

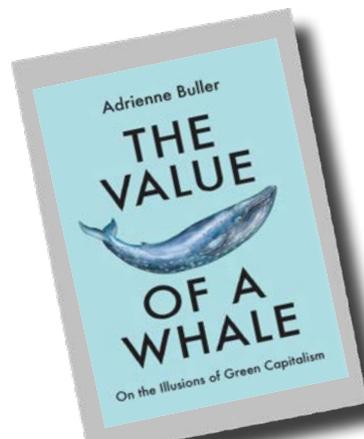
Sonenscher traces how, in the discussions

about the state, economy and society in the late 18th and early 19th centuries amongst some well known (Adam Smith, Ricardo, Hegel) and some less known writers of the period, ‘capitalism’ was contrasted to ‘commercial society’ resulting from the division of labour. Since then, he notes, the two terms have become conflated, with capitalism virtually coming to mean commercial society. This in fact comes nearer to what socialists understand by the word: a property society where everything, including people’s working energies, is subject to being bought and sold. However, in much popular usage, even by ‘anti-capitalists,’ the word still retains its original association with finance and banking.

Towards the end of the book the author reveals that he doesn’t think that either commercial society or lending to governments can be ended. He sees what exists – where the state borrows money to mitigate the worst effects of commercial society – as all that is possible. Despite this, his essay is an interesting discussion of the origin and history of a key word in the socialist vocabulary.

ALB

The Time of a Whale



The Value of a Whale: On the Illusions of Green Capitalism. Adrienne Buller. Manchester University Press £12.99.

Green capitalism is described here as involving two main aspects: the wish to maintain existing capitalist relations, and the attempt at the same time to expand accumulation during the transition to an ecologically sustainable method of production. It is, Buller argues, self-defeating, as profit-motivated ‘solutions’ just exacerbate current inequalities. Economic imperatives are given priority over other needs, and even the Green New Deal still refers to markets and profits. Appearing to act on the climate crisis is

widely seen as important, but effective action is much rarer.

One crucial area for addressing climate change is decarbonisation, which involves reducing the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere. Green capitalism addresses this either by imposing a carbon tax (depending on the cost per unit of carbon emitted) or by invoking a carbon market (whereby a firm has a cap on how much carbon it can emit and can ‘trade’ with others for additional amounts they will not use). But cost and profits are in general big obstacles to decarbonisation, and the fossil fuel industry has successfully lobbied against carbon taxes in almost all cases where they have been proposed. Carbon markets often involve companies in wealthy countries balancing their emissions against those in less developed parts of the world. Carbon offsetting, such as newly-planted trees, is unregulated and barely effective.

A fair amount of attention is given to what has been termed ‘asset manager capitalism’, whereby firms such as BlackRock and Vanguard play a large role in the corporate economy. This has become increasingly the case since the 2007–8 financial crisis, and they provide at least as much credit to companies as banks do. Asset management funds often adopt the strategy of passive investing, which means they buy many of the securities tracked by a share index in order to replicate its performance. They rarely disinvest in a company, and emphasise long-term investment. They have little interest in influencing corporate behaviour regarding the climate, and BlackRock in particular operates a revolving door with government, in both the US and UK.

The author says her aim is not to suggest solutions to the ecological crisis, but rather to argue that green capitalist approaches do not offer a path to a safe future. With reference to carbon sinks, which absorb more carbon than they emit, she writes refreshingly that ‘We are more than capable of sustaining a decent life for all – and for the long term – with the space, resources and natural “sinks” this planet generously offers.’

In case you are wondering, an IMF study estimates the value of a great whale at \$2m, based on their contribution to eco-tourism and their capacity for carbon capture.

PB



Britain enters the Common Market

From the beginning of this month Britain has been part of the 'European Economic Community', to give the Common Market its official name. This means that the British government is pledged to pursue, along with eight other West European governments, common policies in such fields as foreign trade, transport and agriculture. By 1978 all trade barriers between Britain and the other eight countries should have been removed and all nine should have erected a uniform tariff against goods coming from outside their 'common market'.

For the capitalists of Britain, or most of them, this will open up a vast new market in which to try to sell their goods at a profit. But what about the workers? How will the Common Market affect the ordinary wage- or salary-earner in the factories and offices of Britain?

First, and this has already begun to happen, there'll be a rise in food prices as a result of the British government having to change its method of subsidising agriculture. (...)

The second change the ordinary wage-earner will notice is in the way the goods he buys are taxed. From 1 April this year purchase tax and SET will be abolished and replaced by a Value Added Tax (VAT). (....)

Thirdly, workers from Britain will be free to move to the other countries in search of a job and will be able to carry social security rights with them. And workers from the other countries will be free to come here on the same terms, of course.

Within ten years, however, we could be using a common European currency and voting in elections for the European Parliament at Strasbourg. And after that, perhaps, there'll be



Credit: Getty Images

progress towards a 'United States of Europe' as another Great Power challenging the current world hegemony of America and Russia (...).

But, in any event, the emergence of such a new capitalist super-State, or the creation of a single European capitalist economy, is of no concern to the working class. Though it will affect them nevertheless. To try to mitigate these effects they will have to start thinking in terms of united action with their fellow workers in Europe. Already some trade unions, and trade unionists, have — wisely — been making contact with their opposite numbers in the other countries.

(Socialist Standard, January 1973)

Article

The World Cup of shame?

MANY MEMBERS of the Socialist Party, including the present writer, are keen football fans. We love the skill, the beauty, the athleticism of the game. But at the same time we have severe reservations about the way it is organised and the conditions under which it is played. It is a kind of paradigm of capitalism as a whole, the system we all live under. What this means is that human beings produce the most potentially brilliant mind-blowing inventions and innovations and exhibit the most fantastic skills and ingenuity in putting them to use, whether that be in the field of technology, education, food and drink, sport, and much else. Yet there are almost inevitably serious warps in the way these are used and express themselves. That is partly because so much of what takes place in capitalism is focused on, bent towards money and profit rather than human need, but also because, through its system of forced wage and salary work as a means of survival for the vast majority, it engenders in the individual a sense of powerlessness, of being just a tiny cog, of being able unable to fulfil one's individual potential.

Most people cope with this by considering it somehow natural quite simply because they have never known or imagined anything else, but also because, as one writer has put it, 'distraction technologies and the entertainment industry sell us meaningless thrills to patch over the pain'.

Which takes us back to football and the spectacle the world is now emerging from, that of teams of highly talented footballers pitted against one another to win a coveted competition, the World Cup. One might have thought that the awful treatment — lethal in some cases — of those workers who built the structures and the infrastructures for the staging of the spectacle and the retrograde mentality of the rulers of Qatar (and apparently most of the inhabitants) would have led many of those with a degree of fellow feeling for other human beings to consider boycotting what one writer called 'the World Cup of shame'. But few, it appears, went down that road, the vast majority being swept up in patriotic (or nationalistic or jingoistic — choose the word) hero worship of their own team and its players, individuals



whose wealth dwarfed anything their normal daily grind could allow them to even dream of. The pictures on the television screen often showed nothing short of mass hysteria as teams scored goals or won matches, a true bread and circuses for modern times.

Yet at the end what was left was anti-climax, even for the supporters of the team that won the competition as they returned to their normal everyday lives as wage slaves and the powerlessness inherent in that role. Perhaps the spectacle they had experienced was an example of what the writer Charles Eisenstein, in his book *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is Possible*, calls 'a substitute for the expression of one's own greatness'.

World Socialist Movement Online Meetings

Our general discussion meetings are now held on Zoom rather than Discord. To connect to a Zoom meeting, enter <https://zoom.us/j/7421974305> in your browser. Then follow instructions on screen and wait to be admitted to the meeting.

JANUARY 2023 EVENTS

World Socialist Movement online meetings

Sundays at 19.30 (IST) Discord

Weekly WSP (India) meeting

Sunday January 11.00 GMT Zoom

Central Branch Meeting

To be fixed. For exact date contact spgb.cbs@worldsocialism.org.

Friday 6 January 19.30 GMT Zoom

No meeting. Meetings resume next week

Friday 13 January 19.30 GMT Zoom

Has the crypto bubble finally burst?

After a catastrophic 2022 that saw \$2tn wiped off global cryptocurrency values, and the high-profile collapse of FTX and the subsequent arrest of its owner, you might think the lustre has finally left the crypto world. And yet, Silicon Valley VC companies are pumping billions into crypto's latest new high-rolling venture, so-called Web3, the internet's supposed next incarnation using crypto tokens and the blockchain. WTF is going on, and what does it say about the direction capitalism is taking? Speaker: Paddy Shannon.

Friday 20 January 19.30 GMT Zoom

Extinction Rebellion's plan to overthrow the government

Speaker: Adam Buick

XR and its offshoots believe that 3.5 percent of the population practising determined civil disobedience can overthrow a government. Is their plan credible? Is it democratic?

Sunday 29 January 11.00 Zoom

Regular Sunday morning discussion meeting

Socialist Party Physical Meetings

LONDON

Saturday 28 January 3pm

The rewards of competition: a prize worth fighting for?

Speaker: Richard Field

Socialist Party Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 UN (nearest tube: Clapham North)

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.

Party News

New branch

A new branch, Yorkshire Regional Branch, has been formed, meeting in Sheffield. The branch meets on the last Saturday of each month (this month on 28 January) at 1pm in the The Rutland Arms, 86 Brown Street, Sheffield City Centre, S1 2BS (approx 10 minute walk from railway and bus station). All welcome. Anyone interested in attending should contact for confirmation of meeting:

Fredi Edwards, Tel 07746 230 953 or email fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk

Twitter accounts

West Midlands branch have set up their own Twitter account: @SPGBWMM

The Socialist Party's national Twitter account is @OfficialSPGB.

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.

What an example!

A SHORT time ago I was trying to park my car in a shopping area near where I live when things didn't entirely go to plan. What happened is explained in the message that I subsequently posted on the local community Facebook group I'm a member of. My post read as follows:

What an example!

Yesterday I was involved in a slight road accident at the beginning of Beechwood Rd just after the Car Wash. I won't go into details except to say that it was a real 50-50 thing between my car and another one, ie, you couldn't say that either of us were really to blame. The young chap in the other car had a couple of scrapes on his bumper and so did I. He didn't seem angry (and neither was I), but he told me he'd just had the bumper replaced. So a difficult situation. Then the young fellow from the Car Wash (some of you must know him) came up and said: 'No point involving the insurance. Just wait a second'. He came back armed with a cloth and what I can only describe as some miracle stuff which he used on the scrapes and somehow completely removed them – and they haven't come back. The other driver and I were both happy. We shook hands and agreed to leave it at that. What a relief! But now comes the big thing. I offered £20 to the young Car Wash man and he said no. I tried to insist, but he still absolutely refused. He said: 'Look, next time you need a car wash, come here.' All I can say is what a brilliant human being.

Most readers will know that local community Facebook groups are normally populated with messages about lost pets, badly parked cars, yoga classes, street lighting, rubbish collection, activities in the local park, etc. My news was a little bit different, but it still seemed a good forum to let the local community know about a fantastic example of human togetherness unsullied by the idea of gain or material reward. It was also a way of my thanking the Car Wash fellow for being such a decent individual (and also maybe giving his business a bit of publicity).

But what I didn't anticipate was what happened next. Within less than half an hour of my posting, there'd been over 70 replies- either 'likes', 'loves' or messages. After that the numbers only multiplied and by the following day there had been over 600 responses from

people expressing approval, admiration, and various other kinds of thumbs-up. Examples of the various things people wrote were:

You are a good man and your company and workers are wonderful members of the community

I will take my car there next time, just for his kind gesture

Next time I need the car washed I'll go there too. What a brilliant man!

My chariot is long overdue for a wash, I'll have to bring it down

How fantastic

A little kindness goes a long way

Yes, I was nearby and witnessed the incident and was struck by the decency and generosity of the people involved. Surely a great example of how wonderful humanity can be when we choose to cooperate with each other. Thumbs up to the young man

There is kindness around us. We just need to look

Aww how lovely my next car wash will be there too!

Nothing compares to human kindness, well done young man x

What a lovely story, and what a kind person. When I need a car wash, I'm goin there!

What a great outcome... made me a bit tearful

What a lovely thing to do

I witnessed yesterday, wow I'm impressed He is awesome

There are still lovely humans in the world Gives such hope in our fellow human beings. If only it was normal behaviour

The Car Wash man responded too: 'Thank you for your kind words. It honestly meant a lot. I could see the situation was getting a bit stressful, so I thought I'd help the situation. More than welcome anytime'.

What to say about this? Well, the fact that around two thirds of the 900+ members of the Facebook responded in this way was nothing if not heartening. How strongly it militates against the view we often hear expressed that looking after number one and the greed, selfishness and competition that goes with it is somehow all there is to 'human nature'. That's an idea expressed in a lot of what has been said, written and published over much of human history. Yet the tide seems to have definitely turned now with many studies

coming to the opposite conclusion, ie, that not only are human beings capable of manifesting peaceful and cooperative behaviour rather than being hostile and competitive with one another but are more likely to behave in that way if conditions allow it. It all depends on the circumstances. This view sees humans as eminently flexible beings who will prefer to make common cause with their fellow creatures unless they are pushed into doing otherwise by conditioning or situation. Of course empathy and cooperation may not 'make news' as effectively as negative, selfish or uncooperative behaviour, but that's largely because caring cooperative activities are so everyday, so common, far outnumbering negative behaviours, and so tend to get taken for granted and go unmentioned.

All this was borne out by a recent study (2021-22) based on online questionnaires ('The Kindness Test'), carried out by psychology researchers from the University of Sussex in collaboration with the BBC. Its 'take home' was that, despite the competitive ethic of current society, human beings are fundamentally a kind species generally prepared to cooperate with and help one another in their daily lives and activities. This was manifested in apparently banal but obviously important findings such as most people being readily prepared to do favours for others, helping strangers to pick up things they'd dropped, or having concerned feelings for people less fortunate than themselves. A further finding was that people who regularly carry out kind acts or even just notice that other people are carrying out kind acts also have higher levels of well-being.

And doesn't the 'Car Wash' story back this up? A person who was prepared to do what he saw as 'the right thing' to help total strangers. And most other people, as shown in the Facebook responses, admired him for behaving in this way. Isn't the implication that, in a society organised in an entirely different way from the current capitalist one (the one that we call socialism), people would not have the slightest problem in operating in a harmonious and cooperative way most if not all of the time. In such a society, one of common ownership, free access to all goods and services and democratic organisation, the natural human tendency to share and cooperate will surely come into its own.

HOWARD MOSS