

THE

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SOCIALIST STANDARD

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

SCAPEGOATS IN SMALL BOATS

Making political capital out of desperation



Also: Migration – what is the problem?
The labour army wants YOU!
Chile during and after Salvador Allende

The singularity of a socialist revolution
Goo
Why I'm a socialist
Before Marx: David Ricardo



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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'

Neither Starmer nor Old Labour

AFTER KEIR Starmer had said in an interview with the BBC on 16 July that he didn't object to being called a 'fiscal conservative' (presumably with a small 'c'), Mike Lynch of the RMT commented on Sky News that 'at the minute many people can't spot the difference' between Labour and the Conservatives', but spoilt it by adding 'and that's a shame for somebody who's probably as talented as Keir Starmer is' and calling on him to 'show that he's on the side of working people.' That would be difficult because he's not on our side.

Lynch went on:

'He should be saying something about workers' rights. He should say stuff about the NHS, looking after people who are struggling in the housing market, council houses for the masses, controlling rents, addressing all sorts of stuff about what's going to happen in the imbalance in our society. He's not saying any of that. He won't dare mention the word socialism' (tinyurl.com/463ranbn).

Who does he think Starmer is? Jeremy

Corbyn, the man Starmer stabbed in the back? Lynch is nostalgic for the Labour Party of yore- workers' rights, council houses, rent control- but it's a couple of generations since Labour advocated that sort of thing. That workers should want better conditions is normal but this was never going to come through the Labour Party; a little through trade unions perhaps but dependent on labour market conditions. The 'imbalance' between those who own and those who work is built into 'our society' and nothing can be done to reduce it. The whole basis of society needs to be changed from class to common ownership before production can be geared to meeting people's needs properly.

The present 'labour unrest' is a reaction to rapidly rising prices putting pressure on workers' living standards and so is essentially defensive, running fast to try to stand still. If it leads to a revival of a bit of class consciousness in some workers that can't be bad, but defensive, trade union consciousness is not enough. What is required is the

socialist consciousness that there is no solution under capitalism but only through socialism.

Lynch chides Starmer for not daring to mention the word socialism. It's a good thing he doesn't. We don't want Labour leaders claiming to be socialist. The Labour Party doesn't stand for socialism — everyone can see that now — but never did. It's just another capitalist party and always has been, even in the pre-Blair days when it had a paper commitment to full-scale state capitalism (nationalisation). Which is probably Lynch's idea of what socialism is.

The alternative to Starmer is not to go back to Old Labour and its reforms that didn't work but forward to socialism where productive resources are commonly owned and democratically controlled so that they can be used to turn out what people want and need, instead of as now (and under Labour governments) to make profits for the few.

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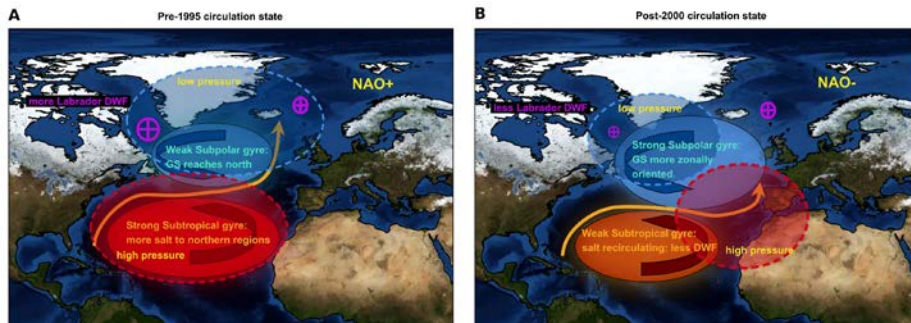
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Russian roulette



SOCIALISM WOULD, in a certain sense, be quite boring. Gone would be the constant drama of economic crises, production gluts or shortfalls, and inflating and exploding speculator bubbles (to say nothing of wars, muggings, organised crime, and other sources of popular excitement). Instead it would be a comparatively sedate affair, with the practical business of living being mostly a matter of known and predictable factors, managed in a steady and sustainable way. The requirements of society, measured through consumption figures, would be known. Production levels would also be known. The two would never become misaligned by much, and fairly easily recoupled.

But where's the fun in knowing what we're doing, when we can use wild stab-in-the-dark guesswork instead? Capitalism moves in mysterious ways, its balls-up to perform. Instead of a transparent, steady-state production system that reliably delivers what's required, it's a secretive casino where almost anything can happen at any moment. The one percent play the tables to make a fast buck, with no regard for what damage they're doing, or what disasters befall the rest of us as a result.

There's no need to play roulette over global production, when we could understand and control the process simply by closing the casino and using democratic common ownership instead. What's worse is that capitalism is gambling with large-scale processes that we don't understand, namely the world's climate. This is not just roulette, it's Russian roulette, with the muzzle pointed at the planet.

The reason scientists don't understand climate science is that it's hard, and the reason it's hard is two-fold. Firstly, it is not part of the mechanistic world of Newtonian dynamics, where everything is theoretically predictable if you know the initial states, trajectories and velocities. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) describes the climate as a 'coupled non-linear chaotic system',

meaning that long-term predictions will never be possible, and probabilities are as good as it gets.

Secondly, there is a critical shortage of data from which to derive models. Accurate measurements don't exist before recent times, making extrapolations from past historical periods nearly impossible, and consistent and coherent data still don't exist in many parts of the world, particularly at the poles. Moreover, the IPCC has noted that 'a serious concern is the decline of observational networks' (tinyurl.com/3yxwa937).

These difficulties, combined with strong political inertia as well as heavy industry lobbying, have tended to make IPCC forecasts err towards the conservative, in turn attracting criticism from climate scientists themselves, who argue that the IPCC is playing too safe and not putting a strong enough case.

Anecdotally at least, news stories seem to be making the case for them. July was the hottest month ever recorded, though the record was only set in 2019. In August, Morocco broke the heat record with temperatures of 50 degrees. Wild fires also raged in Hawaii last month, killing hundreds, and the military were drafted in to fight fires in Canada. Meanwhile Australia could be facing another 'Black Summer' with this year's bushfire season, which last year emitted the equivalent of 80 percent of the coal-exporting country's typical annual greenhouse emissions (tinyurl.com/5bb7rscs).

Nevertheless, uncertainty remains at the core of the climate problem, as two recent examples illustrate. A new study has warned that the system of heat and density-driven ocean currents known as the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation (AMOC) is in danger of collapse by the 2050s and possibly even as early as 2025. Not to be confused with the Gulf Stream, which can't shut down as it is driven by winds and the Earth's rotation, AMOC is highly vulnerable to changes in ocean temperature as a result

of global warming. It is known to be at its slowest in 1,600 years, and its collapse could mean temperature drops of 5-10 degrees in Europe, with Britain's climate becoming like that of northern Canada. Meanwhile equatorial regions, unable to dissipate their acquired heat northwards, would become virtually uninhabitable ovens for around 3 billion people. Where previous populations would have coped by migrating, property and nation-obsessed capitalism will of course do its best to fence them in and make migration impossible.

The researchers did not expect their report to be received favourably, even by the IPCC: 'Obviously, I would have preferred the outcome of our study was less controversial because we are of course being attacked from all sides now. But that's how science works' (tinyurl.com/4kcf9dva).

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Americas, a huge area of the eastern equatorial Pacific that according to climate models should be warming, has in fact been cooling for 30 years, and nobody knows why, or what it will do next. If this 'cold tongue' carries on cooling, it could conceivably reduce global warming by up to 30 percent, which would be a big win. But it could also increase the risk of droughts in the Horn of Africa and the southwest US, already suffering from a twenty-year megadrought. If, conversely, the cold tongue flips and starts to warm, it will desiccate the Amazon, Australia, Indonesia and India, while places like Peru and Ecuador could be inundated by floods and landslides.

Nobody knows which scenario to plan for, even supposing governments can make plans that won't be foiled by the capitalist market. Scientists call the cold tongue 'the most important unanswered question in climate science'. But from a socialist perspective, there's an even bigger unanswered question, which is why we are letting the wealthy capitalist class and their pet governments gamble recklessly with forces nobody understands, with potentially devastating consequences for life on Earth.

There are people who believe that no real revolutionary change can happen unless there is first a global catastrophe and a general collapse of civilisation. Indeed, some even wish it. We think that's a prescription for barbarism, not socialism. But workers of the world need to get together to put a stop to this capitalist game of hazard, and soon, otherwise the doom-lovers may get their wish.

PJS

Dear Editors

Labour-time ‘money’?

Dear Comrades,

Many thanks for the thoughtful review of the new edition of Marx’s Critique of the Gotha Program. I wish to respond to just a few points:

My introduction explicitly rejects the idea that ‘the Critique offers a model of exactly how a post-capitalist society ought to be constructed’ (p. 27) so I surely do not think that the labor tokens discussed by Marx is immediately applicable to the modern world. But we do have to ask why he poses remuneration based on actual (as against abstractly universal) labor time as flowing from the initial socialization of the means of production. Three issues are involved:

(1) Class society has drummed into us the notion that we give to others and society based on what we get in return. It is the very principle of commodity exchange, a quid pro quo. Attaining ‘from each according to one’s abilities, to each according to their needs,’ transcends this state of affairs. However, Marx is realistic enough to know that ‘the muck of the ages’ will still stick to us as a new society emerges; it will take time to learn how to fully treat others (and nature) as ends in themselves rather than as means to an end. Some kind of quid pro quo will undoubtedly persist, but hopefully, not for long.

(2) The question is what kind. Prior to a communist society proceeding ‘from its own foundations’ a unit of exchange will be needed to clear transactions without utilizing such value-forms as money. If the issue is ignored, there is the risk of regressing into relying on an abstract equivalent.

(3) To be sure, the forces of production are much more developed today than in Marx’s time. But this is precisely what makes his discussion of a lower phase of communism so pertinent. The immediate task facing any communist society will be taking down and dismantling much of the forces of production, which are by now embedded with technologies that are so inherently destructive as to undermine human existence itself. That is a problem

that is surely not going to be resolved in the blink of an eye.

Lastly, innumerable revolutionary Marxists (beginning with Rosa Luxemburg) had a lot to say about the need to fight for reforms (the eight-hour day, broadening the electoral franchise, etc.) while advancing the cause of revolution—just as many anti-racist activists today emphasize fighting for “non-reformist reforms” (like defunding police) in challenging racial capitalism. It’s not just that today’s social movements need to learn from Marxism; Marxists also need to learn (and in some cases unlearn) based on the insights and perspectives of today’s social movements. Otherwise, our politics becomes a ‘painting of grey upon grey.’ I discuss this in a recent essay: www.historicalmaterialism.org/index.php/articles/beyond-binary-race-and-class.

Peter Hudis

Reply:

That ‘class society has drummed into us that we give to others and society based on what we get in return’ and that this will continue into socialist (or communist, the same thing) society suggests that socialism will be something that people will simply be transposed into with the ideas they now have. But socialism can only be brought into being by people who want it and understand its implications, one of which is that it will involve a wider reciprocity than the type you have in mind where something is given in the expectation that something of equal value will be returned.

People contribute to socialist society what they can with the expectation (and knowledge) that they will receive, from what is made available, what they need. In other words, from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs. Not that it is possible to calculate what an individual contributes to society. Production today is collective and all those who take part in production contribute collectively. Also, those unable to work are equally entitled to have their needs met.

Should there be temporary shortages of some things in the very early stages of socialism, as it is conceivable there might be, some more realistic way of dealing with this situation than distribution according to time worked would have to be found (not by us today but by those around at the time). Direct distribution of given amounts might be one. We don’t agree that ‘a unit of exchange will be needed to clear

transactions without utilizing such value-forms as money’. It is such ‘labour money’, both as ‘remuneration’ (taxed to provide an income for those unable to work) and as the price of consumer goods and services, that would be much more likely to lead to a return to proper money.

Basing what people get on how long they work would infringe what you say ‘class society has drummed into us’ as that assumes that people accept that an hour’s contribution is the same whatever the particular work or skill. It, too, implies the rejection of ‘the muck of ages’

Marx probably mentioned a labour-time voucher scheme because it was a popular idea amongst German Social Democrats at the time. When, in 1891 the German Social Democrats adopted a new programme there was no mention of this (which only had an appeal for artisans making a whole product). Later in the same Notes, Marx made the more basic point that how goods are distributed in socialism would depend on how much and what there was to distribute. It is not necessary to list all the technological developments since 1875 which mean that there will be immensely more to distribute even in the early days of socialism than then and so the stage of ‘to each according to their needs’ can be reached fairly rapidly after the common ownership and democratic control of productive resources has been established.

We are not against such measures under capitalism as factory laws and the extension of the franchise that Luxemburg (and before her, Marx) campaigned for. Our position is that it is not the job of a socialist party to itself advocate them; its job is to advocate socialism. We don’t accept the concept of ‘non-reformist reforms’ as reforms that ‘challenge capitalism’. Reforms that undermined capitalism either won’t be enacted or, if they are, won’t work as intended as they would interfere with the operation of capitalism’s economic laws and provoke an economic crisis. To win enough support for them would involve as much time and energy as winning support for socialism. Another reason for concentrating on campaigning for socialism. *Editors.*



Digital pound, what's that?

'NEW DEPUTY governor will oversee project to mint digital pound', was how the *Times* (2 August) reported the appointment of Sarah Breen as a deputy governor of the Bank of England. Here's the Bank's description of what is envisaged:

'The digital pound would be a new type of money issued by the Bank of England for everyone to use for day-to-day spending. You would be able to use it in-store or online to make payments. This type of money is known as a central bank digital currency (CBDC). [...] The digital pound would be denominated in sterling and its value would be stable, just like banknotes. £10 in digital pounds would always have the same value as a £10 banknote. [...] The digital pound would be like an electronic version of the banknotes issued by the Bank of England. [...] The way that you would access digital pounds would be through a digital wallet that would be provided by a private company' (www.bankofengland.co.uk/the-digital-pound).

The press statement issued by the Treasury and the Bank in February announcing a consultation on the subject explained that the Bank would provide the infrastructure in the form of a 'core ledger'; the private companies would offer people

digital wallets through smartphones or smart cards (tinyurl.com/4nkjxvpt).

Money, as Marx pointed out in section 4 of chapter 1 of *Capital* on 'The Fetishism of Commodities', is not a physical thing but the expression of a social relation. He wrote of 'a definite social relation between men that assumes... the fantastic form of a relation between things'. The relation between people he had in mind was between producers of different articles for sale who could only be brought into relation with each other via the market, which required a means of exchange. Today this includes the relation between buyers and sellers of labour power.

The physical thing in which this social relation is expressed can, and has, varied. In pre-capitalist times it had been, among other things, cows and cowrie shells but historically the most important form that money has taken has been the precious metals gold and silver. However, even these haven't expressed money for many years now, having been replaced by intrinsically valueless paper notes and cheap metal coins issued by the state. We are currently in a period where these are being increasingly replaced by a computer code. The coming of central bank digital

money would complete this change in the form (though not the substance) of money.

You can see the logic, from a capitalist point of view, of doing something like this. Payments these days are increasingly made electronically anyway, by transfers to and between banks. However, the 'libertarian' right are up in arms about it. Soon after the government's announcement Nigel Farage tweeted on 7 February: 'Central Bank Digital Currencies will give the state total control over our lives. This must be resisted'. In the recent by-elections, the Reform Party, the successor to the Brexit Party, promised to 'oppose a cashless society and central bank digital currency' while Piers Corbyn shouted 'KEEP CASH!' Yet another conspiracy theory.

The government is saying that the new form of money would not replace cash but that notes and coins would continue to be issued. What it would replace is bank transfers. Which would make it even clearer that banks only circulate money. They don't create it. Only a central bank like the Bank of England can do that.

The socialist retort to Piers Corbyn might be 'Smash Cash', or, rather, change the social relation of which money is an expression by making productive resources commonly owned and democratically controlled. Money would then vanish into thin air.

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Halo Halo

IS CHINA to be congratulated on putting 'illegal religion and superstition' books into the same category as pornography? Heterodox teachings are prohibited. In June the Market Supervision Bureau in Shangcheng County raided bookstores looking for those types of books and confiscated those found. With impressionable youngsters in mind the MSB searched bookstores near schools and colleges (*Bitter Winter* 29 June).

China's Central Institute of Socialism (sic) has been teaching Christian leaders 'core Marxist principles (sic), the 20th National Congress of CCP, and Xi Jinping's thought on a "new era of Socialism"! (*Bitter Winter* 13 June). Crack the 'he's not the messiah, he's a naughty boy' joke about Xi Jinping at your peril.

* * *

RICHARD DAWKINS, as of 25 June, is very annoyed with New Zealand. Science students in NZ are to be taught that, 'Māori 'Ways of Knowing' (Mātauranga Māori) have equal standing with 'western' science.' Dawkins calls this a 'ludicrous policy' and 'adolescent virtue-signalling' (tinyurl.com/yb54tfwa).

Which country will be the first to elevate Mary Eddy Baker to a surgical genius

and insist that Christian Science replaces the learning presently taught in medical schools?

* * *

WELCOME TO the class struggle Brothers! Church of England clergy discover that they're members of the working class! The trades union *Unite* has a Faith branch and the 2000 who pay their union subs every week have got their District officer to put in a first-time-ever pay claim for a minimum of 9.4 percent. Their employer has, amongst other assets, a £10.3 billion investment fund which produces over a ten per cent return. Those Sunday collection boxes must be raking in the gelt. Unite's General Secretary says, 'The clergy deliver a clear message for the Church of faith in the hereafter. Unite is fighting for a better deal for them in the here and now' (*Counterfire*, 23 June).

Sounds like those preaching pie in the sky need to put down their bibles and pick up the *Socialist Standard*.

* * *

DOES ANYONE remember the *Only Fools and Horses* episode, The Miracle of Peckham, where DelBoy scams money from exploiting a weeping statue of Mary in the local church? The 'miracle' occurs



because the lead of the church roof has been nicked and when it rains the water drips down and off the face of the statue. Has the Pope seen this episode and is it one of his favourites?

Miracles don't happen! The pontiff has been berating his flock for believing in 'miracles' and weeping madonnas in particular. 'Apparitions of the Virgin Mary are "not always real", he said, in what appears to be an indirect reference to a woman who drew thousands of pilgrims to pray before a statue that she claimed shed tears of blood.' 'The Madonna has never drawn [attention] to herself,' he added. The statue was bought by Maria Scarpulla in Bosnia, who returned to Italy and claimed the Madonna wept tears of blood and communicated to her (*Guardian*, 4 June).

As if!

DC

Tiny tips

A VIDEO has captured the dramatic moment a £300,000 Roll-Royce was hoisted up to a penthouse on request of a billionaire in China. The luxurious Rolls-Royce Ghost was sent up to the 44th floor of a high-rise building after the wealthy businessman decided he wanted his car parked on his balcony (tinyurl.com/3yvtv63e).

Eswatini heads to the polls soon, with elections scheduled for September. But there's nothing remotely democratic in prospect. The country remains ruled by King Mswati III, Africa's last absolute monarch, who presides over Eswatini with an iron fist. Mswati dissolved parliament on 11 July, confident there's little chance of people who disagree with him winning (tinyurl.com/msbaae72).

'Legislative protections remain weak across the continent,' the researchers who collated the results of the survey said in a response to questions. In 'Somalia, Somaliland, Mauritania and Northern

Nigeria homosexuality can be punishable by death,' they said (tinyurl.com/4buzjv55).

Disadvantaged Britons are dying 10 years sooner than their wealthier compatriots – victims of what's become known as the 'shit life syndrome' – a life marked by poor living conditions, disease and addiction. The documentary profiles people who have a job but can still afford nothing – from Blackpool in the west, to Ashton-under-Lyne and Cumbria, on the border with Scotland (tinyurl.com/3scyx5a6).

A Labour government in the UK under Starmer will bring no significant changes in economic or foreign policy and will make no difference whatsoever to the lives of working class people (tinyurl.com/4hw9pey3).

When I spoke to Cohen [co-founder of Ben & Jerry's ice cream], the group's primary donor, according to Fritz, he echoed the ad's key points, saying U.S. arms manufacturers saw NATO's expansion as a 'financial bonanza.' 'In the end, money won,' he said with a resigned tone. 'And today, not only are they providing weapons to all the new NATO countries, but they're providing weapons to Ukraine.' I told Cohen I could understand his opposition to the war

and follow his critique of U.S. foreign policy, but I couldn't grasp how he could take a position that put him in the same corner as a government that is bombing civilians. He refused to be drawn in. 'I'm not supporting Russia, I'm not supporting Ukraine,' he said. 'I'm supporting negotiations to end the war instead of providing more weapons to continue the war' (tinyurl.com/2p827284).

The federal minimum wage in the United States would be \$42 an hour today if it rose at the same pace as Wall Street bonuses in recent decades. But it hasn't. Monday marks 14 years since the last federal minimum wage increase—the longest stretch without a boost since the late 1930s, when the national wage floor was first established. Since 2009, the federal minimum wage has been stuck at \$7.25 an hour, pay that's currently not livable in any state in the US (tinyurl.com/35jebfkm).

The implication of Kennedy's statement is that the [Covid-19] disease is a biological weapon created by Chinese researchers and Jewish American scientists to kill Christians (bit.ly/44PAouB).

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

MIDLANDS

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

Yorkshire Regional branch.

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.

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

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Edinburgh branch. Meets 1st Sunday, 11am on Discord. Contact: Fraser Anderson f_raz_1@hotmail.com

Glasgow branch. Meets physically: 2nd Friday of the month; online Discord: 3rd Tuesday of the month. Contact: Paul Edwards, rainbow3@btopenworld.com • 07484 717893

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

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

WALES

South Wales Branch (Cardiff and Swansea)

Meets 2nd Monday 7.30pm on JITSJ.

(meet.jit.si/spgbsouthwales3).

Contact: botterillr@gmail.com or

Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. 01792 643624

Central Branch

Meets 2nd Sunday of the month, 10am (UK time) meet.jit.si/CentralBranchSPGB. Contact: cbs@worldsocialism.org.

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Emptying the ocean with a teaspoon

WE LEARN from the *Guardian* about a food programme aimed at primary school children in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. Seventeen percent of the Kenyan population, over nine million people, live in extreme poverty (worldpoverty.io/map).

From the article: 'According to Save The Children, 26% of children in Kenya are living with stunted growth due to malnutrition' (tinyurl.com/w949dmee).

A Kenyan 'not for profit' organisation involved in helping to provide four hundred thousand meals a day to 225 primary schools and young child development centres in Nairobi states, on its website, the obvious truth that hungry children cannot learn properly and can't grow healthily.

Their solution? To improve educational outcomes through the provision of nutritious food.

This Kenyan charity is to be commended, within limits, in concentrating on the single aim of feeding hungry children. Many charities express their aims, or visions, as being bringing about positive changes but none of them involve the replacement of capitalism. The legendary Greek hero, Hercules, was tasked with twelve 'impossible' labours. The task of cleaning out the Augean stables would seem the most relevant one to that of 'cleaning up post-capitalism'. Not an impossible undertaking as there will millions of people across the world involved in accomplishing that.

In contrast to the Kenyan charity, Lankelly Chase with £130 million in assets is planning on divesting itself of that amount because the people who run it are having a crisis of conscience. The organisation gives £13 million a year toward 'hundreds of charities operating in areas such as social, racial and climate justice'.

They claim, 'We will make space to reimagine how wealth, capital and social justice can co-exist in the service of all life, now and for future generations' (tinyurl.com/4ramn7wf). Is that 'wealth'

as used by Adam Smith, national income? By 'capital' do they mean the asset-owning class, the minority who continue to exploit the majority?

What's this organisation's aim, is it to persuade the former class to be nicer all round and give out a few more bob from their ill-gotten gains? Will a promise be made in return to persuade the rest of us not to instigate a revolution?

The term 'jam tomorrow' comes to mind. At the present time a vast number of people can't even afford margarine.

Stockholm Syndrome is a psychological condition – over time those held captive by a group or individuals begin to identify with the purpose of their captors. Capitalism would appear to have successfully indoctrinated many into that frame of mind.

Would it be stretching a point to infer the same of recipients of charity? Whether being fed in Africa or being given food parcels in a rich economy where social ills should be better able to be alleviated, there is a sense of 'thank goodness for X because I don't know how I would manage if it wasn't for so and so'.

To quote Dylan Thomas, the response should not be one of grateful subservience but one of 'Do not go gentle into that good night / Rage, rage against the dying of the light'.

Some might argue that given the ongoing present conditions, not just in the UK, but across the world of devastating rises in the cost of food, housing and many other commodities, charities are more welcome than ever before.

There are people who now find themselves dependent upon charity when that wasn't previously necessary. Whilst capitalism exists the moral dilemma of those who find they have no option but to accept such largesse, providing they don't fall into the category of the 'undeserving poor', is conditioned by the instinct of survival irrespective of the sources from

whence it comes. However, that doesn't mean being grateful, being appreciative, being thankful or singing the praises of charities necessarily.

Those Stockholm Syndrome devotees of religious fairytales may point to the biblical comment that the poor are always with us. Ergo, it's an insoluble problem. One religion demands that once personal wealth goes above a certain amount then two and a half percent of it must be paid toward charitable relief of the poor and the orphans. With the number of adherents it has, that must work out to a very tidy sum every year. Given how long it must have been collecting, has it achieved a successful resolution of the problem? Answers on a postcard.

Lankelly Chase tell us, 'We are striving for a world healed by justice, equity and inclusion by challenging existing systems and creating the conditions for much healthier systems to emerge.'

Oh dear. Not to doubt the sincerity of those running this charity but the naivety is unbelievable. Our refusal to endorse charities being taken as read in this case, one cannot help thinking that the £130m might do more good if transferred to those providing meals for hungry children in Africa.

But when that money was used up, what then? Would the number of people living in extreme poverty be reduced? Would children stop going hungry?

Perhaps the millions might be donated to the Socialist Party, if legal, which entity, be assured, would put it to very good use in accelerating the 'conditions for much healthier systems to emerge'. Only one emergent system is necessary. Alternatively, if they would like advice as to how to participate in the aim of replacing capitalism with socialism it will be immediately forthcoming.

Socialism, you know it makes sense!

DC



Credit: Save the Children

Migration – what is the problem?

THERE HAS been migration for as long as there have been people. Firstly moving from Africa and spreading over the entire world. Not that it is a peculiarly human trait. Come autumn or spring, some birds migrate considerable distances. There are herd animals with a tendency to move en masse.

However, anyone thinking migration is a novel phenomenon and a recent political problem could be forgiven considering how it's being portrayed by sensationalist media and desperate politicians. A veritable armada of small boats swarming across the English Channel, or so it would seem.

'Johnny Foreigner' is single-mindedly intent on accessing public services having never paid a penny towards them, expecting to be housed and receive benefits. That is when not undertaking devious criminal schemes, or bringing extensive extended families to join them in enjoying such largesse.

With a general election pending both Tory and Labour Parties have identified this emotive issue as a major potential vote winner, or loser. Each vies with the other to demonstrate how they alone can tackle this problem. There is the nub of the issue. Migrants are not people with problems, they are deemed to be the problem. And problems must have solutions, though it is doubtful if either party would claim to have the final solution. Although there is a discomfiting resonance whenever politicians specifically identify a particular group of people as being alien.

Capitalism has used this sense of the lesser *other* from its outset. Taking early advantage of that notion led to brutal forced migration from Africa in the slave trade, with enterprising traders shipping involuntary human cargo to the money-making plantations of the 'New World'. A deliberate movement of people to generate profits, the capital that financially fuelled the industrial revolution.

It might be objected that slaves are not the same as migrants in that they were transported against their will. But how many people become migrants undertaking the perilous, and too often fatal, sea journeys from choice? War, abject poverty and famine are drivers of people who are uprooted with little or no control over their journey.

Those early days of capitalist industry in Britain saw the enclosure of rural land creating a mass migration from the countryside to the new industrial urban centres, where labour was required. There was no consultative process, just the financial imperative. Undoubtedly, in the

initial stages there were men who had to leave their families in the village while they went to the towns.

Eventually those men would send for their families to join them. Such movement would have been no simple task in the absence of organised transportation. Later, many descendants of those families would relocate to the Americas and the antipodes, driven again by desperation. Some went against their will as transported criminals.

Even economic migration within national boundaries led, on occasion to conflict. For example, in 1832 a strike by miners at Friars Goose in Gateshead was met with the eviction of the miners and their families from their colliery tied cottages. This was to accommodate lead miners, who'd been impoverished by their declining industry, who were migrating to the expanding coalfields. Because it suited the mine owners, this migration was welcomed by them, while the locals were forced aside by use of the local militia from Newcastle.

It requires a little genealogical research for those who identify their families as belonging to a particular former industrial area in the north of England, for example, to find antecedents, going back only a few generations, who came from the then rural south. The growing interest in genealogy has led to many taking DNA tests to establish their familial origins. It is common enough to meet people claiming blood-ties to Scandinavia, Northern Germany, Ireland and Wales, often with unexpected influences from much further afield.

It seems we are all descendants of foreigners, not that those Viking and Saxon forebears would have thought of themselves in such terms. Movement of people was commonplace and there were no nations to identify with.

All too frequently there are news reports of another small boat foundering in the Channel during an attempt to cross over from France that ends in disaster. For a brief moment the drowned become men, women and children, rather than simply migrants. There may be a momentary reduction in belligerence towards those promoted to victims, while the antagonism is refocused on villainous people-smugglers making money out of human misery.

Asylum traders, like slave traders before them, are of course simply motivated by money. As are the manufacturers of the wholly unsuitable inflatables used as makeshift ferries. As, also, are the politicians of various stripes who soon return to ranting on about the unacceptable cost of migrants coming to 'our' country.

The accommodation of migrants, it is insisted, must be as basic and unwelcoming as possible to act as a deterrent to others. This begs the question as to how dreadful must accommodation become to be a more effective deterrent than the prospect of being launched in an overcrowded rubber dinghy into the world's busiest and turbulent shipping lane with the very real possibility of drowning?

Politicians continue to trade their quack solutions to the ever-present migrant situation. Repurpose army camps? Use hotels, a nice little earner for hoteliers? Or perhaps take an idea from history and anchor a few prison hulks, sorry barges, around the coast.

If migrants are so ungrateful as to object, they can always take the reported advice of Lee Anderson, deputy Tory chair: 'If they don't like the barges, they can fuck off back to France.'

What if the small boats were luxury yachts carrying super-rich traders in the wealth created for them by workers? These economic migrants, in the sense of being wealthy enough to sail from country to country as they will, would certainly be welcomed.

However, those referred to pejoratively as economic migrants are classed as being even less worthy of acceptance than those fleeing war and political repression. Yet, the common cause of their distress is capitalism. War is the most belligerent expression of that fundamental characteristic of capitalism, competition. Politics, whether totalitarian or democratic, ultimately serves capitalists' interests, the need to ensure profitability.

Meanwhile, those workers who cannot serve the ceaseless pursuit of their home country's capitalist class become economically surplus. Migration in search of the wherewithal to live then becomes the driving necessity.

The 'migration problem' has a solution; abolish capitalism. Then everyone can make a valued contribution to society, local, regional and internationally. And in return their self-defined needs will be met. In socialism people can travel freely and safely, as and when they choose. Or stay put around where they are born if they wish. The choice is straightforward, continue ad infinitum to have migrants fleeing war, famine, repression and poverty, all of which will persist as long as capitalism is allowed to persist. Alternatively, sink capitalism and promote socialism as the world's common destination.

DAVE ALTON

Socialist Standard September 2023

The labour army wants YOU!

AN 1890 poem by Rudyard Kipling, *Tommy*, (from the slang for a soldier, Tommy Atkins), tells of the contempt held toward the working class member of the Army by the civilian population. Until that is, they were required to go off and fight some war on behalf of British capitalism. It's reasonable to assume that economic circumstances drove a lot of Tommies into the armed forces.

Herbert Kitchener was the Secretary of State for War during the 1914-1918 one (he drowned in 1916). Initially, the armed forces were able to swell their numbers with volunteers, but as time passed and large numbers of young working-class men were being led like lambs to the slaughter on the battlefields of France and beyond it was necessary to introduce conscription in 1916. Probably Kitchener is most well known for the recruiting poster in which he stares out whilst pointing at the viewer: Kitchener Wants You!

The present Conservative Member of Parliament for Chingford and Woodford Green appears to fancy himself as another Kitchener. Iain Duncan Smith's not exhorting the working class via a poster. He's aiming at the industrial reserve army of labour, more specifically, those who through disabilities and sickness of various kinds are physically unable to be waged/salaried wage slaves. Smith used an Op-ed in *The Sun* headlined, 'We must get thousands of people on long term sickness back into work for the sake of the economy – here's how'.

Data from the Department of Work and Pensions analysed by the Centre for Social Justice suggests there are some 1.6 million more claimants since 2020,

costing the state around £13 billion more in welfare benefits. Reducing this number by getting more people back into work will help the government find the room it needs to invest in public services and reduce the tax burden (tinyurl.com/3etumu43). What Smith wants is to lessen the tax burden for capitalists.

Smith's predecessor in that constituency, also a Conservative, was a minister in Margaret Thatcher's government. Norman Tebbit was, in a similar vein, fond of bashing the unemployed. Tebbit said the unemployed should get on their bikes and go look for work and get a job as his father had in the thirties.

Writing in Liverpool's favourite tabloid, and in a very similar vein, Piers Morgan targeted 'work-shy wastrels': 'Official UK unemployment numbers are at a near-record low of just under 4%. Yet staggeringly, a quarter of the people of working age – that's over 10 million – don't currently have a paid job. That includes students and carers, but it also includes vast numbers of people claiming to be sick and disabled and living off government handouts, or who've just taken early retirement. Add the enormous number of people on some form of benefits – estimated at over 5 million, many of whom are clearly gaming the easy life system – and Britain's become a nation of shamefully unhealthy, entitled, couch potatoes. No wonder a recent poll had the UK being No1 in the world for having citizens who would most want to quit their jobs and do nothing if money was no issue.'

Note the 'gaming' and its inference that they are perpetuating a fraud of

some kind. Has Morgan ever tried living off unemployment pay, or a basic state pension?

'How the hell has it come to this? We've always been a country of ambitious and industrious grafters who've taken pride in putting a shift in' (tinyurl.com/bdwxfsfu). Ha, the delusions of the well-heeled!

And there's more! In a Bloomberg podcast, on 19 May, with Guy Hands, the billionaire chairman of a large private equity company, said, 'I look at the UK and see that, in 2030, Poland will be wealthier than we are. In 2040, we will be the poor man in Europe'.

He opines, 'the UK should not have left the EU, as the country needs rule of law and consistency, but not a single politician is talking about going back.' He lamented that 'Brexit has essentially thrown the country back 50 years, to the 1970s, a decade that is widely remembered as a time of crisis, with skyrocketing inflation, high unemployment, strikes and power cuts.'

'Since the UK left the European Union, it has been competing on the world stage, but the country's current laws are not suitable for the new environment.'

Now that the UK is out of the EU, the British government could take a radical approach and change some of its laws, Hands said, citing the country's 'extraordinarily complex' labour laws that are a 'nightmare' compared to other European countries.

Nightmare labour laws! Perhaps capitalists would prefer a throwback to nineteenth century industrial relations?

We, the majority, would prefer socialism.

DC



Credit: Historyoftheaic

Chile during and after Salvador Allende

SEPTEMBER 11 marks 50 years since the violent death of the elected president of Chile, Salvador Allende, in 1973, and the overthrowing of his government by a military coup backed by the CIA, establishing a brutal dictatorship presided over by General Augusto Pinochet. This caused the death of thousands of Chilean workers, students, union leaders, political activists, and many were incarcerated, 'disappeared', and tortured via electric shock, sexual abuse, beating and waterboarding.

The election and death of President Allende took place in the middle of the Cold War and the struggles for world hegemony between the USA and the Soviet Union and the influence of Cuba in Latin America. Chile was hemmed in by several conservative and military dictatorships in the region backed by the USA government who also protected the economic interest of the US capitalist class, along with the internal ruling class. There was also a huge economic crisis facing Chilean capitalism.

The objective of the US government was to avoid another enclave like Cuba on its own backyard since Cuba had a heavy political influence in Latin America, and the Cuban government had diplomatic, commercial, and military relations with the Soviet Union, and was backing guerrillas in several Latin American countries.

The government of Chile called itself socialist in the same way that the Cuban government called itself socialist or Marxist-Leninist, and Fidel Castro was a close ally of the Chilean government. Moreover, Castro himself visited Chile in 1970 in the middle of the social upheaval caused by miners' strikes.

The government of Chile proclaimed the so-called 'Chilean path to socialism', as Cuba also had proclaimed the Cuban road to socialism. The reality is that neither one of them were establishing a socialist society, but state capitalism as in the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea. The basic principles of a capitalist society were retained, including wage slavery, production for profits and the domination of a state apparatus over the working class.

Allende was elected in 1970 with the support of a coalition of leftist political parties known as the Popular Unity, obtaining one third of the votes with a narrow margin of 36.2 percent over Jorge Alessandri, the former president of Chile who obtained 34.9 percent, and the Christian Social Democrats who got 27.8 percent. As such, Allende was not elected by a majority of votes but, according to the Chilean constitution of the time, if no presidential candidate obtained a majority of the popular vote, Congress would choose one of the two candidates with the highest number of votes as the winner, and

the decision was effectively made by the Christian Social Democrats which approved his nomination as president of Chile.

Social reforms

The government of Allende, immediately after his nomination as President, initiated various social-democratic reforms for the Chilean working class, and the nationalization of large industries such as copper, iron, coal, cement and large extensions of land, the creation of a health and medical program, a food program, and education for the poor. All those reforms were described as the Chilean path to socialism, but in reality, they were reforms made for and within the context of a capitalist society, and they would not have turned Chile into a socialist society run in the name of the workers. Instead, the economic reforms would have established a state-capitalist system of production administered by the state, the same process that took place in Cuba in 1960.

They established diplomatic and commercial relations with countries on which the US had placed embargos and commercial blockades, such as Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea, and several African and Asian countries, and they also became a member of the Non-Aligned countries movement (Third World). They developed a relationship with the Soviet Union but their relations with the US were not of the same order as the previous conservative government who had openly aligned with the US capitalist class. The nationalization of several US corporations created further friction with them.

Strikes

From the very beginning of the Allende government, thousands of mine workers in different parts of the country went on strike for high wages and better working conditions, as their real wages had gone down due to high levels of inflation. The response of the Allende government was to send in the military and police to reprimand them and tell them to make sacrifices to produce for the so-called homeland. Fidel Castro regarded the workers as reactionaries and counter revolutionaries, demagogues, agitators and agents of US imperialism. The Left, instead of supporting the workers, supported the so-called socialist government; the Communist Party which was part of the Popular Unity also supported the actions taken by the military and the police against the workers, and the strikes continued spreading to others sectors of the working class including the transport workers.

The Popular Unity government was obliged to incorporate the military as part of the state administrative apparatus, under the name Popular Army. But the Popular Unity government was no longer able to run an economy based on state control of the means of production, and had weak support.

The military duly took the opportunity to execute a bloody coup d'état, and Allende either shot himself or was assassinated.

The Pinochet dictatorship

The subsequent conservative government of Augusto Pinochet (which the leftists often call fascist) lasted for a period of 16 years, and all reforms implemented during the government of Allende were reversed and most sectors of the economy were privatized including workers' pensions. This is what the leftists wrongly call neo-liberalism, though the reality is probably in some ways more in line with monetarism. The reversal of all those Allende reforms is a clear indication that reforms implemented by leaders can also be reversed, they are not permanent, and sometimes those reforms are implemented in order to try to pacify the working class. There is certainly no guarantee they will succeed, as Allende's didn't.

Chile since Pinochet

In 1988 a plebiscite was held and the majority of the Chileans workers voted for the removal of the presidency and dictatorship of Pinochet, and a new election subsequently took place. A Christian Democrat president was elected, and several legal actions brought against Pinochet and the military. He was indicted and placed under house arrest where he died, but the military kept the power of the state and its agencies, despite the fact that various presidents, governments and Congresses from different political tendencies were elected including social democrats and leftists. None of them were able to resolve the underlying problems of the people.

The present government of Boric was elected with a coalition of 'Communists' and 'Socialists' offering many promises for workers and for women. A new constitution was put to the vote and rejected by the electorate, including the indigenous Mapuches. The government of Boric knew in advance that the new proposal was most likely going to be rejected and they arguably wanted it to be rejected because they knew that most of the constitutional clauses were not going to be implemented due to the fact that the right-wing faction controls the Congress and was not going to allow any drastic economic and political changes. The case of Chile is a clear indication that the problems facing the working class cannot be resolved by left-wing or right-wing governments and that the problems are not the leaders, political parties, fascism, neoliberalism, or other political tendencies, or the exact implementation of reforms – the real underlying problem, whatever the regime, is capitalism.

MF

The singularity of a socialist revolution

ACCORDING TO the Left there have been multiple socialist revolutions. Or, more precisely, there have been many political dramas that are claimed by both the Left and by the protagonists involved to have been socialist in nature. A great pantheon of heroes has been created to satisfy the Left's desperate need for messianic figures which include such individuals as Karl Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky, Castro, Che Guevara, Nelson Mandela, Hugo Chavez and even the likes of Mao Zedong and Joseph Stalin! One thing most of these have in common is failure but can we consider all or any of them to be socialists? We can say that the socialism of Marx and Luxemburg was profoundly different in nature from the political structures favoured, and in some cases created, by the others in the list. Fifty years ago this month is the anniversary of the 'martyrdom' of another great hero of the Left – Salvador Allende. Perhaps by considering his ideology and activity we can further explore the profound political divide between his (and the Left's) notion of a socialist revolution and that of Marx before the subsequent evolution of the theories of 'state socialism', Bolshevism and reformism.

The 'Socialist Party of Chile' was formed in 1933 as an attempt to unite the various groups that identified as 'socialist'. Like so many Leftist 'broad churches' it was plagued by division and disagreement but by 1967 it had embraced the oxymoron of Marxism/Leninism with its de-rigueur 'central committee'. Allende managed to get himself elected as president in 1970 through his popularity with wider leftist movements and the formation of a 'Popular Unity' coalition. In this way he believed he could create socialism by nationalising the major industries of Chile. Why he believed this, as the Left still do, is primarily down to the influence of the Bolshevik coup of 1917 in Russia. Lenin had transformed Marx's view, that nationalisation was a good way to accelerate the productive forces and so make socialism possible, into a perverse form of socialism itself. Capitalism was in its infancy in Russia and Lenin knew that there was no chance of creating the mass consciousness and productive forces needed for a socialist revolution so he



created the concept of a vanguard who could lead the masses to 'communism' via an intermediate stage he called socialism. In the absence of a full understanding of Marxian politics this became the ideological orthodoxy of the Left, showing a callous disregard for the misery and suffering it had caused in Russia and emphasising an unprincipled greed for power that Bolshevism represented. Thus the scene was set for yet another ill-fated episode in the long political tragedy that was state capitalism.

Although we cannot see into the mind of anyone it is quite possible that Salvador Allende was primarily motivated by a real concern for the poor and oppressed among his people, but what we can identify with certainty are the reasons for his failure: calling an economy and society socialist when it is based on wage labour and capital, even when the means of production are owned by the state, is politically incoherent at best and downright duplicitous at worst; socialism can never be created in one country alone since it inherits the global structure that capitalism has instigated and which makes socialism possible; without majority mass consciousness socialism cannot be imposed by any elite, however well intentioned they may be. There can only be one global socialist revolution (in contrast to the Socialist Party of Chile's Bolshevik-inspired piecemeal concept of a Confederacy of Socialist Republics) and any claim that there have been and will be many socialist revolutions is born of political naivety, egotistical hubris or an opportunist lust for power.

The failure of the Allende regime was inevitable since any kind of capitalism is subject to the same global economic pressures that ensure that the exploitation

of labour for profit is foremost. Those who claim that it would have survived without the interference and ideological hostility of the USA are missing the point that state capitalism is just as bad, if not worse in many respects, as is 'free-market' capitalism from the perspective of the exploited masses. The moral outrage that masquerades as 'realpolitik' among the Left is in reality a mixture of contempt for the intelligence and potential of the working class combined with an elitist idealism which can only be described as bourgeois. They cannot conceive of a moneyless, stateless democratic global society and so they believe no one else can – certainly not the uneducated masses. The Marxian understanding of social revolution is not concerned with the changing identities of governments who attempt to facilitate or control capitalism but with the emergence of a mass consciousness that will replace production for profit with production for need.

It cannot be doubted that the subsequent dictatorship regime led by General Augusto Pinochet and supported by the CIA was a nightmare for the Chilean people. While capitalism lasts there will always be malicious empires like that of the USA whose job it is to destabilise and destroy any regimes that are considered to be against their imperialist interests. While visiting the UK in 1998 Pinochet was arrested on charges of genocide and the British people had to witness his stomach-churning and grotesque defence by Thatcher and his subsequent release from house arrest by Labour's Jack Straw. Allende was a courageous individual but, in the end, like his fellow Leftists who have achieved power, he changed nothing.

WEZ



TWENTY YEARS ago, in 2003, our new and glorious King warned us of the potential of a 'grey goo' catastrophe, from new technological and social developments running out of control and devouring the planet.

How right he was

The modern period has been characterised by massive structures. Physical, economic, and social structures. There were the massive engineering projects of the advancing capitalist age, building railways, dams, factories, and megastructures, finally outshining the Egyptians and their pyramids. Then the great power blocs of Entente, Alliance, and Axis, fielding armies that finally surpassed those of Alexander and Genghis Khan, and ending with the stasis of NATO versus the Soviet Union, where the whole world was threatened with annihilation from a general nuclear exchange. And socially there has been the erection of Democracy, as a temple of classless worship, an ever-expanding sphere where the rich and the indigent supposedly had the same access: the same access to information with the BBC, and press regulation: the same access to physical citizenship via palliatives and doles, above all the NHS; to education via free schools and university tuition even for the working class; political equality via the franchise, regulated by the Electoral Commission. Over all this stood a civil service that was no respecter of persons, administering the whole system, and a broad political consensus between all political parties and classes that this was a Good Thing and should continue.

Respectable working class

One of the most important structures resulting from this was the respectable working class. A class with reforming, not radical chains, that voted Labour but looked down on subversive ideas. The class that fought for a fair day's wage, not the abolition of the wages system, that traded its birthright for a mess of pottage consisting of an 8-hour working day, a manageable mortgage, and pensioned retirement.

The other blocs also had their different systems, and similar social contracts, explicit or implicit, as to the relationship of worker to capital, and of capital to the state. While each bloc would berate the others as to their barbarity, in practice within the limits of available wealth and level of development their structures were remarkably similar. Free market, mixed, or state capital were points on a scale.

Now of course what is order for the spider is chaos for the fly. Those outside of the blocs, or who fell through the gaps of the system, were fair game. A corporation could outflank a minimum wage and other controls by setting up shop in the global South, or by employing transient labour, or underpaying women (stamping out child labour, within the state's confines, was a universal boast). Imperialism abroad became neo-imperialism, its victims now crushed under debt rather than the boot heel. All's fair, and you can work yourself out of poverty. Supposedly.

It was in Britain that all this first fell. New class war economic experiments, first tried out in post-coup Chile, were brought to

these shores by an insurgent Conservative government in 1979. A convenient military victory provided the political capital for a triumphant second election, while a manifesto to swing the pendulum in the other direction was described as 'the longest suicide note in history'. Across the 1980s, while the rest of what was rather optimistically called civilisation continued its sclerotic social compromise, the moles burrowed under, waging war at all points at home and abroad with no purpose but chaos that would fell the existing order, bringing more profit to capital and thus less to labour, while destroying the international order and baring the Soviet's throats to their gnawing teeth. In the decades since the fall of the Soviets, their tunnelling has borne fruit, and structure after structure has come crashing down.

This is the grey goo that we were warned about. Describing it as an intelligent system is something of a reach: it is entirely instinctive, yet assimilates an entire society, destroying its existing systems, and turns it into a formless slurry that can be consumed for a profit. The career and pension is a distant dream, as is housing or even feeding your children. Voting is under attack at the polls, but far more importantly the recent campaign to define almost any and all social democracy as antisemitic has turned the BBC, the media bulwark against the billionaire media barons, into a firehose of servile bullshit.

There is no democracy without debate. Education standards are now those of the psychotic billionaire hobbyists who purchase academies. Our foreign policy is no longer part of the NATO structure,

with a legacy of Empire structure, but chasing the Americans' heels to hear their commands of the day, in the new US-UKA 'alliance'. And the social fabric of imperialism has broken down: where the city was supposed to shower its brutal trading wealth onto the country from above, as a substitute for native manufactures, now the Square Mile acts as a jet engine firing the misery of billions towards the bank accounts of hedge-fund billionaires at supersonic speeds, bypassing the North which is scheduled for managed demolition. And recently of course we had the ultimate political Punch and Judy show, of the Truss 'administration', along with the first budget to open with the line 'Everybody be cool, this is a robbery'. A man who seemed to be wholly owned by Crispin Odey, a currency speculator, wrote a budget that put billions in the pockets of the likes of Crispin Odey through currency and bond market speculation, while we all suffer, and no-one can talk about it because the first structure to be dissolved was our own backbones. As someone once said, the British are finally going to find out how it feels to be ruled by the British.

Reasons to be cheerful?

As Ash from *Alien* might say to the working class facing this onslaught, 'You have my sympathies'. But from a revolutionary perspective there are possibilities. The problem is, the Western working class had succumbed to victory disease. The social contract was the social stasis, that stopped anything from moving. Workers had systems, such as (but not only) unions, to maintain their position as a class of capital, rather than being a revolutionary class. Their chains were reformist chains, and a fair day's pay for a fair day's work seemed a logical demand for the working class, and they rightly looked askance at the dangerous nutters that wanted to pull it all down. At the same time the capitalists of various persuasions were locked into sclerotic and inefficient systems that gave them an average rate of profit and kept them from the guillotine, and they could at least take pride in the empire-building nature of their enlightened taxes.

But now this is going. Out with a working class who do not directly own capital but do have rights and privileges, pensions funded on the stock market, are consulted, are offered routes out of their class however tenuous and individual, in short are a class of capital. Their party is the Labour Party, as subordinate and loyal partners of the manufacturers in their battle against landowners and financiers, and those members of the working class who drifted further leftwards so often had

reasons other than their class position, whether personal, quixotic, hobbyist, or just falling through the cracks. Through the classic period of capital, revolutionary politics has not, arguably, been economic but millenarian and historical class politics. But now that working class is becoming a memory. The revolutionary proletariat is not just about the people who work. The proletariat is not a class so much as the dissolution of all classes: and workers are, in these last days of capital, once again proletarian. In times of madness, the nutters are finally the voice of sanity they should always have been.

Lenin asked, 'What is to be done?' – this is the question posed by the vanguard of the organised working class in capitalism. It is a question that demands order, an end to the chaos, the fly trying to take over the spider's web or at the very least come to a modus vivendi with the spider. And it is a cry that has socialism of a particular kind as its object, the 'socialism' of increasing wages and regulated working days and pensions and swimming pools.

The cry of the proletariat, the dissolution of all classes, is different. Its cry is 'I am nothing and should be everything!' As Durruti said:

'We have always lived in slums and holes in the wall. We will know how to accommodate ourselves for a while. For you must not forget that we can also build. It is we who built these palaces and cities, here in Spain and America and everywhere. We, the workers. We can build others to take their place. And better ones. We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth; there is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie might blast

and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world here, in our hearts. That world is growing in this minute.'

A world of goo is the legacy of Capital, as the fabled scorpion that stung the frog mid-river, not due to its advantage but due to its nature. It is a world that the established working class must fear, and is warned against. But it is a world that the proletariat can rule without any instruction from a vanguard or obedience to an overseer, every step better than their last, and a world so debased that no treasured structures need to be preserved. As even the American bulwark falters into farce, a ringmaster lashing out at the lions that have seen their military failure and now are coming to see them less as tormentor and more as meat, threatening world nuclear war to obscure the corruption on a single corrupt scion's laptop but more just to seek oblivion over their inevitable decomposition: the international nature of the working class starts to make more practical, rather than oratorical, sense.

A world of ruins, not just of the physical but the political, the religious, the economic, where all that is solid melts into air, is a world where the proletariat can survive and flourish but the bourgeois worker cannot: to survive collapse, to survive shame, and prosper, you must become a cockroach, and the prideful cannot make the transition. A world of goo is a world of possibilities, but the working class must first go under the yoke of shame; fortunately, our capitalists are lashing us in that direction. But then, in some ways capitalists have always been the better Marxists.

HOBGOBLIN



Credit: Getty Images

Why I'm a socialist

EVERY MORNING, as the sun is still rising, a crisp 5am where I am awakened by noise coming through the paper-thin floors and walls of my flat complex, I open the blinds and take in the beauty outside my window. Of course, this beauty is the litter flying out of our bins and dancing around, a private circus show! And, as I hear my dad grumbling, and getting his crappy grilled cheese breakfast made in the George Foreman, I can practically already smell the rust coming from his steel-capped shoes and the electrical smoke on his carpenter pants. I often wonder, isn't there a world better than this?

Is there not a world where my dad is fairly compensated for the hours he spends, a world where I don't have to live in a dump surrounded by affluence? Walking to school, I never understood that I was different to the others, but now it's so clear. I go past family homes every morning, decorated with BMWs and Chevrolets parked outside with their licence-plate-teeth grinning at me, and every morning I'm jealous that people have an upstairs. I've never had an upstairs of my own, a room which wasn't practically transparent for everyone to listen in on because of how small the house is. I've never been to a private school, nor have I the outfits or the latest fashion which all my peers covet. I've always been what they would consider an outsider, inadequate and an outlier to their inner circle.

My friends don't really get it. Sure, they're not rich, but they're well-off enough to have a house – I mean how lucky is that? Never in my parents' lives have they had the money to actually buy property, yet some people in the world have dozens of homes, which they don't even live in. What do they have them for? To showcase? To boast? Meanwhile, I need a place to live which doesn't have mould in every corner, and a boiler which isn't straight from 1940.

Perhaps because I'm not one of them, I don't understand the reasons behind it – I probably never will – but to me, this world is black and white. There shouldn't be an argument over who deserves housing, we are all deserving of at least that – shelter. And I find it so hideous that people like us are out on the streets while landlords hoard their property, boasting about how smart it was to get into real estate. It's not 'smart', it's just the exploitation of a broken system.

What does this party offer to me,



specifically, as someone who is both transgender and autistic? Genuinely, what does this article have to do with either of those things? What are you talking about, Jame? Well, I think the answer lies in the fact that both of these things will forever be intertwined with my status as a working-class citizen. I don't have the money to afford private gender-affirming care, of course, so I've had to rely on the wonderful Conservative-run NHS for help.

Denied

I've been on the waiting list for about two years. Of course, when profits and tax cuts are prioritised over actually helping the people, and healthcare is neglected, this is what you end up with. I've had to wait a similar amount of time to get my autism diagnosis, on top of that.

So what, Jame? What does this have to do with anything, why the Socialist Party?

Because *capitalism doesn't care about people like me*. Not one day in this world have I ever felt like I've truly mattered, simply just another burden to the government, never somebody worth fighting for. Never have I felt reassured by government when they say they'll repeal conversion therapy, never have I felt safe when I've walked through CAMHS' doors and I'm met with stark-empty hallways and a dilapidated counselling service. Never have I felt equal, and sure my superiors can smile and make me feel comfortable all they can, but to them I'm just a pawn they need to wrangle in place so that their bosses don't decrease their pay for not managing me well enough. Do I really want to continue living in a system where the

worker is so undervalued and overworked, that they are not even considered human? We are just products, who need to be maintained and placated so that the higher-ups aren't faced by union strikes.

But it hasn't been working. It hasn't been good enough. Concessions are not being met, and I'm tired of being ignored as a transgender, autistic, working-class teenager. My needs, most people's needs, are not being met. We're in a world where the difference between the mega-wealthy and the poor is so discouraging that it's hard to think that we can carry on this way.

I don't see the world in the same way that you do, most likely. And in my eyes, things are either good or bad. Things are unbelievably bad. I see the world as being in a massive stalemate, torn between what's right, and greed. There are solutions, but nobody is jumping at the opportunity to use these solutions, because they are too distracted by greed. Yet, nobody is speaking out? Everyone is just sitting around, letting our leaders do nothing? When will change come? When will things actually be good? I just don't understand. People will flagrantly defend our leaders, capitalism, the free market, but what has it ever done for us?

What has it ever done for us trans, autistic, working-class teens?

That's why I joined the Socialist Party, because I'm tired of the way I'm treated. I'm tired of being exploited, ignored, disparaged, and I want to make a change. I don't want to be part of a system which hates me for my uniqueness.

JAME(S) WITKOWSKI

Before Marx: David Ricardo

DAVID RICARDO, who died 200 years ago this month, was after Marx the person who contributed most in the 19th century towards an understanding of how the capitalist economic system works. Today he is remembered in academic economics only for his theory of comparative advantage in international trade (that a country should not necessarily produce for export what it can produce the cheapest but should concentrate on what it can produce cheaper than others). Socialists remember him for his class analysis of the capitalist economy and for formulating the labour theory of value in clear terms.

Class analysis

The 1817 Preface to his *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* begins:

‘The produce of the earth — all that is derived from its surface by the united application of labour, machinery, and capital, is divided among three classes of the community; namely, the proprietor of the land, the owner of the stock or capital necessary for its cultivation, and the labourers by whose industry it is cultivated’.

This three-class division had already been used by Adam Smith and was adopted by Marx in *Capital*. It was accepted by nearly all those analysing the capitalist system, whether for or against it, up until the end of the 19th century. Academic economics then abandoned both it and the labour theory of value, and for the same reason — the anti-capitalist interpretation given to them by Marx and others.

Ricardo’s use of the word ‘cultivate’ brings out how important a role agriculture played in the economy at that time. It was also important for politics in Britain, with the main struggle in the 19th century being between the representatives of the ‘proprietors of land’ and the ‘owners of stock or capital’. Ricardo was an open supporter of the latter and his economic theory underpinned his politics by showing that rent was an unearned income that impeded capital accumulation. He was himself a capitalist (a financial capitalist rather than a factory owner) and a Whig MP.

By the end of the century the three-class division had become outdated, with the economic and political victory of the ‘owners of capital’ and the merger of the landowners into the capitalist class. Since then there have been only two classes in the capitalist economy — the owning class and the working class.

Labour theory of value

The labour theory of value states,

basically, that the exchange-value of a commodity depends on the amount of labour required to produce it. As Ricardo put it, in the opening lines of his book:

‘The value of a commodity, or the quantity of any other commodity for which it will exchange, depends on the relative quantity of labour which is necessary for its production...’

He went on to deal with various objections to this view and answered them in a way which socialists still do.

To have an exchange value a commodity must be useful:

‘Utility then is not the measure of exchangeable value, although it is absolutely essential to it. If a commodity were in no way useful — in other words, if it could in no way contribute to our gratification,—it would be destitute of exchangeable value, however scarce it might be, or whatever quantity of labour might be necessary to procure it.’

The theory did not apply to such items for sale as ‘rare statues and pictures’ — since they were unique and could not be reproduced, their exchange-value depended entirely on the demand for them. The theory applied only to commodities that can be reproduced:

‘In speaking then of commodities, of their exchangeable value, and of the laws which regulate their relative prices, we mean always such commodities only as can be increased in quantity by the exertion of human industry, and on the production of which competition operates without restraint’.

It wasn’t just the labour applied at the last stage of production that counted, but also the labour applied in the early stages of their production. So it was the total labour employed in producing a commodity from start to finish including the labour involved in transporting it to the place of sale:

‘Commodities vary in value conformably with this principle: in estimating the exchangeable value of stockings, for example, we shall find that their value, comparatively with other things, depends on the total quantity of labour necessary to manufacture them, and bring them to market’.

Ricardo then went on to spell this out in detail:

‘First, there is the labour necessary to cultivate the land on which the raw cotton is grown; secondly, the labour of conveying the cotton to the country where the stockings are to be manufactured, which includes a portion of the labour bestowed in building the ship in which it



is conveyed, and which is charged in the freight of the goods; thirdly, the labour of the spinner and weaver; fourthly, a portion of the labour of the engineer, smith, and carpenter, who erected the buildings and machinery, by the help of which they are made; fifthly, the labour of the retail dealer, and of many others, whom it is unnecessary further to particularize. The aggregate sum of these various kinds of labour, determines the quantity of other things for which these stockings will exchange, while the same consideration of the various quantities of labour which have been bestowed on those other things, will equally govern the portion of them which will be given for the stockings’.

A fall in the amount of labour required at any of these stages would result in a fall in the exchange value of the final product. On the other hand, a fall at the last stage, because it contributes only a part of total value, would not mean an equivalent fall in the product’s value, a point often forgotten when it comes to calculating productivity and which is why an increase in this is not as much as sometimes assumed.

There were inconsistencies. One was over the ‘value of labour’ — what determined wages: how come that there was a difference between what labour produced and what it was paid? Some in the 1820s and 1830s argued that the monopoly of instruments of labour by the ‘owners of stock or capital’ and the competition between workers for jobs meant that workers were not paid ‘the full product of their labour’ and that the source of profits was the ‘unpaid labour’ of the workers. They were later called the ‘Ricardian Socialists’ though this was not what they called themselves.

In his economic writings up until the mid-1850s Marx could be classified as one of these. He, too, saw competition between workers as resulting in them being paid less than the value of what they produced. It was only when he began to study economics more thoroughly in the library of the British Museum in the 1850s that he came up with the solution: what the workers were paid for was the value of their capacity to work (their 'labour power') which was different from and less than the value of their labour (what they produced). Marx called this difference 'surplus value'. This was the same as 'unpaid labour', a term still in use inherited from pre-Marxian working-class economics but which must not be understood as saying that workers are not paid the full value of their labour power; they generally are.

Falling rate of profits

There was another question that Ricardo discussed and that Marx was also led

into discussing. Ricardo's chapter 'On Profits' is devoted to arguing that there is a 'natural tendency' for there to be 'a fall in the general rate of profits'. He saw this as being the result of diminishing returns from agriculture which would require more labour to be devoted to producing what workers needed to consume to be able to work properly; so wages would rise at the expense of profits. Not only that but the rent paid by the 'owners of stock' to those who owned the land they farmed or on which their factory stood would go up as more and more land had to be brought into cultivation to provide food for workers' consumption.

The general assumption of post-Ricardo economists was that the rate of profit would tend to fall. Marx took up the problem and sought to explain any such tendency from factors internal to the workings of capitalism rather than something external such as diminishing returns from agriculture. He explained

it as resulting from a larger and larger proportion of capital consisting of buildings, machinery and plant compared with that used to employ productive workers as only the latter produced the new value, a part of which was the source of profits.

Because Marx devoted so much space to correcting Ricardo on this the impression has been created that Marx saw this tendency as having an actual long-run effect on capital accumulation. Some students of Marxian economics have been so bold as to argue that it would lead to the collapse of capitalism as, at some point, the rate of profit would fall so low that capital accumulation would stop. This was not Marx's view. He did see a temporary fall in the rate of profit as playing an important role in capitalism's boom/slump cycle but this was caused by other factors (over-investment in a boom leading to overproduction).

ADAM BUICK

Cooking the Books

Reformism sucks

ALTHOUGH IT is rather obvious that the 'resource-based economy' that Peter Joseph of the Zeitgeist Movement wants – with no ownership rights over resources, no money and open access according to need – is recognisably what we could call 'socialism', he himself has consistently refrained from using the word.

In a podcast on 17 June entitled *Why 'socialism' sucks. And it's not why you think ;)* he gives one reason for this (tinyurl.com/46eb6vp3). Basically, he sees it as a reaction to the effects of capitalism involving government intervention in the market to try to deal with them. That's not how we use the word. The term we use for that is 'reformism'. But let's see how he develops his argument.

He sees capitalism as a system founded on 'the use of markets':

'Markets are indispensable to capitalism and define its very nature. From the act of market trade, the structure develops in a self-organising manner. For instance, markets can only exist if there is property or ownership. Ownership leads to the idea of capital, which in turn creates group competitive incentives, resulting in hierarchies, power imbalances, inequity, and other common features. These features also generate responses such as legal regulation against property crime, etc.'

So, capitalism is a system with its own

structural logic:

'the market system is hence a dynamic system with structure and not a blob of malleable philosophical incentives [...] The system tells us what to do and not the other way around. [...] [L]iterally every country in the world that uses a market economy – which is every single one – is utilising the same foundational structure regardless of how it's administered or regulated. The only variation we observe within this basic system structure is the extent to which external forces attempt to manage or control it. This intervention does not alter the system structure itself but rather influences its endogenous behaviours, reorienting outcomes within certain limits.'

But such interventions cannot solve the problems capitalism generates:

'A truly objective system analysis of capitalism reveals that poverty, deadly inequity, and environmental destruction are built-in functions of the system, as natural to the system as the production of a good like a smart phone. The only options to address these negative issues are either to completely move away from the trade-based system or to attempt strategic regulation to slow down these outcomes, although never completely eliminate them, of course — they are built in.'

This leads to his definition of 'socialism'.

'Socialism essentially builds upon the idea of regulating the inherent features of market economics to create a more sustainable and equitable world. It involves micro-level interventions, such as the state taking control of healthcare to ensure more equitable access. This is a common understanding of socialism in popular culture, deviating from the natural, self-regulatory nature of markets by using bureaucracy/law to compensate for market failures and ideally produce more balanced outcomes.'

In this sense 'socialism' is not a distinct, separate system but a reaction within the capitalist system. It sucks, in his view, because when it is portrayed as the alternative to capitalism it 'limits the potential for improved economic and social organisation'. This sucks for us too, only we call it 'reformism'.

We agree that capitalism is a system with a built-in logic that can't be lastingly overcome through government or any other intervention, even if we don't start from the same basis of systems analysis that Joseph does (or accept his rather unhistorical account of the origin and development of capitalism). Capitalism can't be reformed so as to work in any other way than it does. It needs to be replaced by a system that 'completely moves away from the trade-based system', involving the abolition of property rights over productive resources and production directly for use not sale. What we mean by socialism.

Super Marketing

WHAT'S THE difference between Wagon Wheels and Cart Wheels? About 10p a pack and the colour of their packaging: Cart Wheels are Aldi's cheaper version of the perennial chocolatey snack, which original maker Burton's insists hasn't shrunk over the decades. The differences- and similarities- between established brands like Wagon Wheels and supermarkets' counterparts were the subject of Channel 4's *Secrets Of The Supermarket Own-Brands*. Presenter Denise van Outen checks out the products lining the aisles, and chats with various experts to reveal how supermarket own-brands are more than just slightly inferior copycats of 'proper' brands. How they are marketed is as important as how they are manufactured, and the documentary only has enough time to outline some of the methods used to flog us one variety of comestibles over another. With its jaunty music and bright colours, the programme is pitched as a cheeky nudge to be more shopping savvy rather than a hard-hitting exposé of a racket. Despite this, it highlights how much we're manipulated not just in what we buy, but also what we think we're buying.

Most supermarkets have at least three 'tiers' of own-brand goods: the cheapest 'budget' range, the standard one which just undercuts the 'proper' brands, and the 'premium' one with the swankiest wrapping. Traditionally, 'budget' ranges were packaged in an obviously no-frills way, with the apparent cheapness of the design echoing the lower price. A tin of Tesco's Value baked beans with its stark blue and white stripes looked quite unlike a can of Heinz Beans. Strategies started to change around 2018, by which time discount chains like Aldi and Lidl had established themselves in the marketplace. Since then, 'budget' supermarket own-brands have been more likely to ape the packaging of their branded counterpart, such as Cart / Wagon Wheels and other favourites like Hula Hoops and Robinson's cordials. Often, the branding will barely mention the supermarket and instead go for an image that suggests a homespun, small-scale producer, such as Sainsbury's Stamford Street or Tesco's Stockwell & Co. Both strategies disguise that the products are 'budget' own-brands, although the 'premium' ranges, such as Sainsbury's Taste The Difference, aren't shy with mentioning the shop. All this suggests that supermarkets no longer want their name to be associated with cheapness, even



Credit: Channel 4

though cheapness is what more people are after since prices rocketed. Still, the strategies are doing what they're supposed to, proven by how supermarkets generate more profits from their own-brands than from branded products.

The way that own-brand goods are manufactured is planned to maximise profits by minimising costs. Richard Crampton, Sainsbury's Director of Fresh Food, admits that sometimes the three 'tiers' of their own-brand products, from 'budget' to 'premium', are all made in the same place. One example is their own-brand stuffed pasta, with each range distinguished from the others by slight variations in their recipes 'enhancing that product' to the 'same high standards', enthuses Crampton. There are also more similarities in the content of branded and own-brand goods than we might expect. For example, Hula Hoops and their replicas are both produced in the same crisp factory, albeit with varying ingredients or processes. And the six most well-known brands of washing powder are made by only two companies, with nearly all own-brand ones manufactured by a third. The diverse range of brands for what boils down to similar products by a few producers gives only an illusion of choice, one of capitalism's hallmarks.

The companies get away with this because of how their branding strategies are underpinned by an understanding of psychology. One state of mind which they aim to encourage is loyalty to a particular product. We're most likely to stick with 'proper' brands for toiletries, beauty products and cleaning materials, no doubt reinforced by their advertising campaigns which can 'shout louder', according to retail expert Miya Knights. While there's more competition between own-brand and branded food and drink, some long-established names have maintained their loyal followers, such as Coca Cola. The documentary features YouTube food

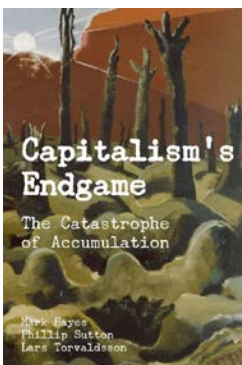
reviewers the Smythe family, whose parents resolutely only buy Coke. However, the predictable result of a blind taste test is that they mistake Lidl's Freeway cola for 'the real thing', showing that the brand they adhere to isn't as distinctive as they assume.

A related point was made when Denise and brand psychologist Jonathan Gabay set up a street stall to hand out Magnum-like ice creams to passers-by. Some are promoted with a snazzy image and an elaborate back story about how the ice cream gets churned, and others are only announced with the word 'Aldi' written in felt-tip. Even though the same ice cream was given out throughout, those which came with the sales pitch were thought to taste better than the ones without, even once the hoodwinked recipients were told the truth.

The two experiments show us how much our preferences, for food in this instance, are shaped by how they are commodified. A small number of producers have dominated the market by finding the most cost-effective ways to manufacture our more popular fodder. Tweaking the details of a basic recipe creates versions of the product which can be pitched to customers grouped by levels of spending ability. This lack of real choice between ice cream, cola or pasta is disguised by varying the branding, either a little or a lot. At its most manipulative, branding can even impact on how appetising we find the product, when we associate its image with good taste. Throughout, money dictates how this process plays out, in the costs of manufacturing and marketing, and then in the sales which turn into profits for the owners. The way that commodification moulds what we consume is inescapable in capitalism, of course, not just in what we use but also what we watch. *Secrets Of The Supermarket Own-Brands* itself was interspersed with glossy adverts and sponsored by a big name brand.

MIKE FOSTER

Checkmate?



Capitalism's Endgame.
Mark Hayes,
Phillip Sutton
and Lars
Torvaldsson. Old
Moles Collective.
2023.

This is by three writers who stand in the Left Communist tradition, the main organisations of which in the UK are the International Communist Current and the Communist Workers Organisation. They tend to agree with us that socialism or communism means a society of common ownership and free access to wealth without wages, prices, markets etc and also oppose reformism, state capitalism, nationalism and so on. Both groups are very small and they have a tendency (particularly the ICC) to express themselves using difficult, abstract terminology that found its height during the Third International period. It doesn't make for an easy read and it's equally easy to come to the conclusion that their minuscule size is as much to do with their inability to move beyond archaic language and formulas as it is about the substance of their political ideas.

Interestingly, this book seems to be an attempt to move a little beyond their established political positions and draws on the ideas of both groups while indicating that their previous formulations might be in need of some revision. Left Communists (like many Trotskyists) tend towards catastrophising – capitalism is forever in its death throws because of its internal contradictions and all that remains is for the proletariat to raise its combat to the level that the vanguard party can guide the revolution towards communism – indeed this is one of their key points of difference with the SPGB. The ICC has long held the view of Rosa Luxemburg that capitalism cannot meaningfully expand once it has integrated all the previously non-capitalist areas of the world economy (such as peasant economies) because in 'pure capitalism' the workers and capitalists combined are unable to buy back all the products of industry. This means external markets are necessary and once these have been exhausted then capitalism will enter a period of glutted markets and permanent crisis (said to have been around the time of the First World War). The authors dismiss this erroneous theory as we have done, as it simply does not correspond with the facts – and as we have demonstrated previously, it is also flawed at a theoretical

level. They also take issue with the alternative theory adopted by the CWO and originally developed by Grossman and Mattick that the falling rate of profit (and eventually, falling mass of profit) due to technological innovation is the key reason why capitalism is fatally flawed, leading to the need to purge excess capital from the system in destructive wars.

To the credit of the authors, they are at least living in the real world when they realise there is a need to account for capitalism's massive and continued expansion in recent decades and that it has not plunged humanity, as predicted, into another barbarous world war (though periodic economic crises and more localised wars have continued). They note that the genuine globalisation of capitalism (markets, financial superstructures, the labour market, etc) has underpinned periodically strong growth rates. They also note the massive and related expansion of energy usage, which has risen exponentially since the 1950s and led to a mass of climate change issues.

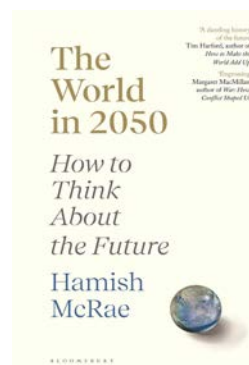
Indeed, it is here, more than in the pure economics, that they seem to locate capitalism's potential 'endgame', as the competitive drive to accumulate profit leads to ever more environmental destruction. These sections of the book are good and worth reading. This comes with a caveat though – like many of those in the broad Marxist tradition that may be seen to be developing or applying ideas in a slightly different way, there's a sense that they feel the need to justify everything they write with near constant reference to dead Germans and Russians. This, for instance, leads to endless poring over Marx's *German Ideology*, *Capital*, *Communist Manifesto* and other texts – the sections where they have more obviously extended their reading a little beyond this tend to be the best. There's nothing fundamentally wrong with the Marxist method – we sit in that tradition ourselves of course – but it's not entirely helpful if it turns into the political equivalent of an autistic tic.

There is another caveat too. We would agree with them that capitalism is a decadent social system in that it has long outlived its usefulness. By this we mean that by creating an interconnected world-wide division of labour and raising the forces of production to unparalleled heights, capitalism has created the conditions of mass sufficiency necessary for the construction of a socialist society to replace it. The last chapter of the book is called 'Imagining the Future' and it could reasonably be expected that the contents would be reflected by the title, but it is a disappointing chapter and a missed

opportunity, being mainly philosophical meanderings about the revolutionary process and the 'realm of freedom' beyond the 'realm of necessity'. There is nothing about the recent growth of the Fully Automated Luxury Communism idea, and certainly nothing on how 3D printing, digitalisation or even AI can help underpin a society of sufficiency and free access, which seems odd. However, the authors do say another, follow-up volume is being prepared, on 'the nature and perspective of communism'. We just hope they put down the *German Ideology* for a minute, reflect on their more recent reading and let their imaginations take over for a while.

DAP

Forward Thinking



The World in 2050: How to Think About the Future.
By Hamish
McRae.
Bloomsbury
£12.99.

In 1996 McRae published *The World in 2020*, in which he referred to the likelihood of Brexit. Now he has again looked a generation ahead, to examine what the future might hold. Of course he accepts the continuation of capitalism, with competing countries and political conflicts, but he has some interesting points to make about environmental issues, demographic changes and the impact of technology.

The global population is ageing, with people living longer and birth rates falling (the latter quite drastically so in Japan and South Korea, but less markedly in much of Europe). Younger workers are apparently more productive than older ones, but seven retirees for every ten people employed (as may happen in Japan by 2045) will put a strain on healthcare and so on. For instance, the Health Foundation recently claimed that by 2040 one person in five in England (nine million people) will be living with a serious illness. Other parts of the world are different, though, with India and Africa having youthful populations. By 2100 Africa may have 40 per cent of the global population: 'It will be young; most of the rest of the world will be old'. Nigeria may well have a population of 400 million (at present 224 million). The Anglosphere, as a 'community' of English speakers, is likely to be very powerful.

By 2050 the world will be able to feed a projected ten billion people, but water

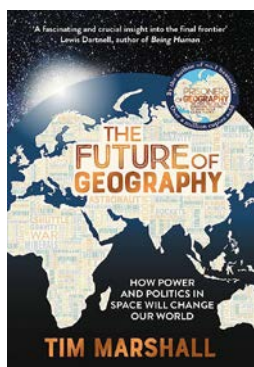
shortages may well be a major problem, at least in some places. Flooding of coastal areas will become increasingly likely, while some cities will run short of water, and two-thirds of people will probably live in cities. China will be short of water, arable land and sources of energy. Indonesia is at particular risk from climate change, with rising waters a real problem. Australia will have to cope with a warmer and drier climate. Global warming may well lead to large-scale migration, well beyond what currently takes place.

The last fifty years have seen little improvement for most people in 'developed' countries: 'Median earnings in the US have barely risen in real terms since the 1970s, while in Europe the picture is more varied, but certainly since 2007 they have at best been flat.' Workers' share of GDP has been falling since the 1960s. By 2050 there will supposedly be a 'middle-class world', which presumably means that at least two-thirds of the population will be comfortably off, though not much justification is given for this view. Productivity has been increasing over the decades, but it is easier to achieve this in manufacturing than in services, which is where consumption may become concentrated. The absence of any discussion here of degrowth is a major shortcoming, though.

But the world in 2050 might be very different, without rival countries or trade or inequality. That would be a much better situation to combat climate change and water shortages.

PB

Geopolitics



The Future of Geography: How Power and Politics in Space Will Change Our World.

By Tim Marshall, Published by Elliot and Thompson, 2023

Marshall has written a few books on geography and politics. In this work he argues that it is helpful to see outer space as a place with geography: it has corridors suited to travel, regions with key natural assets, land on which to build and dangerous hazards to avoid. In the twentieth century, the three main spacefaring nations were the USA, China and Russia. The USA is now the dominant player, with China catching up and Russia falling away. Each has their own version of a 'Space Force' to provide military

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capabilities for their forces on land, sea and air. In 2021 NATO established a Space Centre in Germany. Increasingly important are the capacities to attack and defend satellites which provide those capabilities.

The UK Space Command was created in 2021 and is based at RAF High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire. From there it controls their Skynet satellite communications system (not to be confused with the rogue AI system, also called Skynet, in the *Terminator* series of films). Its commander, Air Vice-Marshall Paul Godfrey, declared that 'One of our goals is to protect and defend our assets in and through space'.

Since this book was published Brigadier General Jesse Morehouse at US Space Command has claimed that Russian aggression and China's vision to become the dominant space power by mid-century, had left the US with 'no choice' but to prepare for orbital skirmishes. Morehouse said: 'The United States of America is ready to fight tonight in space if we have to' (*Guardian*, 28 May <http://bit.ly/45R1BB1>).

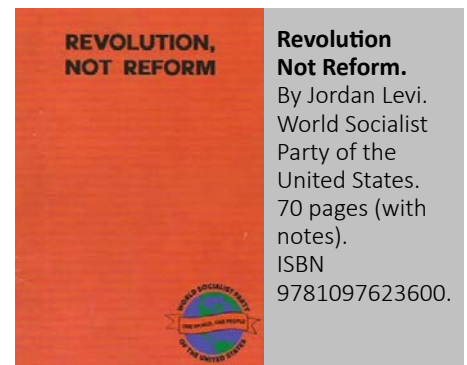
Elon Musk's SpaceX company has Starlink satellites and has distributed more than 10,000 broadband terminals (what Starlink engineers call 'Dishy McFlatfaces') to Ukraine and this has proved invaluable in fighting Russian forces. It could be argued that SpaceX was a third party from a country that was fighting a proxy war. If Russia shot down the satellites orbiting over Ukraine would America respond militarily? Nobody is sure what would happen.

The history of capitalism is the history of wars. Specifically, it is competition over markets, sources of raw materials, energy supplies, trade routes and areas of strategic importance. Space is no exception. As Marshall points out, 'There's money to be made in space'. As long as capitalism lasts it is not a question of 'if' but 'when' there will be a war in space. Such a conflict would be unlikely to be confined to space.

Marshall argues that China has asserted 'the superiority of communism'. He quotes the historian Barbara Tuchman writing in 1972 on the 'fact' that China is 'communist' and Marshall adds: 'Tuchman's words are as true now as then'. China is ruled by a 'Communist' Party dictatorship, but neither it nor any other state has claimed to have established a communist society. Marshall is by no means alone in making this error but it is worth emphasising — no country in the world has claimed to have established communism. Ever.

LEW

New pamphlet



Revolution Not Reform.
By Jordan Levi.
World Socialist Party of the United States.
70 pages (with notes).
ISBN
9781097623600.

This pamphlet, in booklet form, is a simple exposition of the case against capitalism and reformism and for socialism by a member of our companion party in the United States.

Two of the reformists discussed — it was written in 2019 — are Bernie Sanders (of whom the author was originally a supporter) and Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez. Both claim to be socialists but their programme shows that they favour the wages system 'but just want wages to be higher'; that they favour private ownership 'but just want small and big business to have a level playing field', that they still think housing, food, etc should be produced for sale 'but just want them to be cheaper'. As the author comments, 'sounds pretty capitalist to me'.

The idea that Russia, China, Cuba and Venezuela were or are socialist is debunked and they are shown as state capitalist to various degrees. Leninism is distinguished from the views of Marx and Engels as a distortion of them. The final chapters speculate on what the early days of socialism, as a classless, wageless, moneyless society based on common ownership, democratic control and production for use not profit, might be like.

Written in a chatty style it is easy to read, with the footnote references confined to the last 20 pages. It can be read in one go and so can be a useful short introduction to socialist ideas.

Copies can be obtained from our Head Office at 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN. Price £5 (postage included). Cheques made payable to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain". PayPal payments to: spgb@worldsocialism.org



Marx in his Time

MARX, in short, was politically active in an age when capitalism had yet to become the dominant world system, economically or politically. This decisively shaped his political tactics. Since he believed that capitalism paved the way for Socialism and that it still had part of this work to do, he advocated that, in this circumstance, socialists ought to work not only for Socialism but also for the progress of capitalism at the expense of reactionary political and social forms. This involved Marx in supporting campaigns to establish political democracy or which he felt would have the effect of stabilizing or protecting it. [...]

Living in the age he did when, as we saw, capitalism had not yet fully created the material basis for Socialism, Marx stated, when pressed on the question, that had the working class won political power at that time (which we can now see was most unlikely in view of its political immaturity, indeed in view of the fact that many of them still worked in petty industry) there would have had to be a longish period during which, first, control of the not yet fully socialized means of production would be centralized in the hands of society and then, this done, the means of production would be rapidly developed towards the stage at

which they could provide plenty for all. In the meantime, even on the basis of the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production, consumption would have to be restricted (Marx mentioned labour-time vouchers as a possible way of doing this). Free access according to individual needs could not be implemented till the means of production had been further developed. Marx did not mention how long he felt this might take but, judging by the subsequent technological advance under capitalism it could have been up to thirty years.

Once again this perspective made some sense in Marx's day, but not now. Today "transition periods", "revolutionary dictatorships", "labour-time vouchers", "first phases of socialism" are irrelevant, nineteenth-century concepts. Full free access to goods and services can be introduced almost immediately after Socialism has been established, and Socialism can be established almost immediately after the socialist-minded working class wins political power. This is what Marxism implies today and why we in the Socialist Party of Great Britain feel fully justified in claiming to be the Marxists of the twentieth century.

(Socialist Standard, Special Issue on Marxism, September 1973)

Action Replay

Gaming the System

THE COMMONWEALTH Games are nowhere near as big a sporting gathering or media show as the Olympics, but are still pretty sizeable, with twenty sports, over five thousand competitors and 1.5 million tickets sold for last year's Games. They have taken place in the UK several times in recent years: Manchester in 2002, Glasgow in 2014, Birmingham in 2022.

But things have started to go pear-shaped. The 2022 Games were originally awarded to Durban, but after possible financial problems were given to Birmingham instead. The Australian state of Victoria has decided not to stage the Games for 2026, on account of the rise in costs, with claims that the original estimate was likely to be doubled. The Commonwealth Games Federation is searching for a replacement host, and has said it could delay the Games until 2027 to allow for arrangements to be made. The Canadian province of Alberta has pulled out of a bid to host the Games in 2030, with a government minister saying the cost was a burden 'too high for the province to bear'.

On the other hand, it has been argued that, in recent cases, for each dollar spent by governments on operating costs and venues, two dollars was generated for the

local economy, with improved transport links and more jobs. 'That feelgood factor is great for business, and it really helped businesses to boost their profile,' said the head of the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce after the 2022 Games. One possibility for 2026-7 is that Birmingham could step in once more. But as usual under capitalism, visions of profit and economic growth are not always enough to persuade people to put their money in. Championships in other sports are often more attractive to sponsors and broadcasters.

There have been suggestions that the Games may not be held again, or that if they are, it will have to be in a very different format, perhaps with fewer sports or in more than one location. One former badminton medallist said, 'the really sad thing about the news ... about Victoria withdrawing is it's hard to escape the fact that this is almost certainly the beginning of the end for the Commonwealth Games. It's really hard to see how it has



Credit: PA

a long-term future now when so many governments and countries are just so reluctant to pay the cost'.

The Games began in 1930 as the British Empire Games, and are sometimes referred to as the Friendly Games. The Commonwealth Games Federation website states: 'We create and celebrate a uniquely inclusive and diverse sporting movement, levelling the playing field and addressing inequality in sport in all its forms, so that all people of the Commonwealth know that sport is for them'. Nothing to do with international rivalry, flag-waving or making a profit, then.

PB

World Socialist Movement Online Meetings

Our general discussion meetings are now held on Jitsi. To connect, enter <https://meet.jit.si/SPGBFridaynights> in your browser, then click Join Meeting.

SEPTEMBER 2023 EVENTS

World Socialist Movement online meetings

Sundays at 19.30 (IST) Discord

Weekly WSP (India) meeting

Friday 1 September 19.30 (GMT + 1)

Introduction to Jitsi

Friday 8 September 19.30 (GMT + 1)

Some misconceptions about the Labour Theory of Value

Speaker: Adam Buick

Friday 15 September 19.30 (GMT + 1)

Did you see the News?

Discussion on recent subjects in the news.

Host: Doug Mclellan

Friday 22 September 19.30 (GMT + 1)

What right-wing social media does to you

Speaker: Mike Foster

Friday 29 September 19.30 (GMT + 1)

How big an obstacle are ideas about 'human nature' to the spread of socialist ideas?

Speaker: Howard Moss



New Education Committee online sessions

We plan to run several Wednesday evening sessions on the Socialist Party pamphlet: "Some Aspects of Marxian Economics" starting mid-October. We'll study at a leisurely pace and no previous knowledge is required. Open to members and non-members. To register, or for further details, email spgb.ed@worldsocialism.org

Socialist Party Physical Meetings

Saturday 9 September, from 11.15am

Wigan Diggers Festival

The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event

Gerrard Winstanley Gardens, The Wiend, Wigan town centre, WN1 1PF

Sunday 24 September 12 noon -2pm

Literature stall outside Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High St London SW4 7UN

CARDIFF

Street Stall Every Saturday

1pm-3pm (weather permitting)

Capitol Shopping Centre, Queen Street (Newport Road end).

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.

Small **Change** in the Small Claims

A FRIEND recently asked me to assist her in taking a roofer she'd employed to the Small Claims Court. The work he'd done, she said, was so poor that she needed to employ someone else to put it right and she felt justified in taking out a case against him to claim the extra money it was going to cost her. That was around £3,000 and she didn't have it.

A speedy resolution?

I'd been told that the Small Claims Court was a place where, for a small fee, you could go to an informal hearing in front of a judge for a speedy resolution of your case. In the event what I discovered was entirely different. You could indeed go to this Court to claim any amount under £10,000 by filling in a relatively simple form and paying a sum of around 10% of the money you were claiming, which you hoped would be added to the amount you were awarded at the end. But any simplicity ended there and what came next was unbounded complication.

First of all, the defendant, the roofer, on receiving notice of the claim against him, denied all responsibility and issued a counter-claim arguing that my friend actually owed him money since he'd miscalculated the cost of the materials he'd used, even though he'd not told her about that at the time. Manifestly absurd of course, but the Court then ordered her to respond to his claim and send that response both to him and the Court. Then, when, after several weeks she received the roofer's response to her own claim, she was instructed to respond to that as well.

Pompous judge

Eventually, some weeks later, a date was set for a 'preliminary hearing'. The day came and I accompanied my friend. To say what happened at the hearing was- what's the word, farcical? overblown? – I don't know. I imagined we would have a chance to put our case to the Court directly. Instead, the judge, who really was the proverbial pompous ass, told us that the point of the hearing was not for him to hear what we had to say but to inform us how the case would progress henceforth. He then took 45 minutes to impart much largely irrelevant information, only at the end of which did he lay down instructions- of an incredibly complicated nature-about what we now needed to do. Though the roofer was clearly a hostile opponent,



we should get together with him to seek and agree on an independent assessor who would draw up a report on the work done, for which we should expect to pay around £1,500, the cost to be shared by both parties. There would then be another £300+ to pay towards the cost of the final hearing, which amount would fall upon my friend. The hearing itself, referred to by the judge as 'the trial' would, he decided, last a whole day sometime in the future.

We were discouraged to say the least, and even more so a couple of weeks later when we received the judge's formal written instructions confirming what he had said but adding a few additional hurdles. One of these was to supply both the Court and the defendant with all relevant documentation (contracts, bills, plans, photos, valuations, etc.) within a very limited timescale. Another was to send to everyone involved, ahead of the 'trial, a 'hearing bundle' containing all items of evidence from both sides 'with an index at the front and with each page numbered' and 'contained in a suitable ring binder'. All this for a hearing where £3,000 might or might not be granted on an undetermined day in the future.

Bemused

What would most people do in the circumstances? My friend, understandably bemused by all this, asked me what I thought. My advice to her was that, despite the blatant injustice of it, she needed to drop the case on the grounds that it just wasn't worth the time, energy and stress of it all. She agreed readily and said she realised that the 'Civil Justice Centre', which was responsible for processing the claim, had at best a tenuous connection with justice, its main concern

being the discharge of bureaucratic procedures. So we put together a letter stating that the absurdly heavy-handed way in which our simple claim was being handled left us with no choice but to discontinue it. As for paying for the extra work that needed to be done, she told me she would try and get an additional loan on her mortgage from the bank she held it with. Not ideal of course, but anything seemed better for her than staying in the bureaucratic maze she's entered.

Human energy wasted

What to conclude? Well, first of all, the very existence of the Small Claims Court (also known as the 'Money Claims Court') is a prime example of how the system we live in is ruled by money, with workers having to spend much of their time seeking to make sure they have enough of it to keep their heads above water. Even a small overspend or unexpected expense can put someone on the wrong side of solvency and make them have to scramble around, via such routes as the Small Claims Court, to try and put that right. Secondly that Court is just one of the many examples of the enormous waste of human energy and resources inherent in a system that spawns vast amounts of socially unproductive activities resulting in huge complex bureaucracies and large numbers of what have rightly been called 'bullshit jobs'.

Anyway, there's no doubt about what I'll say the next time I hear someone talk about going to the Small Claims Court. 'Just forget it.'

HOWARD MOSS