

THE

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SOCIALIST STANDARD

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

What to do about Reform UK?



Also: Not obscure nit-picking
40 years of Red Nose Day
All fools now?
Reforming UK politics?

How we live and how we might live
(part 8)
Who are the 'Middle Class'?
Work, free and unfree



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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'

What to do about Reform UK?

REFORM UK is a reincarnation of the Brexit Party and given the recent furore over Rupert Lowe MP, seems to be beset by the same type of periodic infighting among its representatives. In fact, it is effectively the same party with a change of name and led and financed by the same people — typically dissident members of the capitalist class who want less regulation of their financial activities. They realise that they can't get this unless they control political power — the power to make laws and regulations — and that the route to such control lies through the ballot box. They are hoping to repeat their success in the Brexit referendum, by again appealing to anti-foreigner prejudice and distrust of a 'liberal elite' that they say is running the country. But they are no friends of the workers whose votes they need.

Reform may have been in the process of trying to develop detailed policies and promises like the other parties, but this is not the basis of its appeal nor why people vote for it. It's the discontent felt by many about the economic problems they face and the failure of the Labour and Conservative parties to deliver on their

promises to mitigate these.

Reform's position can be described as 'nativist' in the sense of supporting a policy of prioritising the interests of native-born inhabitants against those of immigrants. In Britain this would include not just 'white' people but native-born and established 'non-whites'. As Reform members and candidates fall into the latter group, to campaign against the party for being racist won't wash as it can be seen not to be the case.

Even so, the way Reform expresses its nativism is crude, nasty and divisive. Obviously, socialists counter those spreading hatred against our fellow workers who are refugees or undocumented immigrants. That's part of our general position that the workers of the world should unite to replace capitalism with socialism.

The pressure group 'Stand Up To Racism' proposes to 'go door to door where Reform candidates are standing to mobilise the vote against them'. But voting for the other parties won't stem the growth of Reform as the basis for its growth has been precisely the failure of these parties to

deliver on their promises.

Reform feeds off the widespread view that the MPs and councillors of the other parties are out for themselves. But that's not the reason these parties don't deliver. It's because they support and operate within capitalism. They fail because under capitalism, a system driven by profit-making, profits have to come before meeting people's needs; a priority which those making political decisions have to apply. The established parties fail because it is impossible for them to succeed. They would fail even if all their MPs and councillors were saints.

Capitalism simply cannot be made to work for the benefit of the majority class of wage and salary workers and their dependants. Reform will fail too if ever it gets into positions where it is in charge of implementing policies. They too will have to run the system according to its priorities and economic laws.

The way to react to the growth of Reform is not to support the other parties against it. It is to campaign against capitalism and all the parties that support that system and for a society based on the common ownership and democratic control of productive resources so that they can be used to directly meet people's needs.

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Dark capitalism



READERS MAY have noticed that phishing emails have increased to almost epidemic rates lately. These are no longer badly spelled with wonky grammar. They are sophisticated efforts with corporate logos and plausible small print, purporting to be from banks or internet service providers, or even from your own club or organisation. Like Dracula, they can't get into your system unless you invite them across the threshold, in this case by clicking the provided link. Once in, they aim to drain your bank account dry. A simple rule is to assume that anything asking you to click or open something is a scam unless you're absolutely sure it isn't. You can find some other good advice here (tinyurl.com/52yprt7f).

There are phone scammers too, who are as annoying as they are persistent. In an effort to fight back, some computer scientists have set up honeytrap accounts, supposedly belonging to innocent and confused old ladies, but really controlled by an AI bot with the sole function of keeping scammers tied up in long phone calls answering silly questions (tinyurl.com/425s6bck).

But all that is a drop in the bucket compared to what's really going on in that shadowy criminal dimension of the profit system, which we might call 'dark capitalism'. Scamming is just one facet of this, but it's not just a grubby little cottage industry anymore, it's a multi-billion dollar global industry on the scale, by some estimates, of the illegal drug trade.

A deep and deeply disturbing analysis of this industry was provided recently in an 8-part podcast series called Scam Inc. by the *Economist* South-East Asia correspondent Sue-Lin Wong (economist.com/audio/podcasts/scam-inc). Since most of the series is paywalled it's worth briefly

recapping here. Just as AI can be used to fight scams, it is also being used to create them. There are two main types, love scams and crypto investment scams. Love scams target single, often older people, drawing them into a heady and convincing online or phone relationship until they are completely convinced it is real. AI is used to research and identify likely marks, and then deep-fake face and voice calls, as well as web and social media 'histories'. The victim is cultivated over months, and then invited to make a small investment which sure enough sees a profitable return, reinforcing their sense of trust. When they are later invited to make a big investment, with huge returns, they have no reason to think it's not genuine. And then, nothing. All the calls stop, the number is unobtainable, the scammer has vanished and so has the money. This, in the trade, is chillingly referred to as 'pig butchering'.

Crypto scams target people, perhaps with retirement savings, who are persuaded that they can't lose. Smart people are often at particular risk, largely because they overestimate their own sceptical faculties and underestimate how devious and tech-savvy the scammers are. One corporate finance manager paid over \$21 million of company funds after his board of directors, all of whom he knew personally, told him to in a teleconferencing meeting. What he didn't know was that the 'board of directors' were all deep-fake computer voices, and so convincing that he couldn't tell the difference. How can anyone defend themselves against that? Sue-Lin Wong's own solution has been to give all her family members a secret password, so that if 'she' ever phoned them asking for large amounts of money, they would have a way to verify it was really her.

You might think, at this point, that these scammers are the amoral jackals of capitalism, the worst of what Marx called the 'lumpenproletariat'. But the truth is even more horrible than that. Having interviewed one love-scam victim in Canada who lost \$75,000, Sue-Lin performed the almost miraculous feat of tracking down the very scammer who did it. And what she found would chill anyone's blood.

This is where dark capitalism turns darkest of all. The guilty scammer wasn't some ruthless money-grabbing parasite, she was a helpless kidnap victim terrified for her life. She had applied for what seemed like a promising job in Thailand, on the advice of a supposed friend, then was bundled into a car at Bangkok airport, trussed and blindfolded and driven across the border to a 'scam compound' in Myanmar, a barbed-wire fringed mini-city patrolled by dogs and armed guards. Her passport was taken away, and she was ordered to use the phones to scam westerners, on pain of physical beating, or even execution. Only if she scammed enough money would she ever be set free, they told her. In her compound were hundreds of other kidnap victims, all forced to do the same thing. And hers was only one of many such compounds.

Who are the gang lords behind all this? Very likely Chinese former Triad (mafia) bosses, kicked out of China by Xi Jinping's crackdowns but able to operate scams from anywhere. Under pressure from China, Myanmar's rebel forces recently broke open some of these scam compounds, releasing hundreds of trafficking victims (tinyurl.com/rfv9ayu9). But such compounds exist in other places across the world. One was even uncovered on the Isle of Man.

Even socialists, who think they know the depths of capitalism's depravity, must quail at its darkest criminal side, where no laws inhibit its drive to make a profit no matter who suffers. Here is where you see what money does to people, how low it makes them sink. Here is where the need to abolish capitalism screams, as loud as in any warzone, any overcrowded hospital, any sink estate, any overdose or private numb despair.

And yet, decent humanity shines through even in such circumstances. When told the full story about the Myanmar scammer who took \$75,000 from him, the Canadian offered to meet her to assure her that he didn't blame her for anything, and that he wished her well in the future. She, sadly, was too traumatised to agree to the meeting.

PJS

Dear Editor...

Not **obscure** nit-picking

THANK YOU for publishing a review (<https://tinyurl.com/3cnpzdtdb>) of my pamphlet entitled *Time to Get Rid of Money* (as are the Old Moles Collective as a whole for the various reviews of our books that you have published).

However I do find it sad that the SPGB needs to criticise in such a petty way. Why cannot you engage in a serious discussion? After all, as the review seems to grudgingly accept, we do both believe that class society and a society based on money must be eliminated. One would think this would be a basis for a more in depth review and some serious analysis and discussion of a complex money system and the way it works eg, its impact on the poor under capitalism, the wealth pyramid, the anarchy of the market, the increase of working class debt and debt generally, let alone the fact that money is purely electronic and that today gold is not used to backup currency.

But no, ALB ignores all these issues to perpetuate a traditional weakness of discussion by the leading figures of the SPGB in favour of the need to score cheap jibes through a mixture of false representation of ideas and a lack of effort. I don't pretend to have expert, detailed workings of today's complex financial systems at my fingertips but at least I am trying to explain the essentials and engage in discussion about what it really is. The Old Moles know that we will not convince everybody instantaneously of the absolute correctness of our political positions, so discussion is what we primarily aim to develop with our books.

First of all let us take note of some brief but important facts:

The level of world debt in 2024 is approx \$300 trillion yet the level of world GDP for 2023 only equals approx \$100 trillion dollars. The total value of gold in mines to 2024 is much less than this and equals only \$18.07 trillion (212,582 tonnes of gold have been mined to date at a market price of \$85 per gram at end of 2024).

For the UK the economy's net worth is about £11 trillion (2020) and the level of UK GDP equals £2.5 trillion (2022). Nevertheless, the level of debt in the UK is approximately £5 trillion (2024) and, according to the Bank

of England, the level of bank deposits in the UK come to £1.5 trillion (2023). However the amount of actual sterling available comes to only £94b (2022)

Did ALB make any real effort to understand such figures? They are easy enough to find and check online and clearly show that the money in circulation is much less than deposits in the banks and especially of the value of debt that exists. Furthermore, bank reserves are restricted to a small proportion of the deposits held by banks. Where then is the real money that ALB has so much trust in? ALB's faith in the capitalist banking system is touching but that is what the financial system depends on ie faith and it is sadly misplaced in a socialist.

ALB blithely dismisses the evidence from the Bank of England and the former head of the US Federal Reserve and tries to devise his own better explanation of loans that use reserves and bank deposits, but fails to realise that only 4 percent of deposits is kept as cash by bank, the remaining deposits and reserves are entirely electronic!

Yes, the idea of creating currency 'out of thin air' is hyperbole and yes the banks need to make a profit on this activity which may well limit the amount they can create at any given time, but this electronic money is created by computer and cash is printed to maintain this system. This is the money system in today's capitalist economy.

In every economy, the level of currency is only sufficient to facilitate the circulation of commodities so it does not cover total deposits let alone total GDP and the deposits and reserves held by banks. Moreover there is the fact that the valuation of a currency can change and even collapse — as recently in Argentina.

Any rational interpretation of this situation can only say the money is not worth actually anything. It is backed only by other coins and notes or by electronic records. All currency physical and electronic is only valuable and only works because the state backs it with promises and relies on the population keeping its faith in the money system — and ALB, I'm afraid, does his bit to support that system.

Debt is not the main problem, capitalism

and its shit financial system is and perhaps SPGB needs to investigate and discuss how capitalism really works instead of scoring debating points.

PHIL SUTTON

Reply:

It was the title of your pamphlet and your political background that led us to read and review it. We had expected 'some serious analysis and discussion of a complex money system' from a Marxian point of view but were disappointed to find that it endorsed a mistaken theory of the nature of banking that we had been combating for years, viz., that banks can create money 'by a stroke of the pen' (as it was put in the 1920s) and generate an income for themselves from the interest they charge for lending it — 'an electronic data entry costs virtually nothing but earns interest for the bank!', as you put it.

If this was the case, a bank would be a very special capitalist enterprise, one that could create a part of its capital out of thin air and obtain a profit from it. Every capitalist would want to be a banker. Actually, a bank's business model is to borrow money at one rate of interest, whether from savers or the money market, and to re-lend it at a higher rate. This 'spread' is the source of its income; what is left after paying its costs in terms of buildings, computers and staff is its profit.

You claimed the authority of an article in a Bank of England publication for your view (www.bankofengland.co.uk/-/media/boe/files/quarterly-bulletin/2014/money-creation-in-the-modern-economy). Nearly one third of our review was taken up with an extensive quote from the article in question which showed that it did not support your view. What you call our 'own better explanation of loans that use reserves and bank deposits' was in fact that of the Bank of England article. You now concede their point that the need to make a profit 'may well' limit the amount of money banks can lend at any one time. But 'may well' is too weak; a bank will stop lending at the point where it costs it more in interest to cover its loans than the rate it could charge borrowers.

continued on p6

Guns before butter

‘NATIONAL SECURITY’, admirals, generals and air chief marshals are telling us, is ‘the first duty of any government’. In a sense they are right. The first duty of a government is to ensure security, though not of the population it rules over; it’s the security of its capitalist class, to protect them from being taken over by the armed forces of a rival capitalist state.

To do this, the government has to equip, train and maintain a military force armed with the most up-to-date weapons of individual and mass destruction that it can afford. This has to be paid for out of taxes that ultimately fall on the profits of the capitalist class. As the government’s ‘first duty’, such spending takes priority over other government spending, as summed in the saying ‘Guns before butter’.

That was the heading of the editorial in the *Times* on 19 February. ‘To underpin Europe’s security’, it thundered, ‘Sir Keir Starmer must expand defence spending in a time of economic difficulty. That means taking an axe to the bloated welfare system.’ A week later Starmer announced that the Labour government would increase military spending to 2.5 percent of GDP by 2027 and later to 3 percent.

Labour intended to take an axe to the welfare system anyway, so Starmer said that it was ‘overseas aid’ that would be cut to pay for this.

Paul Mason, the former Trotskyist who once wrote a book called *PostCapitalism* but now works for a thinktank financed by the Ministry of Defence, welcomed this as something he had been calling for. His job requires him to think up reasons why defence spending should be increased and one that he has deployed is that it will stimulate growth. Last July he wrote an article headed *Rearm, And The Economy Will Grow* (tinyurl.com/mrxezm3j). His evidence for this was pretty thin:

‘Anecdotally, where defence investment is actually happening it is a major driver of growth. Barrow-in-Furness, according to one senior trade union contact, is starting to boom. The old Debenhams store, which shut down in 2021, is set to reopen as an apprentice training centre; hundreds of apprenticeships a year are being lined up.’

Given the way that GDP is calculated, any increase in government spending will increase GDP but this doesn’t mean that this will lead to growth in the longer term. In another simplistic propaganda piece

last July, Defence spending: A waste of money? (tinyurl.com/7p7j7vbe), Mason attempted to refute the argument that ‘defence spending reduces economic growth’. Since defence spending is paid for from profits and profits are the source of finance for growth in the sense of capital accumulation, it would seem obvious that defence spending tends to reduce growth.

Mason’s counter-argument was that extra defence spending would act as a better ‘fiscal stimulus’ than other forms of government spending but this assumes that the capitalist economy can be stimulated by government spending, as taught by Keynes but refuted in practice. In essence, he is advocating what has been called ‘military Keynesianism’. When he was a Trotskyist he might have called this a ‘permanent arms economy’. Only then he would have opposed it. Now he is advocating it.

Government spending on arms is a drag on capital accumulation but it is a necessary expense, and so not a waste, for capitalism. In that sense capitalism is a permanent arms economy.

Letter *continued*

You also concede that to say that banks can create money out of thin air is ‘hyperbole’. If banks really did have that power then the labour theory of value would be invalid.

Value is only created in production by workers exercising their physical and mental energies to transform materials that originally came from nature into goods and services for sale. Initially it is divided into wages and surplus value, generating purchasing power. Money measures and circulates value. Originally money was a product of labour with its own value. The precious metals ceased to function as cash ages ago and, since 1971 when the US cut the link between the dollar and a fixed amount of gold, ceased to be the general standard of value as well (even if they remain with other things a store of value). Nowadays what is popularly called ‘money’ are tokens for it, electronic as well as the more traditional pieces of coloured paper and metal disks, all of which are, as you

point out, intrinsically worthless. Money has various functions and you are confusing money as a means of payment with money as a unit of account. The fact that GDP (what is produced in a year) is expressed in units of money does not mean that an equivalent amount of money is required to buy it. Money circulates, ie, can be used in any number of transactions. Similarly, it is not a problem in itself that total debt (what businesses, governments and people owe each other), expressed in units of money, is greater than GDP, if only because the same sum of money can be used to make and settle more than one debt. Again, there is no need for a bank to hold the full cash equivalent of what it lends. That would undermine the whole idea of banking which is based on the assumption that those who have lent it money will only want to withdraw an average amount of it at any one time (4 percent seems to be the current norm in Britain), meaning that the rest can safely

be loaned out. Thus, the total amount a bank lends is greater than the amount it needs to hold as cash, even if it can’t be greater than the amount the bank originally borrowed or borrows. Fundamentally, the main point at issue here is not just some academic disagreement about how banks work, but that this has important political implications. It’s not obscure nit-picking. Those who believe that banks have the power to create money by a keystroke (formerly stroke of the pen) advocate that this supposed power should be taken from banks and used by some public body either to finance better social amenities or to pay everyone a ‘social dividend’. It is the theory behind a specious form of reformism. Socialists need to be able to refute it as part of our case that capitalism cannot be reformed to work in the interest of the majority. How can we do this convincingly if we share the same mistaken premise as them? —Editors.

Halo Halo

IN THE Russian-Ukrainian conflict, now hopefully coming to an end, the Russian Orthodox Church had 300 military clergy there with the Russian armed forces.

A metropolitan high-ranking bishop was concerned that this number was far too low. 1,500 priests controlling the 'sinful spirit of revenge' that apparently soldiers are heir to having seen their comrades killed and mutilated in front of their eyes is a moral and spiritual challenge that the priests are there to rectify. As Thomas Hobbes said in another context, the life of a combatant in any conflict can be short, brutish and nasty.

Apparently 'neo-paganism' is viewed by the Church as a serious issue because this stimulates 'animalistic qualities'. In other words, they commit atrocities, we commit atrocities. Anyone who condemns war would agree that horrible things shouldn't happen but conflicts don't occur using Queensbury rules.

The Orthodox church is more concerned that such actions put those committing

them into a state of 'sin'. Here's the cruncher: 'A believer finds it easier to face the line of fire and defy death' (*Kommersant*).

Monty Python famously lampooned religious fanaticism in their film, *Life of Brian*, as well as their sketch in which 'nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition'. The Inquisition, established by Catholic Pope Gregory IX in 1231 initially authorised Dominican and Franciscan friars to investigate and suppress heresy. From 1252 torture was used to extract confessions, This was licenced by Pope Innocent IV. A misnomer as innocents who chose to have different beliefs were tormented into accepting the status quo.

The Roman Inquisition formed in 1542 is said to have been less violent, concentrating on suppressing ideas which the Church did not like. In 1633 Galileo was forced to retract his work which disproved the orthodoxy that the Earth was the centre of the universe. The Spanish Inquisition, founded in 1478 by Ferdinand

and Isabella, is well known historically for its extreme violence toward those who came under its influence.

Protestantism had its own unhealthy obsession – witches. The 1968 film, *Witchfinder General*, based upon the activities of Matthew Hopkins, offers none of the light relief of Monty Python. It is a horror film which depicts the fearfulness that arises when power, allied to religious zealotry, impacts the lives of those who just want to be left in peace. It is believed that over a three-year period Hopkins was responsible for the deaths of around 300 people. These were mainly women. It's estimated that perhaps eighty percent of witch-trial victims were women. Misogyny looms large in religions.

In Africa, the senseless behaviour of centuries ago is still being enacted. Once, so-called witches were dunked under water and if they survived were presumed guilty, but innocent if they drowned. In Angola, in 2024, people were forced to drink poison in order to prove their innocence of witchcraft accusations made against them. 50 people died.

Who says that religion is about love and peace?

DC

Tiny tips

FEMALE GENITAL mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) is a deeply entrenched cultural practice that affects around 200 million women and girls. It's practised in at least 25 African countries, as well as parts of the Middle East and Asia and among immigrant populations globally. It is a harmful traditional practice that involves removing or damaging female genital tissue. Often it's "justified" by cultural beliefs about controlling female sexuality and marriageability (**The Conversation**, tinyurl.com/5udyzjtt).

... "the ELN claims to follow Karl Marx, but it seems to me they believe more in Pablo Escobar." Indeed, drug trafficking helps explain why, after more than 60 years of armed conflict, peace continues to elude Colombia. The violence briefly diminished after the country's largest guerrilla group, known as the FARC, disarmed in 2016, but the government failed to take control of coca fields and drug trafficking routes that were abandoned by the FARC. And

now ELN rebels and a new generation of criminal groups are fighting over this territory (**KAXE**, tinyurl.com/52bvh6yf).

Representatives for the Scranton Army Ammunition Plant declined to comment on how the pause could impact the plant and jobs. ...The plant 'is not the largest employer by any stretch,' said Bob Durkin, president of the non-partisan Scranton Chamber of Commerce. 'But it's a very important employer. The jobs are really high-quality jobs. They are well paying, family sustaining jobs'. (bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cz7v1ejv01go)

In a staggering display of police callousness, the South African government has caused one of the worst mining disasters in the country's history.... The Stilfontein massacre, which left almost ninety dead, has split the South African opposition and exposed a ruling bloc corrupted by mineral wealth. At its heart, it is a story of the contradictions of politics in an extremely unequal extractive economy

(**Jacobin**, tinyurl.com/3xxks3y7).

James Schneider, Jeremy Corbyn's former Director of Comms, argues for a new party.... Zack Polanski, Deputy Leader of the Green Party of England and Wales, says we don't need anything new. There is, after all, a socialist party in the UK already: it's the Greens (**Novara Media**, tinyurl.com/2s4m6dtk).

...William Morris... believed that the creation and enjoyment of pre-industrial arts and crafts could undo the assumptions about natural inequality that were baked into capitalism. Influenced by both Karl Marx and John Ruskin, he demanded that works of art should actually embody the equality and freedom that had disappeared in an age witnessing the rise of mass production and excessive consumption on the one hand and widespread poverty and drudgery on the other. In *News from Nowhere* — his novel-length description of an egalitarian, anti-consumerist society — he aimed at nothing less than rewiring his readers' minds and hearts (**Heriot Watt University**, tinyurl.com/55n3dekjv).

(*These links are provided for information and don't necessarily represent our point of view.*)

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

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

West Midlands regional branch. Meets last Sat. 3pm (check before attending). Contact: Stephen Shapton. 07309090205. Email: stephenshapton@yahoo.co.uk.

NORTH

North East Regional branch.

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

Lancaster branch. Ring for details: P. Shannon, 07510 412 261, spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org.

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

Bolton. Contact: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589.

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

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

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.

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Kent and Sussex regional branch. Usually meets 3rd Sun. 2pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ or online.

Contact: spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org or 07971 715569.

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

spgbsw@gmail.com

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

Canterbury. Contact: Rob Cox, Contact:spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org

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

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

East Anglia. Contact: David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccles-on-Sea, NR12 0SF. 01692 582533.

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

Cambridge. Contact: Andrew Westley, wezelecta007@gmail.com. 07883078984.

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

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Edinburgh. Contact: Fraser Anderson f_raz_1@hotmail.com

Glasgow branch. Meet 3rd Monday of the month at 7pm on Zoom. Branch Social 2nd Saturday of the month at 1pm in The Atholl Arms Pub, Glasgow City Centre. Contact: Paul Edwards by e-mail: rainbow3@btopenworld.com or mobile: 07484 717893

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

Ayrshire. Contact: Paul Edwards 07484717893. rainbow3@btopenworld.com.

WALES

South Wales branch (Cardiff and Swansea)

Meets 2nd Monday 7.30pm on JITSi.

(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) on Zoom <https://zoom.us/j/7421974305>.

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King Capital's plunder of the Congo

THE BRUTAL conflict in the 'Democratic Republic' of Congo is not an ethnic struggle, a failure of governance, or an unfortunate accident. It is the direct consequence of capitalism's relentless pursuit for profit. The plunder of the Congo's vast mineral wealth is not a by-product of war, but the reason for it.

Despite being endowed with vast natural resources, the Congo remains one of the most impoverished and most exploited countries in the world. The cause of this paradox lies in the legacy of colonialism combined with modern rulers of capital and the ongoing plunder facilitated by the master class.

'The colonised can see right away that the coloniser is a thief, a liar, a fraud, a murderer, a torturer, and a hypocrite...'
(Frantz Fanon, the well-known psychiatrist and revolutionary, on the Congo).

Towards the end of the 19th century, King Leopold II of Belgium transformed the Congo into his personal property. He subjected millions of Congolese to forced labour in the extraction of rubber and other resources. Under Leopold's rule, appalling atrocities were committed with millions dying from violence, starvation, and disease. After international condemnation, Belgium formally took control of the Congo in 1908, continuing the exploitation of its resources while not investing in the country's infrastructure or development.

Eventually Congo gained independence in 1960, under a rigged system that ensured foreign control over its wealth. Patrice Lumumba, the first democratically elected Prime Minister, sought to assert national sovereignty. For this affront to King Capital, Lumumba was overthrown and assassinated by Belgian and US interests. The installation of the dictator Mobutu ensured that the Congo's resources would continue to be funnelled to corporations while the population withered.

Today, Congo remains trapped in a cycle of exploitation. Minerals like coltan, cobalt, and copper, essential to Tesla, iPhones and solar panels continue to benefit capital rather than the Congolese. Neighbouring Rwanda has become a key exploiter.

The European Union's special representative for Africa's Great Lakes region, Johan Borgstram, accused Rwanda of violating Congolese territory. Borgstram urged a political solution to the conflict in eastern Congo, noting that Rwanda's support for the M23 (March 23) rebel group and the presence of its military on Congolese territory constituted a violation of Congolese sovereignty. The M23 movement, which has seized key territories

in eastern Congo, claims to be defending the interests of Congolese Tutsis. It has committed horrendous acts, including mass killings, sexual violence, and the displacement of civilians, particularly in eastern Congo.

Rwanda's President Paul Kagame has cited security concerns, pointing to the Congolese government's alleged lack of political will. M23's territorial control has caused nearly 80,000 people to flee, many seeking refuge in neighbouring countries like Burundi.

This ongoing cycle of extraction and conflict is not an accident; it is the result of the global capitalist system that continues to exploit Congo's resources for the benefit of foreign elites, whether they are in the West or in Rwanda. The wealth generated from Congo's vast resources is largely funnelled to multinational corporations, with little benefit to the local population.

Don't imagine this is some accidental lapse on capitalism's part. It is exactly how capitalism functions. The Socialist Party has always argued that capitalism cannot be reformed to serve the majority. It is a system built on exploitation, where wealth is continually extracted, and power remains concentrated in the hands of few. The wars in Congo, like the wars before them, are not by accident or the result of mismanagement; they are the natural outcome of the economic system that demands the subjugation of entire nations for the benefit of King Capital.

Digital book burnings in Trump's America

When viewing history through the lens of analysis socialists understand that attacks on marginalised groups are likely an early indication of rising authoritarianism. A century ago, the Nazi party of Germany targeted transgender people and the scientists who were pioneers of sexual research, raiding Magnus Hirschfeld's *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft*, one of the world's first centres dedicated to the study and care of queer and trans people. The Nazi Party raided the clinic, terrorised the workers, and burned thousands of books, papers and research materials in a public spectacle of hate that foreshadowed the grim horrors to come. Now, today, a modern version of this erasure is also underway. This time, the flames are in the form of a trash folder, as it is a digital erasure, and this horror is unfolding in the United States under the directorship of Donald Trump.

Since his return to political power, the

Marmalade Mussolini and his collaborators have systematically erased the existence of trans people from official records. Under his administration, the term 'transgender' is being removed from government websites, crucial health data scrubbed, and even references to historical trans activists such as Marsh P Johnson at the Stonewall National Monument eradicated.

Charities and institutions that receive federal funding are being overtly pressured to follow suit, ensuring that the trans community is transported out of public life. The speed and efficiency of this erasure would have made the Nazis envious.

These moves are not happening in isolation. They come after a build up over years of false moral panic stoked by the capitalist press, where trans people are being unjustly smeared as a threat to children, just as Hirschfeld was accused of 'grooming' youth in the pages of the Nazi propaganda organ *Der Stürmer*. The narrative is chillingly familiar: demonisation, exclusion, and then elimination.

The implications however extend beyond just trans rights. Fascist parties who seized the reins of democracy under the gaze of capital would test the boundaries by attacking the most vulnerable, seeing how much liberals of all shades would tolerate. As they succeed today in digitally erasing trans people, they will move on to the next targets. Already, Trump and his axis of tech billionaires have floated the idea of defying court rulings, openly challenging judicial authority in their efforts to strip rights from minorities. The broader working class must recognise that an attack on one group's liberties is an attack on all.

Just as socialists oppose divisions and discriminations over race and colour, so we commit to solidarity with those workers under the LGBTQIA banner being victimised by this explicitly nasty face of capital.

Socialists are keenly aware that oppression is the tool of the master class, used to divide and distract workers while capitalists consolidate capital. The erasure of transgender people is not only a symptom of this alt-right culture war but is a warning sign of the increasingly authoritarian aspect of the capitalist political order. Socialists that seek to build a truly free, wholly democratic and equal society will not accept these digital book burnings and Trump's wider assault on humanity. Marx teaches us to look on history scientifically to understand the present condition and in doing so what we are witnessing unfolding under raw capitalism in the US must concern us all.

A.T.

40 years of Red Nose Day

LAST MONTH was a special celebration for the children's charity Comic Relief. It marked 40 years since the start of Red Nose Day. In the days leading up to March 21st, you could hardly switch on the radio or TV without being reminded that famous people, mainly showbiz celebrities, were going to disguise their normal features with red noses of various shapes and sizes to remind us that they were collecting money to improve the lives of poor children.

Endemic

And it does seem difficult not to see this as a positive thing given the fact that, as we are told by the charity Shelter, 120,000 children in the UK wake up homeless every day and many thousands more who may not be homeless have to suffer housing and living conditions that make it impossible for them to live comfortable and fulfilling lives. The Labour government's new Homelessness Minister, Rusharana Ali, has herself referred to this as 'a national disgrace', pointing out that last year 'more than 117,000 households, including over 150,000 children, were living in temporary accommodation'. Shelter also calls this an 'outrage', and understandably so, given that when it was founded in 1966, its promise was to get rid of homelessness within 10 years. Since then, organisations dedicated to solving homelessness have proliferated and Shelter now runs its own weekly lottery – a sure sign that the problem it campaigns about is endemic.

A further recent report by the Barnardo's charity states that 'more than a million children in the UK either sleep on the floor or share a bed with parents or siblings because their family cannot afford the "luxury" of replacing broken frames and mouldy linen' and that 'the rise in "bed poverty" reflects growing levels of destitution in which low-income families already struggling with soaring food or gas bills often find they are also unable to afford a comfortable night's sleep'. And in a recent article in the *Big Issue*, John Bird, founder of that magazine and now a member of the House of Lords, summed up the embedded nature of poverty and homelessness by stating that 'three decades of the same conversation is exhausting'. Other sources have reiterated the same thing. The centre-right think tank, the Centre for Social Justice, found that 'the most disadvantaged people in Britain were no better off than they were 15 years ago, with around 13.4 million people living lives marred by family



Credit: BBC

fragility, stagnant wages, poor housing, chronic ill health and crime'. And Greg Hurst of the Centre for Homeless Impact has expressed the view that 'we are condemned to repeat the cycle of ebbs and flows of homelessness'.

Realm of fantasy

But why? After all, according to official figures, over a quarter of a million homes in England are classed as 'long-term empty', meaning that they have been left vacant for more than six months. Yet we all know that the way things work is that parents and children who need homes cannot simply walk into empty properties and live there. The kind of society we live in does not cater for such needs, basic as they may be, of those who do not have the money to pay for them. In the same way, no matter how technologically efficient food production has become, no matter how much food we are capable of producing, only people with enough money in their pockets will have access to it. In the context of capitalism, John Bird got it right, in one of his *Big Issue* articles, by stating that 'ideas of ending poverty are stuck in the realm of fantasy'.

Scratching the surface

So can anything be done at all? It's clear that Red Nose Day, coming back time after time as it does, can help a little but in the end it can do no more than offer a small amount of temporary relief to the poor or disadvantaged children it is aimed at. No matter how much time and energy is put into it by those involved and no matter how well-meaning they may be, their efforts can do no more than scratch the surface of the poverty problem. They can get nowhere near offering any kind

of long-term solution. The Oxfam food policy director, Hanna Saarinen, recognised this recently when she stated: 'We need to reimagine a new global food system to really end hunger; one that works for everyone.' But the trouble – and the truth – is that such a food system is simply not feasible in the framework of the world we live in, where, at the end of the day, profit must always come before need. That is why, even in a country like Britain where food is manifestly plentiful, many people are still forced to have recourse to food banks, and charities like Comic Relief are still considered necessary. Of course, millions of workers do manage to keep their heads above water, some living reasonably comfortable lives, but even this is usually at the cost of working hard for an entire lifetime, never being truly free of financial insecurity and often at great cost to the quality of their lives.

Need not profit

And so it will remain until we not only, in the word used by Hanna Saarinen, 'reimagine' but also implement a wholly different organisation of society, one that is fully cooperative and human-centred and dedicated to catering for the needs of everyone, not producing profit for the tiny minority – in other words designed to take care of everyone in a sustainable, inclusive way. Adequate resources to provide a decent life for all are available, but that decent life cannot be realised under the profit system. It can only be possible in the kind of moneyless, marketless society that we stand for. and that will render regular recourse to charities like Comic Relief and events like Red Nose Day unnecessary and superfluous.

HKM

All fools now?

WHO NOW echoes the thoughts of the poet Robert Browning and his longing to be back home; 'Oh, to be in England. Now that April's there?' Many of us would probably far rather be somewhere else.

April 1st is April Fools' Day, where it is traditional to tease someone in a practical joke in which the victim is humiliated by being called an April Fool. Custom says this may only happen up until midday. Schooldays on this date used to be fraught with the fear of falling victim to the perpetrators of such japes.

April is also when, in the UK, the new financial/tax year begins. Browning wouldn't have been so gung-ho had he faced the rises in the cost of living that occur in this month. Expect increases in the cost of council tax, water rates, mobile phone bills, internet providers, car tax, insurance, travel fares, petrol, diesel, rent, mortgage payments and more.

For those on fixed incomes and benefits any small increase given through the beneficence of the state is quickly swallowed up leaving them no better off, or possibly worse off. A 2022 political campaign called Enough is Enough, led by the unions, demanded 'A real pay rise, a cut in energy bills, an end to food poverty, 'decent' homes for all, higher tax for the wealthy, nationalisation of certain industries'. Even in the unlikely event of them being implemented, these Fabianesque aspirations would do nothing to change the underlying cause of the problems they aimed to resolve – capitalism.

Poet Adrian Henri once wrote a poem for Roger McGough asking, did a nun think, when standing at the checkout having shopped for one, what it was like to buy groceries for two? Most folk waiting in a checkout queue are probably thinking, 'kin 'ell, how much is all this going to cost?' along with ... 'why don't they open more checkouts, this queue is ridiculous.'

Socialists in a payment queue might think that too, but they might also think 'why aren't the working class working toward socialism? Because then there would be no queuing up to pay because in socialism there would be no money and there would be free access to goods.' Along with, 'don't these people know that in socialism they wouldn't be wasting their time and their lives adding to a capitalist's profits?' These sentiments apply to any situation where payment is required

before the commodities being purchased are allowed to be removed from the shop or store in the hands of the new possessor.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has a report, published at the end of January, the first one it has issued under the new Labour government. It is using figures for 2022/2023 but says that the statistics still remain relevant. According to these figures, one in five people in the UK experience poverty, including over four million children and almost two million pensioners.

The JRF says that there has not been a measurable drop in poverty levels in twenty years. The quoted statistics are deeply disturbing, or should be in an economy the size of the UK's – in 2022/2023 six million people were in deep poverty. 'Destitution, where people cannot afford to meet their most basic physical needs to stay warm, dry, clean and fed' affected almost four million people, including children. The 'solutions' which the JRF proposes amount to nothing but a sticking plaster on an open wound.

In the 1953 film *Trouble in Store*, Norman Wisdom sang, 'Don't laugh at me 'cause I'm a fool, I know it's true, yes I'm a fool.' Socialists get called many names when they present the case for socialism, especially when those hearing it for the first time find it difficult to grasp. Statistically, a socialist has to have been called a fool at one time or another.

For some, the clarity of the socialist analysis is so obvious and easy to understand that the first reaction can be as if someone switched on a blinding light in a dark room, and the second reaction is an urge to share it.

We've all done foolish things in our lives that we subsequently regret but, to use a fairy story example, once a bite of the apple has been taken it is impossible to ignore or forget the knowledge which has been gained. As of now we are, all of us, fools for continuing to let capitalism, its elites, and its shills, carry on exploiting resources, the planet and us, the majority who run capitalism on behalf of the minority.

DC



Reforming UK politics?

THE SOCIALIST Party has consistently questioned the efficacy of reform. Capitalise the word and it takes on a specific significance. Reform UK emerged as a political force of note by securing five parliamentary seats at the last general election.

The Green Party increased its representation in Parliament to four, which was impressive considering the difficulties posed by the first-past-the-post-system. Even more remarkable, though, was Reform's performance. Considered along with its former incarnation as the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), its electoral progress is of interest. In the 2015 general election, one seat was won with an overall UK vote share of 12.6 percent. By the 2019 election, standing as the Brexit Party, its vote share had declined to around 2 percent, with no seats gained. This was the time of Boris Johnson's Tory Party undertaking to 'get Brexit done!' The moment and purpose for UKIP/Brexit Party appeared to have passed.

Five years later though, emerging as Reform UK with a political platform expanded beyond just Brexit, came an apparent breakthrough. However, at 14.3 percent of the vote, the improvement on the 2015 performance was less than spectacular. The major factor was not so much the increased Reform vote, but the near collapse of Conservative Party support. In 2015 they took 36.8 percent of the vote, which increased to 43.6 percent in 2019. Five years on they were down to 23.7 percent. This seems to indicate many Conservative voters relocating with Reform, enabling the taking of seats previously denied them. The Tory right split and its largely extra-parliamentary pressure group was able to become in-house (of Commons).

A determining factor in Reform's rise must be its leader, Nigel Farage. He had founded Reform UK, originally the Brexit Party, two years after he left UKIP following the Brexit referendum. He then effectively left Reform UK and concentrated his political activities around the Trump camp in America. Up to just a few weeks prior to the 2024 general election Reform UK was being led by Richard Tice. Initially Farage declined to advance himself as a candidate, undertaking to proselytise for the Tice campaign around the country.

Who owns Reform UK?

A sudden volte-face occurred when Farage claimed he had a sense of guilt



about not stepping forwards and letting his supporters down. In short order, Tice was replaced as Reform UK leader by the apparently selfless Farage. Previously, Tice had been a member, and co-founder with Arron Banks, of the Brexit campaigning group Leave EU. This organisation distinguished itself in 2018 by being fined £70,000 for breaching electoral law during the referendum campaign.

Tice's tenure as leader of Reform had been marred by fractious personal relations in the party. He had secured, in March 2024, the defection of a former Conservative Party deputy chair and MP for Ashfield, Lee Anderson. This was achieved despite Anderson, just a few months earlier, having referred to Tice as a 'pound shop Nigel Farage' who should 'pipe down a little bit' so as not to exacerbate tensions between Tories and Reform to the benefit of Keir Starmer's Labour Party.

Tice's response was to tell Sky News, '... we're going to replace the Tories as the main alternative to Labour in those red wall seats.' As the election turned out, the red wall seats the Johnson Tories took in 2019 largely returned to Labour. It was the Conservative Party that suffered loss of support in 2024.

The relative success of Reform under the renewed Farage leadership has also led to a reorganisation of the Party. Unusually, Reform UK was founded and owned by its

leader, Farage, who initially established it as a private limited company in which he was the majority shareholder. Rarely, if ever, has a political party so blatantly reflected the capitalist system it is dedicated to serving. It was this that enabled Farage to simply take over the leadership again. As owner he didn't require the democratic inconvenience of being voted into position by the membership.

Two months after the 2024 general election, at its Birmingham conference, Reform was informed by its leader that he intended giving up his shares, and thereby his personal ownership. For the first time since its inception, members would be able to vote on party matters. The party leader was, in future, to be elected and could subsequently be removed by a vote of no confidence. However, such a vote would only happen if 50 percent of the membership wrote to the chairman requesting one.

Alternatively, Reform MPs can trigger such a vote if 50 of them, or 50 percent, demand one. This only applies when there is a minimum of 100 MPs. The purpose behind this change is to attract a larger membership, although it does leave the leader in a strong, dominant position.

Companies House records show that Reform 2025 is now the shareholder, and that neither Farage nor Tice continue to hold shares. Reform UK has become

a non-profit organisation limited by guarantee. Again, a reflection of capitalist structure is maintained.

Demagogic populism

Unsurprisingly, the policies of Reform, styled as a 'contract with the people' are, in many ways, largely indistinguishable from those of the other parliamentary parties, excepting differences of emphasis and nuance.

Policies include immigration and its control, increasing police numbers with more 'bobbies on the beat', cutting NHS waiting lists, reducing the tax burden and tweaking various taxes, freeing businesses from red tape, fast tracking brownfield development sites for housing, speeding up development of nuclear energy, increasing defence spending etc.

Education policies do give an insight into the political shading of Reform. They propose to scrap student loan interest (going for the youth vote?), ban teaching critical race theory and gender ideology, fine universities guilty of political bias or cancel culture, offer private school tax relief, re-introduce home economics, double pupil referral units, and make the school curriculum more 'patriotic'.

There is a pervasive demagogic populism running through Reform UK. This is personified in Nigel Farage who does not typically appear as a fanatical rantier. Rather, his style is that of the plain speaker of common sense, appealing to the interests of various groups of voters.

There are business tax cuts for

one section of the Tory-minded, VAT adjustments to deal with the cost of living, anti-woke messaging for the 'you can't say anything these days' brigade and, of course immigration control. It's pick-and-mix politics, a selection of flavours so nearly everyone's taste is accommodated.

Underlying it all, as with the other parliamentary parties, is the broad if unacknowledged agreement not to challenge capitalism at all. That leaves the cause of the various concerns afflicting people free to operate as it does, as it must, driven by the absolute unquenchable thirst for profit. Production for profit and not for need would continue unhindered under a Reform administration.

The myriad problems people face in the UK, as around the world, cannot be solved by Reform or any other party committed to capitalism, the very system that is the source of the problems. Voting is important, but voting for another status-quo party, no matter how populist, will solve nothing.

Because the vote is valuable don't give it away to a party making promises it can't keep. Like any scam call ask the question, am I going to take what is offered on trust? Or should I take a considered, conscious decision to act in concert with others like me to achieve what will benefit us all?

Regressive mouthpiece

Reform UK has recently begun to show itself, for all its democratic claims, as a party where personal ambition and in-

fighting are the order of the day. Rupert Lowe, just 8 months on from the general election, has had the Reform whip withdrawn. Also, the party has referred their MP to the police for threatening Zia Yusuf, the chair. There is also an internal investigation into possible staff bullying. Lowe has responded by appointing his own legal team. Perhaps of greater concern for Reform is that Lowe dominates Reform's digital-first community with more than 300,000 followers on X. It may well be that Reform UK has had its moment in the political sun.

It is not possible to predict the future for Reform UK. It seems unlikely to garner enough support to amass a parliamentary majority. It may well have significant influence as the repository and mouthpiece of regressive, even xenophobic sectors of the electorate. Unfortunately, those sectors may, at present, constitute a rather greater number of voters than was once the case.

This indicates the importance of socialists continuing to challenge capitalism directly, and not to get drawn into specific concerns about Reform UK or any similar political group that might emerge in the future. Only when the majority of people come to embrace socialism and actively seek to abolish capitalism, will all the present parties, including Reform UK, become wholly irrelevant and disappear from the political sphere. This would be truly 'reforming' UK politics.

D. A.



How we live and how we might live (part 8)

'[the claim] that every individual is required to work is a social convention and disciplinary apparatus rather than an economic necessity' (Kathi Weeks, The Problem With Work).

THE POST-capitalist society being argued for here is one where productive activity is taken up voluntarily by individuals, and access to the social product is open and free. Last month we showed how an objection often made that members of such a society would prefer to lie down and starve rather than do anything to meet their needs was unfounded. We can now look at the many immediate benefits that the structure of such a society would bring even before it developed more elaborate institutions. We have already seen how a system of free access would render 'greedy' behaviour pointless or counterproductive. We can now show that the same system of society would undermine the lazy-person argument.

The most immediate impact a free-access society is likely to have on its members would be a huge reduction in the amount of effort they would need to put in to sustain it. Capitalism is immensely inefficient in its use of human labour. Its system of corraling individuals, families and businesses into independent and competing property units, and then routing production through the profit motive, requires a gigantic social apparatus to sustain it. Not only does it force capitalism to maintain an elaborate monetary mechanism, it also requires a means of managing the resulting inefficiencies. Moreover, the competitive nature of the system creates much duplicated effort, and results in a great deal of labour being devoted to the production of useless and shoddy goods.

Wasted labour

In almost all capitalist states large numbers of jobs are dedicated to the management of a central banking system which, besides making valiant attempts at stabilising capitalism's financial system, concerns itself with the production and issue of money. Upon this foundation whole industries have developed to finance business operations and to service the system's property relationships. The pensions, insurance and brokerage industries are three of the largest of this



kind. Out of a total UK working population of 43 million people well over one million are employed in this sector alone.

The property system also requires capitalist governments to employ armies of civil servants and local government officers to devise and administer welfare and unemployment payments to maintain the workforce through periods of unemployment, to provide for those unable to work, and to top-up the incomes of those whose wages are inadequate. Governments also employ workers to register ownership of land and property, assess and collect taxes, enforce weights and measures, etc. These systems require not only labour for direct planning and administration but also for the production and development of equipment such as computer hardware and software, buildings, stationery products, transport systems and sources of energy.

The bulk of capitalism's legal systems, its judiciaries and police forces, is dedicated overwhelmingly to adjudicating property contracts, property disputes, and property transgressions, along with crimes against people motivated by monetary gain. Businesses based on gambling like casinos, amusement arcades, bookies, betting shops and stock exchanges flourish in the win-lose system that is central to capitalism. Capitalist states consume labour in the production of armaments and military hardware, for sale to others as well as for their own use. They maintain military personnel to further the interests of businesses within their territories in the international competition for markets, resources, trade routes, and the ability to project power and manoeuvre strategically to secure these essentials. In the aftermath of conflict labour is then deployed for rebuilding what has been destroyed.

Monetary tasks

In the world of business, firms of all kinds must dedicate labour resources

to monetary tasks such as bookkeeping, accounting and debt collecting, while the demands of profit maximisation through competitive sale on the market forces them to devote huge labour resources to the advertising and marketing of brands and products. Companies work ceaselessly to bombard us with advertising online, in newspapers and magazines, on TV, at the cinema, on roadside hoardings, on the sides of lorries and buses, on bus shelters and railway platforms and on every available space. Capitalist companies employ labour to research and implement sophisticated psychological techniques for creating artificial wants in consumers. We are pressurised into buying by limited time offers, or into believing we are getting a bargain by supposed discounts, or into purchasing a lifestyle or an identity through branded items. In-store lighting, music, shelf placement and shelving layouts are designed to exploit our instincts and vulnerabilities. 'Product placement' on our favourite video channels keeps goods relevant to our interests in the forefront of our minds. Online 'organic communities' built around brands proliferate to keep us talking about a company's products. PR consultants like the notorious Frank Luntz gleefully explain in their writings the techniques used to manipulate the public by a careful choice and placing of words and images.

And we submit to all of this because capitalism's restless search for profit has uprooted or unsettled our communities. It has isolated us emotionally and economically. We buy stuff to fill up an emotional void. A halo of excitement surrounds each new product on the shelf or online platform and entices us to buy. At home, the excitement persists for a few days or weeks, but then fades and the exciting object becomes just one more thing we have. Our new possession morphs into junk or household clutter, or it falls apart or goes out of fashion.

Still hungry, still unsatisfied, we dispose of it to make room for more. And more labour is then eaten up in transporting and disposing of the waste.

Planned obsolescence

Since the 1950s capitalism's drive to maximise profit by ramping up sales has increasingly taken on various forms of planned obsolescence, so much so that it is now a regular sales strategy. Companies produce cheap products that soon fall apart and have to be quickly replaced. Parts or whole products are entombed in plastic or in spot-welded metal casings rendering them inaccessible and unrepairable. Companies use screws with proprietary heads that cannot be removed with an ordinary screwdriver. Spare parts are quickly withdrawn from sale, or they are sold at exorbitant prices that make it cheaper to replace the whole item. New components are designed to be incompatible with old ones. White goods that once were built to last 30+ years now break down in six or seven. Fashion houses rush out new fashions weekly or even daily. Smart phone manufacturers introduce new designs every year, simultaneously swamping public spaces with advertising, while about the same time punters begin to notice that their old phones are unaccountably starting to go slow.

A great deal of labour in capitalism's competitive society is mopped up in the production of consumer goods that originate not in the spontaneous wants and demands of the population but in the requirements of profit making. In the mid-20th century, pundits predicted that rapidly advancing technology would result in a rise in the productivity of labour. As a result, they believed we would have to work fewer hours in the future. As early as 1930, the economist John Maynard Keynes declared that by the millennium,

when his generation's grandchildren had grown to adulthood, no one would have to work more than 15 hours a week. Keynes was right about capitalism's drive towards increased productivity. He was wrong, however, about the forces that drive capitalism. In a profit system capital takes on a life of its own. It becomes ravenous. It must constantly seek out new outlets for investment, new ways of creating ever more capital. Inevitably this means that new products, new services are constantly being puffed into existence. Instead of reducing the work needed by society, the profit motive keeps us at work generating ever more ephemeral stuff. So we get not just the kind of unproductive work that the late anthropologist David Graeber referred to as 'bullshit jobs', but jobs dedicated to producing bullshit products, and then to marketing them to the 'consumer'.

Eliminating the profit system

By eliminating capitalism's class system together with its profit motive, huge amounts of unnecessary labour and whole industries would cease to exist. In the same move, the direct connection between production and consumption would be restored. The quantity of social effort required to meet social need would plummet, and the population would gain a new level of social control over its labour time. It would be free at last to decide how much effort it wanted to expend on production and how it wanted to use it.

Eliminating the profit system would transform the whole nature of work. When society is founded on common ownership and free access, work ceases to be 'work': the sale and exercise of labour power on behalf of an employer, and becomes productive activity, a voluntary social act, undertaken by individuals for social

purposes. The aim of production would no longer be maximisation of profit by competing firms, but the meeting of social needs. And social needs include those of the producer as well as the consumer. Under capitalist conditions, unpleasant, mindlessly repetitive work often conducted in unhealthy conditions, with unsociable hours and overseen by a harsh disciplinary regime, is the product of the individual capitalist firm's need to minimise costs. With the profit system removed like a glitch in software, only one social purpose for productive activity remains: the meeting of social needs.

Social psychology has known for decades that extrinsic 'rewards' or 'incentives' like wages and salaries are poor motivators for action. And to say this is already to miss something important. To a large extent, wages and salaries in capitalism are not primarily rewards or incentives. For the majority of the population they are an imposed necessity. The motivation for doing a task – any task – comes principally from intrinsic rewards, that is, from the rewards which arise out of doing the task itself. Human beings are primarily motivated by three things: by the ability to control their own lives; by the desire to master skills; and by social belonging. These are incentives that capitalism is very bad at providing. As we argued earlier, it provides intrinsic incentives only occasionally and only in certain industries where profits are temporarily above average and where there are shortages in the labour market.

In a post-capitalist world of common ownership and free access where class conflicts of interest are eliminated, communities engaged in productive activities can organise their work to meet those human needs for control, for mastery and for community. They can provide themselves with conditions of work that maximise their own satisfaction, and not the profits of their employers. Under these conditions productive activity becomes not a sacrifice of time and effort for an extrinsic wage, but a collective activity carried on for collective ends and as a seamless part of a community's social life.

The final article in this series next month will dive deeper into what motivates human beings and answer the question of who will do the dirty work.

(A representative list of tasks required by capitalism's money system is given in Chapter 3 of the SPGB's pamphlet: *'From Capitalism to Socialism: How we Live and how we Could Live'* - tinyurl.com/5b6c2dj4).

HUD



Who are the 'Middle Class'?

AUTONOMOUS VOICE, a contributor to the Facebook site 'A Global Group Where We Are Active Against Capitalism', recently put up a 15-minute YouTube clip, entitled 'The Middle Class: a Working Class Anarchist Perspective'. The speaker attempts to define and analyse what he refers to as 'the intermediate position' in capitalist society' held by 'middle-class people, particularly those in professorial, managerial or small business roles' (youtu.be/AZI55qEWILk). While his illustration points to the same ultimate goal as proposed by the Socialist Party, the analysis of how that can be achieved is very different.

In particular there are indications of a need for 'violent uprising' and of this needing to come from the 'working class', seen as those who do forms of manual work in society. This concept, outdated as it is, is still clung to by many, but it fails to appreciate that all those who need to sell their energies to an employer for a wage or salary and so remain dependent on their next wage or salary payment are in the same fundamental economic position. This means not only manual workers, tradespeople, nurses, service workers, etc., but also so-called middle-class workers such as teachers, administrators, engineers, medics, tech workers, and others, all those in fact who are often described as 'professionals'. All these workers, whether considered working class or middle class, have a common interest that is diametrically opposed to that of the other small class of people in society (we would call them the capitalist class) who own enough wealth not to need to sell their energies in order to survive. And this is the case even if, as things stand, the vast majority of wage and salary earners of all descriptions fail to perceive their subjugation to the system they are tied to.

So while 'Autonomous Voice' is quite correct in stating that the role of many 'professionals' is 'to administer the system of exploitation and keep it running smoothly' and that they have an attitude of complicity towards that system, he is quite wrong to suggest that this somehow takes them out of the game and that they are not themselves exploited and entirely dependent upon the ups and downs of the economic forces of capitalism. True, they – or many of them – may have conventional, indeed docile, attitudes towards capitalist society and the way it works and may seem to be, as the video puts it, 'a buffer preventing radical change'. But the same also applies to the vast majority of those



the video sees as members of the 'working class'. All in fact are locked into the wages system and have to live with the insecurity of the monthly pay slip.

So while we would agree with the need for the kind of society advocated by this video, it confuses and derails the argument by suggesting that some workers have different interests to others. Whatever their line of work, all workers scramble to sell their energies under conditions of duress, and are usually denied the ability to control how they work and whether that work – and pay- will continue. There is a global division between the vast majority, who need to sell their energies for a wage or salary, and the tiny minority that choose to buy those energies. In the end all members of that vast majority have the same class interest – to establish a wageless, money-free society that the Socialist Party exists to campaign for and that will provide the means for all to live free and autonomous lives.

Currently very few wage and salary earners are contemplating being part of any such movement. Yet, it is the only way to transcend the capitalist system

that dominates all our lives, and it can be readily voted into being if enough of us want it. It will provide a means whereby democratic associations of women and men will be able to organise on the basis of voluntary work and have free access to whatever goods and services they need, because the whole society will then collectively own and control all the resources that provide these. People will no longer have to do jobs they do not enjoy – or even hate- just because they need money. They will be able to do work they want to do and enjoy. People will cooperate to do the work that makes society function and they will make decisions democratically- in their workplaces, local communities, regions and, if circumstances require, globally. Above all there will be no more top-down control, no leaders or governments, and no more money controlling people's lives. Only when this happens will we have a society where the freedom to develop and express our needs and potential is equal for all kinds of workers and where the material needs of all are satisfied.

HKM

Work, free and unfree

CAPITALISM WOULD seem to be quite exceptional as a social system in unnecessarily burdening us with work that bears little or no relation to meeting human needs (even if such work might be considered necessary from the standpoint of enabling the system to function on its own terms). This is all the more remarkable given the enormously potent technology it has developed to lighten our workload considerably.

The terms and conditions under which we work today, the constant niggling awareness that our livelihood is dependent on our compliance to the arbitrary will of our employers and so forth, corrodes any sense of intrinsic satisfaction we might get from work. Even so, we still need to work despite this — not just for the money but also our own wellbeing notwithstanding the adverse terms and conditions under which we might presently work. Not being able to work at all can make matters even worse for us.

We need ‘work’, but we need also the conditions that will make work more satisfying. Capitalism cannot deliver this because it is not a system oriented to the satisfaction of human needs. It is first and foremost a system based on the blind accumulation of capital out of surplus value. That in itself signifies the alienation of the majority from the productive resources of society that necessarily imposes upon labour the quality of being coerced and unfree and hence undesirable.

The possibility of individuals being able to freely move between jobs according to their own inclinations would help to greatly enrich the entire experience of work as well as help to produce a more

rounded person. However, in the capitalist society we live in today we cannot just freely choose to alternate between different kinds of jobs as we might wish. If we do happen to have a job in capitalism we are hemmed in by legal contracts and fixed hours that conspire to bind us to this job and prevent us from adopting a too-flexible or experimental approach to work.

What would the implications be if, in contrast, all work were to become unpaid work — that is, performed on a free and voluntary basis? Obviously, in a capitalist society this is simply not possible. It is incompatible with the existence of capitalism.

If all work were to take the form of free creative voluntary activity then the products of that work — the goods and services we all depend on — would have to be completely free in the sense of being made available without any price tag attached. Money, as a socio-economic phenomenon, would simply cease to exist. After all, if you were not paid to work where would you get the means to buy anything?

So unpaid voluntaristic or self-determined work would imply ‘free access’ to the collective products of such work (and vice versa). Moreover, both of these things imply something else — namely, the common or social ownership of the productive resources of society itself.

This is often misunderstood. Market libertarians in particular, are prone to decry this as a blatant case of ‘theft’. ‘You are going to confiscate my property and make it the property of the community’ they complain. But this is to completely misconstrue what common ownership of society’s productive resources is about.

‘Theft’ simply implies the transfer of ownership of the thing in question from the victim of such a theft to the perpetrator. It thus implies a private property relationship. Common ownership, on the other hand, means transcending the very concept of property itself. You are not losing anything; you are, in a sense, gaining the world instead. But so is everybody else (including also the ex-capitalists). Collectively, you are asserting joint or social ownership over the natural and industrial resources of the planet.

Social ownership of these resources is the completely logical and appropriate response to the plain fact that production today is a completely socialised process. The laptop on which I am typing out this article, is — directly or indirectly — the product of the collective labour of literally millions and millions of workers scattered right across the world.

It is no longer possible for anyone to say of any particular product, ‘I made this, therefore this is mine’. The 18th century philosopher John Locke’s ‘labour theory of property’, on which the market libertarians base their case that common ownership would be theft because the fruits of one’s labour ought to be exclusively appropriated by oneself by natural right, has thus been rendered historically obsolete and completely impracticable. In fact, given that production is now a socialised process, it backfires on them by implying socialised ownership — that what is produced by collective labour should be owned collectively.

ROBIN COX



Blowing bubbles

In a Communist Party of Britain supplement in the *Morning Star* (18/19 January) one of its leaders, Alex Gordon, ex-president of the RMT, set out its theory of economic crises:

'Beyond profits extracted from surplus value, capitalists amass capital via bank credit and stock markets. Fractional reserve banking creates new credit many times the original deposits. Stock markets likewise multiply the value of the original means of production. Marx called this fictitious capital, since it separates from and achieves value far beyond the original productive capital. Fictitious capital feeds the economy and finances debt out of all proportion to the means of production it is based on. When this bubble bursts this is a crisis.'

The first sentence is correct. Capitalist firms acquire additional money-capital to invest in production for profit by borrowing from banks and/or selling new shares on the stock market.

The second sentence is incorrect. Banks can't lend more than they have as their own capital, deposits and what they themselves borrow, so they cannot — and so do not — artificially inflate credit in the way Gordon suggests. It's a bit surprising that the Communist Party should have fallen for that old currency crank myth.

The third and fourth sentences are incorrect. Stock markets do not 'multiply the value of the original means of production'.

The fifth sentence is incorrect. 'Fictitious capital' does not 'feed the economy' in the sense of providing more money-capital that can be invested in production. If anything, it feeds off the economy.

By 'fictitious capital' Marx simply meant what actuaries call 'capitalisation', or the conversion of an income stream into a notional capital sum which, if loaned, would yield over a given period of time interest of the same amount.

Shares are a form of fictitious capital calculated from the expected future stream of income coming from the profits made by a capitalist firm and entitle their owners to a share in these profits. They are subsequently traded in their own right independently of the capital originally invested in production, whether to share in the profits or to sell later at a higher price. But, as Marx noted:

'The independent movement of these ownership titles' values, not only those of government bonds, but also of shares, strengthens the illusion that they constitute real capital besides the capital or claim to which they may give title In so far as the rise or fall in value of these securities is independent of the movement of the real capital that they represent,

the wealth of the nation is just as great afterwards as before' (Capital, vol. 3, ch. 29, Penguin, pp. 598-9).

A recent example is 'China's cheap AI chatbox wipes billions off Silicon Valley shares' (*Times*, 28 January) where a part of the fictitious capital was wiped out without affecting value of the real capital invested in the corporations' tangible assets.

Conversely, contrary to Gordon's claim, an increase in share prices is not an increase in real capital (though it may reflect this).

Gordon is offering an essentially financial theory of crises, based on a boom in stock exchange prices (and on banks supposedly creating credit by a stroke of the pen) generating additional money-capital that is invested in expanding productive capacity; eventually too much in relation to paying demand is produced and the bubble bursts.

The stock exchange crash is indeed a consequence of such overproduction. It's when stock market traders realise that the fictitious capital represented by shares is over-priced due to the future income stream of profits on which it is based becoming less than anticipated. But the question is: what causes the overproduction? Marx looked for the explanation in the 'movement of real capital' not in what happens in the world of finance.

What is Marxism?

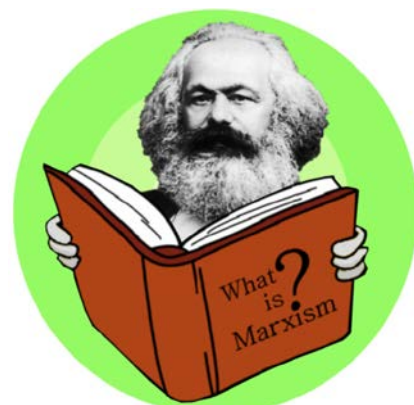
The Socialist Party's Summer School 22nd-24th August 2025

Karl Marx (and Friedrich Engels) gave us a method for explaining how society functions, based on materialist principles and analysis of the economic framework within which goods and services are produced. This body of work has been summed up as 'Marxist'. Since the 19th Century, these theories have been interpreted by countless historians, economists, sociologists, philosophers and political theorists and activists. Their work too has been

called 'Marxist'. Where does an interpretation become a misinterpretation, and how can we judge what's accurate?

The Socialist Party's weekend of talks and discussion considers how Marxism has developed and its influence today, and the extent to which it is an essential part of the case we put for a marketless, stateless society of free access and production for use that we call socialism.

Our venue is the University of Worcester, St John's Campus, Henwick Grove, St John's, Worcester, WR2 6AJ.



Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £150; the concessionary rate is £80. Book online at worldsocialism.org/spgb/summer-school-2025/ or send a cheque (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) with your contact details to Summer School, The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN. Day visitors are welcome, but please e-mail for details in advance. Email enquiries to spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk. Bookings will close on 18th July or before.



Realistically altruistically

Credit: BBC



RADIO 4's *The Infinite Monkey Cage* has clocked up 32 series of 'witty, irreverent' conversations on science-related subjects, helmed by physicist Brian Cox and comedian Robin Ince. A recent edition asked 'How selfish are we really?', although the panellists focused on the flipside of selfishness: altruism, discussing the notion through the frameworks of psychology and evolutionary biology. Psychologist Matti Wilks and comedian Jo Brand give our usual definition of altruism as someone making an effort to be kind to another person with no expectation of anything in return.

Steve Jones, a professor of genetics, defines it in a more Darwinian way as an act which reduces someone's fitness to survive (by using their time and energy on something they don't directly gain from) and which increases someone else's fitness. Superficially, it could seem counter-intuitive to do this, but as Steve clarifies, our genes will spread if we benefit our group overall, and our brains are wired to get a positive feeling when we behave in a nice way. In day-to-day life we don't tend to think about altruism like this, and run with a general inclination to be helpful with a background assumption of 'reciprocal altruism', that if we act altruistically towards someone, then in future they will act similarly.

The panel ponders the extent to which this exists across the animal kingdom, particularly among our distant relatives. Steve says chimps engage in reciprocal altruism by picking lice off each other, although they also fight more than homo sapiens, which is why we've had the evolutionary advantage. Our ancestors went from living and collaborating in extended families to larger groups, and he adds that reciprocal altruism was later embedded by religions which have 'do unto others as you would have them

do unto you' among their principles, with problems arising because as he says wryly, religions hate each other. He mentions that the structure of *The Bible* and Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* are 'remarkably similar', both starting with describing origins and ending with 'mysterious stuff which you don't understand'.

Psychologists have aimed to explain altruism through research into our views and behaviour. Matti refers to studies which found that people are prone to empathise with and be altruistic to those they feel akin to, such as Americans giving money to victims of the California wildfires rather than to people in need elsewhere. Children have been understood to also be 'parochial' in their ethical outlook, although Matti's own research has shown they can be more likely than adults to say we should help people in faraway places. This may be because they haven't yet been socialised to see some people as 'other'.

The programme doesn't consider how the type of society we live in shapes relations between people and therefore how we behave altruistically, although it gives numerous examples of this happening. There is the 'identifiable victim effect', shown in tests when people gave more money to a charity which used a picture of one person in need than when a picture of several people was shown. While this ostensibly demonstrates that we find it easier to be empathetic and altruistic to individuals rather than groups, the effect depends on there being a context of scarcity and charity, and possibly notions of 'otherness' too. Any conclusions drawn about altruism in these studies only apply to this societal situation, rather than necessarily being basic truths of what it is to be human. Further research has found that we're less altruistic towards large groups,

and this could also be socially conditioned. When Matti is asked how altruism expands from small groups (where its benefits are most obvious) to bigger ones, she replies that psychology hasn't done a good job of illuminating this. To give a socialist perspective not explored in the programme, perhaps wide-scale altruism happens when people see through the divisions between groups which capitalism encourages and recognise our common humanity. This may also explain something else which Matti says psychologists haven't been able to sufficiently account for: 'extraordinary' altruists, those who are exceptionally altruistic to strangers without expectations of reciprocity, such as kidney donors.

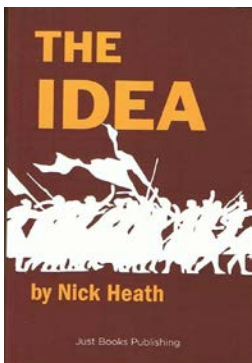
Steve cites blood donation as a familiar example of a 'purely' altruistic act, at least in the UK, where the only payment the donor receives is a cup of tea and a biscuit. In America, people receive money for their blood, and commodifying the process at this point has meant that to minimise additional costs to profit-hungry healthcare companies, inadequate checks have been done to avoid infected blood being passed on. Matti says that elsewhere, introducing payments to donors has led to a reduction in people coming forward, as the 'intrinsic motivation' for doing so had gone when it became monetised.

Economic considerations with altruism are also acknowledged by Matti when she says that it's a 'position of privilege' to be altruistic, meaning that people often can't afford to give to others if they lack enough goods themselves. This isn't a blanket rule, though, as levels of trust and compassion in a group affect the extent that altruism is the norm. To try and measure how much altruism there is, researchers have compared which groups have more or less expansive 'moral circles', which contain things considered to have moral concern. Trying to quantify these qualities is 'not as pure a metric' as comparing countries on their GDP, as Matti says. Asked which country is the most altruistic, Steve jokes that it might be Norway because there's nothing else to do there.

Steve's contributions from the perspective of evolutionary biology tell us that we're primed to act in an altruistic way because this has been evolutionarily advantageous. Some sort of altruism is essential for us to be able to live in groups, especially harmoniously. How altruism is manifested, and how psychology attempts to explain it, are moulded by society's structures. In capitalism, we are conditioned to view some groups as 'other', and behaving altruistically happens through the constraints which a market-driven, divisive society imposes.

MIKE FOSTER

Communist idea



The Idea. Anarchist Communism Past, Present and Future.
By Nick Heath.
Published by Just Books Publishing, 2022. ISBN 9781739723712

Suitably enough, *The Idea*, a book on the history of anarchist communism, is a dense, brick-like volume of nearly 500 pages, detailing the key figures, movements, activities, and publications of Anarchist Communists (AnComs) throughout history.

Anarchist communism, as opposed to anarchist collectivism, is the only anarchist tradition that explicitly calls for the abolition of the market economy and exchange value. Despite its many challenges, it has endured to the present day.

No movement is overlooked, with particularly extensive entries on France and documentation of the significant tendencies in Russia, France, Latin America, Ukraine, and beyond. The AnCom tendencies in China, Japan, and Korea are also covered, drawing in part on the published works of one-time SPGB member and political historian John Crump.

The Idea is a meticulous study that separates the wheat from the chaff, focusing on movements and organisations with a class-struggle perspective. However, as the book itself illustrates, many historical anarchist groups were far less discerning in their alliances. The book can be recommended to anyone with a historical interest in libertarian communism. Heath's work is admirable in its scope and depth.

Nick Heath's political journey began with the Labour Party, then the Communist Party, before he ultimately embraced anarchist communism.

It must be noted some key lessons emerge from this volume. Individualist tendencies are a dead end—sometimes literally. A lesser known and striking example being the case of Museifukyosanto, a small AnCom party in Japan that, being structured along Leninist lines, veered into adventurism, leading to the arrest of more than 700 of their comrades. The end fate of active anarchists tends to follow one of these paths: imprisonment, exile, murder (often at the hands of the state), or suicide. To paraphrase a certain British prime minister, the problem with anarchism is that eventually, you run out of other anarchists.

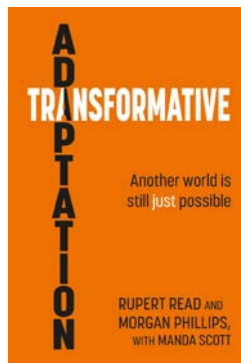
It would be remiss not to mention the example of Korean AnComs, who, between 1910 and 1945, actively participated in

electoral politics. This made their position similar to ours in that respect. They achieved notable success, serving in the Korean Provisional Government and later securing positions in the cabinet.

Nick Heath's book is well worth reading and is a solid example of a disciplined work in a sea of anarchist garbage that was previously published and no doubt will come later. *The Idea* should interest anyone seeking libertarian socialist solutions to the practical problems of organisation and decentralised power.

A.T.

Transformism



Transformative Adaptation. Another world is still just possible. By Rupert Read and Morgan Phillips with Manda Scott. Permanent Publications. 2024. 102pp.

This is a collection of short essays written by the editors, Rupert Read and Morgan Phillips, and by other contributors – with titles like 'Transformative Adaptation as Part of the Emerging Climate Majority', 'How we will Free Ourselves – Together', and 'Thrutopia: Creating a New Story for a World Undergoing Transformation'.

So what do these writers mean by 'transformative adaptation'? Most of them talk about a wide variety of what they see as ecologically beneficial initiatives and activities, for example restoration of wetlands, 'agroforestry hubs', biodiverse planting schemes, community food-growing sites, and use of green technology. Among specific ideas put forward are 'autonomous community-led centres focused on meeting local needs and building local resilience'. They give examples of this kind of thing they see as taking place in various parts of the world, for example Nepal, Kurdistan, and more locally in, for instance, the 'Talking Tree' project in Staines and the 'Zero Carbon Guildford Climate Hub'. They see transformative adaptation as going beyond efforts to simply cut down on carbon emissions and be generally more environmentally conscious (they describe that as 'mitigation') and characterise it as part of the need to 'work with nature not against her' so that 'ecological breakdown can be reversed'. Above all they stress that, if the world carries on along its current anti-ecological track (COP, for example, is seen as a failure and a fraud, 'a surrender to the forces of big energy and big capital'), it will quickly lead to a situation where 'the

very habitability of our earth teeters'.

But what does this book have to say about the political dimension of climate change and global warming and efforts to curb or reverse it and protect the environment? It says a certain amount. It refers to what is happening as 'a crisis of political economy', whereby we all live in a system that demands continuous economic growth' and creates 'dire levels of inequality that would have made Roman emperors blush'. It further states, that 'climate stability and capitalism – in any form – are not compatible', that 'unimaginable "profits" continue to be made, as capital attempts to commodify life itself', and that to remedy this we need 'societal transformation'.

So far so good, except that it seems to think that all this can somehow happen within the system of capitalism and its buying and selling imperative and talks about 'exerting pressure on government' and 'on decision makers', as though governments were somehow neutral and their purpose was something other than managing the capitalist system in the interests of the tiny minority who monopolise the wealth of society. So the book states the undeniable truth that 'the solutions are available, we just need to take collective action and implement them in our communities'.

If 'collective action' simply means local planting schemes, 'green' technology and the like, clearly this will do little more than scratch the surface of the problems of the environment and inequality they point to. So, though we cannot blame the advocates of transformative adaptation for wanting to do something practical to rescue an overheating planet from the ills of capitalism, it cannot in itself feasibly be seen as a wider effective solution.

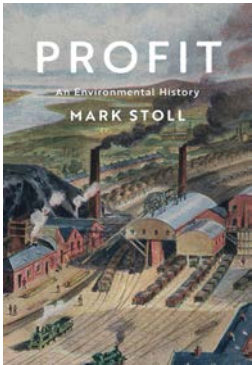
However, to be fair this book does end up going somewhat further, and that's mainly thanks to its final chapter contributed by the novelist Manda Scott, who talks about the need to imagine 'how our lives would look and feel if we let go of our encultured drive to engage in a market of goods and services' and states flatly that 'capitalism is not compatible with a flourishing web of life'.

Groups and movements that offer examples of self-organisation, democratic cooperation and sharing of resources and goods, which this book wants to see a spread of, offer something of an antidote to those single-issue campaigns calling on government to bring in various reforms which, even if enacted, rarely do more than tinker at the edges of the massive problem constituted by the whole system of production for profit. But the most radical of the ideas put forward here, that of a 'parallel government' possibly leading to a more democratic system

and even perhaps to some form of non-monetary economy, seems unnecessarily complicated compared to using simple democratic political action via the existing system of elections as a route to the establishment of a democratic, moneyless, marketless society of common ownership and production for direct use. In Manda Scott's words, 'a system designed to meet the needs of all people within the means of the living planet' and 'a world that is fully connected, where we are not born to pay bills and then die'.

HKM

Capitalism everywhere?



Profit: an Environmental History. By Mark Stoll. Polity £17.99.

This volume contains a great deal of useful information, not just about the environment and how production has affected it, but also on the history of technology and industry, and there are many pages of references.

Various kinds of pollution are referred to, such as the massive oil spills from the Torrey Canyon supertanker in 1967 and the Deepwater Horizon drilling

platform in 2010. But environmental impacts go back much earlier. In the Middle Ages, for instance, silver and gold were imported to Italy to be minted into coins, which led to toxic chemicals being washed into streams and rivers near the mines, in Bohemia and other places. Areas near the mines suffered from deforestation. By the seventeenth century sugar refineries and other industries in the Netherlands emitted vast amounts of stinking coal smoke. In the Americas, growing tobacco depleted the soil, but colonists just moved to extensive uncleared land. In the nineteenth century Britain was the largest producer of copper, which meant the emission of poisonous substances such as sulphur dioxide and arsenic. A lot more material along similar lines is surveyed here.

However, the book has some negative points too. For some reason, the author refers several times to the religious views of various individuals. Does it really matter that Rachel Carson, author of the conservationist classic *Silent Spring*, was a Reformed Protestant or that Bill Gates used to be a Congregationalist?

More significantly, Stoll has a very all-embracing approach to capitalism, which he sees as an economic system where owners of accumulated wealth invest it for profit in extracting raw materials or producing and distributing goods. There have been various forms of it over the centuries, from incipient capitalism to plantation capitalism in ancient Greece to industrial capitalism and present-day consumer capitalism. He writes:

'we cannot live with capitalism and we cannot live without it. At best, we can work to ameliorate its worst effects.' And it 'is rooted in human nature and human history'. Wage labour gets an occasional mention but does not seem to be viewed as an essential part of capitalism. Nor is it recognised that the way most people made their living has varied enormously over the centuries. Furthermore, his idea of profit goes well beyond the notion of surplus value as an intrinsic part of the employment-and-wages system, since he states that forty thousand years ago people made a profit by exchanging tools they had made for other goods they did not have to make themselves.

From the late nineteenth century, industrial capitalism has come to be gradually replaced by consumer capitalism, with its emphasis on advertising and built-in obsolescence. In the US, it seems, a piece of clothing is worn on average seven times before being discarded. The biggest companies sell to consumers rather than manufacturing goods (Amazon and Walmart, for instance).

It is not clear, but Stoll appears to see capitalism as more than just islands of commodity production within a wider economy. The book contains much of interest but its approach to capitalism leaves a lot to be desired, not recognising that the drive for profit is an essential part of a system built on wage labour and production for sale.

PB

"Bots batter Boffs"

AS AN avid sci-fi fan I just couldn't resist the front cover of a recent *Daily Star* (24 February) with its picture of a killer robot and the headline BOTS BATTER BOFFS, especially as a textbox promised the 'Full Story', written by no less than the chief reporter.

So, dear reader, I bought a copy and, rushing to page 9, I learned that software development jobs are now about 30 percent fewer than five years ago, and that tech workers are afraid of redundancy because AI is now able to do some entry-level programming.

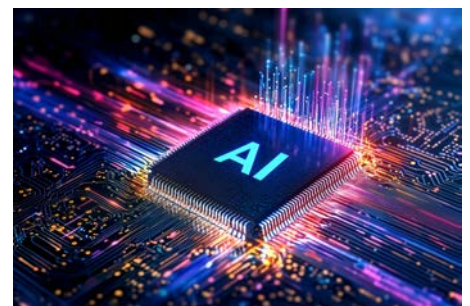
The whole tone of the piece seems to be about smarty pants nerds getting their come-uppance. And those smarty pants must be pretty dumb after all, because they didn't realise that their own efforts would put their livelihoods at risk. Maybe some of the *Star's* readers even found it funny

or comforting to know that other workers have shitty lives too.

Unsurprisingly, the chief reporter's 'Full story' was nothing of the sort. He forgot to draw his readers' attention to the fact that he was describing one of the glaring contradictions of the capitalist system. By which we mean that the advance in industrial technology that AI represents, in one way is very positive, as it increases productivity in a whole range of applications.

But for us, the workers, in economic terms, it becomes a negative. It will tend to result in (1) deskilling, which in turn will put pressure on wages, and (2) a reduction in the demand for labour power (while conversely, by throwing people out of work, increasing its supply), which will also tend to force wages down.

And this is a feature that affects all



industries and all workers all around the world. It has done so ever since the capitalist form of production came into existence. Because lower production costs, including wages, are for the capitalist, the key aim when introducing new technologies and techniques as they give (at least) a temporary advantage in the cut-throat competition between capitalists.

By the way, these advances are almost always the combined results of the efforts of workers, not the capitalists. Just one more good reason, if you needed it, for getting rid of the entire rotten system.

BUDGIE

Scots Nationalism

TODAY THE SNP seems to have left the lunatic fringe behind and appears as a modern, mass political party using the techniques of public relations and advertising industries to give it a new slick image, and the Executive Suit has replaced the kilt as standard dress for the party candidates. Not only does the party have a large and youthful membership of 120,000 but they carry out their propaganda with a style and enthusiasm which leaves the older reformist parties gasping. At the October general election they all but demolished the Liberals, hammered the Tories, and promise it will be Labour's turn next time. (...)

The nationalists have shown they are fast learners when it comes to political cynicism. They pretend to the workers that should independence come then all the oil revenues will automatically go into the Scottish exchequer and be used mainly for the benefit of the workers. They must know that the United Kingdom would get some of the revenue as part of any deal made over the granting of independence, and that the capitalist class

in Scotland would insist that oil revenues be used to reduce the burden of taxation which rests on them.

Will the Labour government's proposed Scottish Assembly, but still under Westminster, outflank the SNP? This is possible since it is doubtful if the electorate in Scotland want complete independence as various opinion polls have shown. However, as the Assembly will have no more success in abolishing capitalism's problems than the SNP's claim that only full independence can succeed, it will probably gain more support.

Should self-government eventually be established the SNP will discover that they cannot will or legislate away those problems of capitalism. No country in the world, no matter how independent or rich in resources, has yet succeeded in eliminating poverty, unemployment, insecurity, etc. For the working class there will be wages while they are working and pensions when they are too old or disabled.

(Socialist Standard, April 1975)

Action Replay

Fire and sales

LONG GONE are the times when cricket had just two formats, three-day county games and five-day Test matches. The one-day Gillette Cup, which began in 1963 and later had various changes of name, was the first departure from the original set-ups. There are now a number of domestic competitions run by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), all with the aim of increasing audiences and sponsorship. The earlier versions, with long matches and lots of draws, were no longer up to the job.

There is still a men's county championship, with two divisions and promotion and relegation. The Blast T20 competition (twenty overs per innings) is divided into two groups, North and South, supposedly 'historic county rivalries', and the One-Day Cup is a 50-over contest. From the coming season, women's county cricket will be structured in the same way.

But the biggest innovation is the Hundred, a 100-ball competition launched in 2021, and based on cities rather than traditional counties. The teams are in Birmingham, Cardiff, Leeds, London (two sides), Manchester, Nottingham and Southampton. They have names such as Welsh Fire and Trent Rockets, presumably intended to sound exciting and perhaps intended to echo rugby league names such as Leigh Leopards and Warrington Wolves. The aim, according to the ECB, is 'to open

cricket to more families and young people'.

The Hundred has resulted in a great deal of take-over activity, with teams being sold off, in whole or part, to other companies. Yorkshire, for instance, sold their entire Hundred stake in Northern Superchargers to a group that already own an Indian Premier League side, while 49 percent of shares have been sold in both the Birmingham and Cardiff teams. The owners of Birmingham City Football Club now own part of Birmingham Phoenix (see last month's Action Replay on companies owning several sports teams).

At the international level, too, there are a variety of competitions, run by the

International Cricket Council (ICC), founded in 1909 as the Imperial Cricket Conference. In February and March this year, the ICC Men's Champions Trophy was played, for the first time since 2017. The delay was due to security reasons, with the Indian team refusing to travel to Pakistan, the intended hosts, for matches. It was decided that India's games would be played in the UAE, including the semi-final and final, which India won. Some people objected that it appeared to be India that were running the tournament, rather than the ICC. There were also calls for England to boycott their match with Afghanistan, given the Taliban's attacks on women's freedoms and the disbanding of the country's women's team in 2021, with women's sport in general being prohibited. So, not for the first time, politics and profit inevitably find their way into sporting competitions.

PB



World Socialist Movement Online Meetings

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

April 2025 Events

World Socialist Movement
online meetings

Sundays at 19.30 (IST) (Discord)

Weekly WSP (India) meeting

Sunday 13 April 10.00 (GMT + 1)

Central Online Branch Meeting

Friday 4 April 19.30 (GMT + 1)

One World, One People

An AI reading of our manifesto for the 1966 general election (postponed from last month)

Friday 11 April 19.30 (GMT + 1)

No Meeting. Eve of Annual Conference

Saturday 12 April 10am-5pm (GMT + 1)

Socialist Party Annual Conference

This is a hybrid meeting. To attend in person see Physical Meetings below.

Friday 18 April 19.30 (GMT + 1)

No Meeting. Easter holiday.

Friday 25 April 19.30 (GMT + 1)

Have you heard the news?

Host: Howard Moss

Discussion of recent events

Friday 2 May 19.30 (GMT + 1)

May Day meeting.

Socialist Party Physical Meetings

Saturday 12 April 10am–5pm • Socialist Party Annual Conference

Those unable to attend in person can take part via Zoom. All welcome in person or on Zoom.

Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN (nearest tube: Clapham North). Nearest overground: Clapham High Street)

LONDON

Thursday 1 May 12.30-4pm • May Day 2025

Assemble 12.30 Clerkenwell Green (nearest tube and station: Farringdon). March to Trafalgar Square 1pm for Rally at 2.30 pm. The Socialist Party will have a presence at both places.

BURNLEY

Monday 5 May 11am onwards

Burnley May Day Festival, Towneley Park

The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event.

CARDIFF

Street Stall Every Saturday 1pm-3pm (weather permitting)

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

COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

We are standing 3 candidates in these elections on 1 May. Folkestone East and Folkestone West in Kent and Stroud Central in Gloucestershire.

To help the campaign, in April, for Stroud, email stroud@worldsocialism.org or text or phone 07853965473. For Folkestone, email spgb.ksr@worldsocialism.org or text or phone 07971715569.

We are also standing in the by-election in Herne Hill & Loughborough Junction ward in Lambeth, London, also on 1 May. Offers of help to spgb@worldsocialism.org

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.

Stand up to Racism



'STAND UP to Racism' is a South Wales campaign group that organises events and demonstrations against racism. I'm on their mailing list and a recent message told me of a weekend event in Swansea's Castle Gardens – 'Love Swansea Hate Racism'. It said: 'Bring your guitar, beats, banners, brollies, poems, words, friends, and yourself to make our streets buzz with dancing and diversity, not fascist jackboots. Let's show that hate has no home here!' I decided to go along and see what was happening.

It wasn't a good day weather-wise – intermittent rain and a bit of a gale – but still what seemed to me a fairly decent turnout of 100 or so people were gathered in one area of the city centre gardens. A police van was parked nearby and some uniformed officers were hanging about, but it all seemed entirely peaceful. There were plenty of banners and placards if none of the promised poetry or live music. But there were speeches from the platform and from one of them I learned that there was a rival far-right demonstration taking place nearby, which helped to explain the police presence.

A proposal was then made from the platform to march to where the far-right, the so-called 'Voice of Wales', were organising their gathering, which they'd called 'a family fun day'. The idea put forward was not to confront them, but to show them they were outnumbered. And that's what happened – the demonstration moved out of the gardens, processed along Princes Way and then crossed over one of the city's main arteries to the Leisure Centre garden, where the Voice of Wales supporters were

gathered. The police had accompanied the procession and now made sure that the two groups of demonstrators were kept apart from each other and that the far right could address their own supporters and anyone else who was around and wave their banners. But all this didn't last long. The Voice of Wales group, who were effectively fewer in number than their opponents and were being drowned out by them, soon decided their 'family fun day' was over and packed up, at which the Stand up to Racism people drifted away. And so did I.

What to make of this? Well, I couldn't but be supportive of the anti-racism demonstrators, for I can only see it as supremely desirable to be accepting of other human beings regardless of their race (in itself a misnomer), background or place of origin. And I can only lament the fact that there are some people who oppose or resent the presence of others in their society on the basis of skin colour, culture or place of birth. As an advocate of a borderless world society, all that makes so little sense to me. However, while being unequivocally opposed to the nationalism, bigotry and manifest racism of the Voice of Wales crowd with their 'Stop the Boats' banners and signs, their pictures of Donald Trump displayed on placards and their speakers' appeals to 'British values', I can't not have some reservations about Stand up to Racism too.

While opposition to racism is to be applauded, unfortunately those who organise such groups tend to use them as a recruiting platform to push a Leninist agenda of the need for a vanguard – themselves – to lead the working class to a society which they may call socialist but in effect would be governed by the vanguard

that has 'led' it there. No surprise, therefore, that the most stand-out feature of the demonstration in Castle Gardens was an SWP stall, set up in the middle selling its newspapers and other publications and displaying posters with slogans for its latest campaigns. And no surprise either that many of the banners, placards and badges on view said things like 'Boycott Israel', 'Free Palestine' and 'Stop the Genocide' and so were not specifically about racism at all but rather about the current conflict in the Middle East, which organisations like the SWP see as one of their 'causes'.

But what about racism itself? Well, there's no doubt that, even within the dog-eat-dog society that is capitalism, there has been a significant improvement in attitudes over the years. In this country, for example, the open, unabated, almost taken-for-granted racism (and sexism) that existed just a few short decades ago is dramatically less in evidence now. Who at that time could in their wildest dreams have imagined that, in the not-too-distant future the leader of one of the two biggest political parties would be a woman of colour. This is not of course to say that racist ideas have stopped having purchase over many people, but there has undeniably been what we can reasonably call progress.

Yet, given the divisive attitudes prompted by the conditions of the society we live in, the scourge of racism will always remain a possibility, a frame of mind that people whose lives feel precarious in one way or another (eg, through poverty, unemployment or job insecurity) may turn to. And indeed they may be encouraged to turn to it by leaders or parties that see it as in their interests to sow division among people who have not developed the consciousness to perceive that they have fundamentally the same interests as their fellow workers. This is currently being illustrated by developments in many parts of the 'advanced' world, eg, Germany, Hungary, USA.

So stand up to racism, yes, but we are unlikely to see the end of that scourge unless we stand up to capitalism and establish a socialist world of common ownership, democratic control, production for need not profit and free access to all goods and services. In such a society, racism, or any other form of prejudice or discrimination, will have no ground to take root in and no soil in which to flourish.

HOWARD MOSS