

THE

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SOCIALIST STANDARD

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

Fortress America



Also: Has capitalism become financialised?
 Just Stop Oil: the failure of a tactic
 Socialist election activity

What's the deal with Greenland?
 The end and the means
 Small is ... small



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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'

Why tariffs are not an issue

‘TARIFF REFORM, Free Trade or No Trade? The Fiscal Fraud Exposed’ was the front-page headline of the *Socialist Standard* in April 1910. It could be today too.

Britain was then a free-trade country with no tariffs on imports. This was the traditional policy of the Liberal Party, then in office, dating from the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1844 which had taxed imports of wheat and other cereals, resulting in higher rents for landowners and so lower profits for capitalists. By the turn of the century, however, British metal manufacturers were feeling the effect of competition from German and American producers and the cry went up for their profits to be ‘protected’. A demand taken up by the Conservative Party as ‘tariff reform’.

Both sides canvassed working-class support for their policy, employing the same specious arguments which we are hearing again today. The Free-Traders’ main argument was ‘cheap food’, that if tariffs were imposed then the price of food would go up and people would be worse off. Today, Trump’s opponents are saying that his tariffs will harm workers by putting

up the price of computers, smartphones and clothes. The Tariff Reformers argued that a tax on imports would help preserve jobs in heavy industry and reduce unemployment. Trump, in photo ops with hard-hatted car workers and coal miners standing behind him, is employing the same argument, one that has attractions for the workers concerned and is often supported by their trade unions.

An increase in the cost of living and job security are matters that workers have to worry about. But tariff-free trade does not make workers better off and protective tariffs cannot ensure job security.

Wages reflect the money cost of creating and maintaining a worker’s labour power and tend to go up and down in line with the price of the basket of goods and services they need to do this. If the cost of living increases so, eventually, will money wages (the quicker, the more workers take union action to press for this). And vice versa.

Employers don’t employ workers to provide them with a job but to make a profit out of their work. They are always under competitive pressure to keep

costs, including labour costs, down. One way of doing this is to install more up-to-date machinery that enables a worker to produce more in a given period of time. Which results in fewer workers being employed. This process continues even behind tariff walls.

Whether or not there are taxes on imports, workers remain economically dependent on those who monopolise the means of wealth production and have to work for them for a wage that is less than the value of what they produce or provide. Their interest lies in ending this situation by making the means for providing what society needs common property under democratic control.

Then there will be ‘no trade’ because what is trade but the exchange of products between separate owners? With common ownership it cannot exist. What there will be is the simple moving of products from where they are produced to where they are needed, a question of logistics and not a question of buying and selling — or of tariffs and other taxes.

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Without distinction of race or sex



IN THE USA, Trump's MAGA gang is ruthlessly savaging everything they don't like, including climate science, Ivy League universities which they see as being hotbeds of radical leftism, and diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI). Their DEI bête noire is what's called 'affirmative action', which they take to mean promoting ethnic candidates over more talented white ones, in defiance of the principle of meritocracy.

This presupposes that a white-dominated 'meritocracy' is ever genuinely capable of being 'colour blind', in the sense that it doesn't notice whether a person is white or black. Critical race theory, which the MAGA gang also loath, mocks this self-serving pretension and argues that disadvantaged groups will never get a fair shake unless a little positive discrimination is introduced into the mix. As things stand, the system will always promote whites over more talented ethnic candidates.

Logically speaking, discrimination is not in the interests of employers, if through their own prejudice they are reducing the pool of talent they can draw from. But prejudice is not logical. Moreover, economically disadvantaged whites may not see or admit that there is a racism problem in the first place. To them, any positive discrimination in favour of other disadvantaged groups, together with talk of 'white privilege', will seem like a wholesale liberal attack on their 'rights'. Populists like Trump are experts in exploiting such concerns.

During the USA's infamous Jim Crow era, segregation required race-defining laws to determine who was black and who was white. The concept of 'race' has no scientific basis, so the laws were inevitably arbitrary, leaving some white-appearing people designated black, and vice versa. This legal nonsense imposed an artificial binary categorisation on what in reality is a spectrum, in order to enforce an iniquitous social oppression.

Constitutional lawyers teach that 'parliament can do everything but make a woman a man and a man a woman'. In its judgement last month the UK Supreme Court seemed to agree but they were making a purely legal ruling. They were not seeking to reflect the scientific view which is much more nuanced.

'Most traits ascribed to males and females fall along a spectrum that has two peaks. One is the average for females. The other is the average for males [...] But almost nobody fits in the peak for their sex on all of those measures' (tinyurl.com/bdz9dxy2).

As molecular evolutionary biologist Nathan Lents puts it, 'How we define sex really depends on what we're talking about. We want this to be a nice, neat, two-bucket category system where there's no grey area, but unfortunately biology doesn't traffic in binaries very often'. He describes a huge range of sex-related cardiovascular functions, hormone levels, blood, liver and brain conditions and disease dispositions, which don't necessarily correspond to the external visible anatomy, or what's called the phenotype. 'While it's very understandable to want to collapse all of this diversity into very simple categories, it really misses a lot of important biology. Life is complicated, life is messy, life is multi-dimensional' (youtu.be/EyXVYzpOzFA).

He goes on: 'We have anatomy all throughout our body that shows sex differences, but those differences are overlapping, and the variation within the sexes is larger than the difference between them' (youtu.be/XsV62lqifS8).

He concludes: 'We've invented categories such as male and female, we invented these words, we invented these labels and we created the definitions, which means that they're not necessarily a biological reality' (youtu.be/fL4xuVsOuT0).

For instance, women typically have two X chromosomes, and men have an X

and a Y chromosome. But this is far from being universal. Around 1.7 percent of babies are born as 'intersex' or as having 'differences of sexual development' (DSDs), meaning they have traits of both sexes. This is about the same proportion as those who have red hair, or globally, around 110 million people. 1 in 650 newborns assigned male at birth have two or more X chromosomes and one Y (Klinefelter syndrome). 1 in 1000 newborns assigned female have just one X chromosome (Trisomy). In some cases, the SRY gene, important for male sex development, jumps out of the Y chromosome and bonds to an X instead. In others, X and Y have genes which prevent bodies from responding to testosterone and other male sex hormones (androgens), so that their bodies develop as female while having testes inside their abdomens.

Stigma surrounding such conditions often led to surgery at birth that was kept secret by the child's parents, leading to severe mental health problems for the child later in life, in particular gender dysphoria, in which the person's perceived gender does not align with their assigned sex.

Some of us may have mismatched sexual traits and not even know about it. In 2014, a 70-year-old father of four seeking treatment for a 'hernia' turned out to have a uterus with fallopian tubes (youtu.be/kT0HJkr1jj4).

The Supreme Court ruling is likely to have heartrending repercussions for transgender women, and will no doubt be contested. It's a political ruling that will allow one large oppressed group to feel a measure of protection at the cost of another, far smaller one. But it is not based on science, which has nothing to say on wider questions about sports or hospital beds or prisons. And it allows politicians to 'dodge responsibility over one of the most contentious and toxic debates of our age' (tinyurl.com/2pc964f6).

In socialism, 'legal' definitions will be irrelevant. Equality doesn't mean we all have to look or be the same. What it does mean is that we will cooperate, practically, ethically, and creatively, to build a post-capitalist society of common ownership for the emancipation of the whole of humanity, in the words of clause 4 of our Declaration of Principles, 'without distinction of race or sex'.

PJS

Dear Editor...

"Socialism's prospects have never been better"

IN 1995 I moved to the 'City of Three Revolutions,' as St Petersburg was known in Soviet times, and lived there for ten years. Although my antennas were always up for signals of a socialist spirit, or even just the memory of one, they registered none. My reaction was to dive deeper into the history of the revolution. I began noticing things about it that were out of sync with my reading of Marx and Engels, like the fact that almost all the top Bolsheviks were from the upper class, not to mention that what they did to the workers they were supposedly leading to communism was far worse than what they had suffered under their old masters.

Lenin brought his Bolshevik Party to power on the cresting wave of the democratic workers' councils in 1917. Then, with a few changes, he essentially restored tsarist autocracy. Freedom of speech, the press, and assembly were again suppressed, and the absolute power of a non-elected monarch, a dictator, reappeared along with a centralized bureaucracy. Under Lenin, the *chinovnik*-bureaucrat apparatus once more became the master of the land and of thousands of industrial enterprises. It included many tsarist bureaucrats, who, together with a few Bolsheviks, were the bosses in the ministries. Lenin's bureaucracy blended with the tsarist bureaucracy and quickly adopted the same rules. Everything that upset or challenged the interests of centralized economic and socio-political life was eliminated.

Naturally, the USSR presented itself as socialist. From the standpoint of capitalists the world over, this was confirmed by the abolition of private property and the free market. For Soviet workers, however, their government, though endlessly spewing Marxist phraseology, was a harsh exploiter. The USSR had very little in common with socialism, if by this we mean a society without exploitation and classes. Abolition of private property and nationalization of the means of production are not socialism if the direct producers do not control the economy. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was not a union because Moscow ruled despotically over the regions. It was not soviet because the Bolsheviks eliminated the workers' councils. It was not socialist as workers' self-management was destroyed. And it was not republican because there were no free elections. Every word in this 'USSR' was a bald lie.

German and Dutch Marxists, including among others, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl

Liebknicht, Leo Jogiches, Paul Levy, Franz Mehring, Otto Rühle, Anton Pannekoek and Herman Gorter, exercised an early criticism of the concept Lenin elaborated in his 1902 pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?* whereby a highly disciplined party of professional revolutionaries would 'substitute' for the working class and carry out a socialist revolution in its name. They insisted that socialism was not a party affair and argued that all political parties – even those identifying as socialist – are inherently bourgeois in nature because they always have a hierarchy with leaders who make all the important decisions and followers who do as they are told. The very idea of the political party was a violation of the credo and collectivist spirit of socialism.

For the longest time, I could not understand the phenomenon of well-off, usually well-educated, individuals leading revolutions, people like Lenin, Trotsky, Castro, Guevara, and Mao. The answer is self-evident, but it took me a while to realize this. Intellectuals have two routes to power. One is to join the establishment and work to preserve and extend it in the spirit of Niccolò Machiavelli. For the more daring or desperate, the other way is to lead a revolution and make the establishment theirs. Leftists, including Leninists, Trotskyists, Stalinists, Maoists and other 'ists' have a special interest in state capitalism, are based on the exploitation of and rule over the workers, and make up capitalism's 'radical' left wing.

Since the Paris Commune of 1871, the world's workers have not discovered any other form of revolutionary organization than the council. Councils know no hierarchy, all decisions are taken collectively, and their representatives answer only to their members. This is the form in which the social-revolutionary workers' movement has clothed itself – like the soviets that were shut down and swept away by the Bolsheviks in 1917-1921, and the similar elimination of workers' councils (*arbeiterräte*) in Germany in the early twenties, the councils that were eliminated by the French 'communists' in 1968, Iran's mullahs in 1979, and Poland's apparatchiki in 1981, among many others.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels did not say, 'Unite the workers of the world! They said instead, 'Workers of the world, unite!' Their audience were workers, not upper-class intellectuals with guilt complexes and political ambitions. Indeed, if they are to blame for anything, it is the sanguine hope they gave to so many that capitalism

would spread across the planet and take root much faster than it did, along with the expectation that the victory of the proletariat, by virtue of its sheer size and majority alone, would be guaranteed and the world would finally lay the awful system to rest. In fairness to Marx and Engels, however, the first words of the *Communist Manifesto*, published in distant 1848, are: 'A specter is haunting Europe.' The confusion may be due to the pamphlet's forward-looking last sentence: 'Workers of the world, unite!' It is now 2025, and there have never been more workers on the planet. Moreover, the hold on them of political parties is largely a thing of the past. The prospects for international socialist revolution have never been better.

EVEL ECONOMAKIS

Reply:

Obviously we agree with your criticism of the so-called USSR and of Leninism but – equally obviously – cannot agree that 'the very idea of the political party was a violation of the credo and collectivist spirit of socialism'.

The historical figures you list seem to have meant parties based on the principle of leadership such as Lenin's vanguard party and parliamentary Social Democratic and Labour parties that ask workers to follow them as leaders by passively voting for them. We agree with rejecting that kind of party but most (though not all, not Luxemburg for example) seem to have ruled out the possibility of a political party – as a party contesting elections with a view to winning political control – which 'know[s] no hierarchy, all decisions are taken collectively, and their representatives answer only to their members'. This is the sort of party we advocate. Such a party is necessary as workers need to organise to take control of the state if only to prevent it being used against them but also to coordinate the changeover from capitalism to socialism.

We have nothing against 'workers councils' as such as bodies that workers have formed from time to time under specific historical circumstances, but we don't see them as a necessarily socialist revolutionary form. Not all the examples you list have even claimed that but advanced various trade-union type and political democracy demands. That said, workers will need to self-organise also in the places where they work to keep production and administration going while the workers' party uses political control to end capitalist ownership of the means of production. — *Editors*.

The King of Tariffs

'TRUMP OFTEN cites the "gilded age" of William McKinley, the late 19th-century president, who imposed tariffs at an average rate of 50 percent to protect the domestic farming sector from foreign competition' (*Times*, 4 April).

Actually, it was the manufacturing sector that McKinley wanted to protect. When he was a congressman for Ohio he drew up the Tariff Act of 1890 that came to be known as the McKinley Tariff. Trump calls him the 'Tariff King', a crown he himself clearly wants to wear.

In 1888, with the campaign for tariffs in America in full swing, Engels published an English translation, with his introduction, of a talk on free trade that Marx had given in French in Brussels in 1848. Engels quoted Marx as saying (in chapter 31 of *Capital*) that historically protectionism had been 'an artificial means of manufacturing manufacturers'. In his talk Marx criticised free trade too but came out in favour of it because it would hasten the development of capitalism and so bring on the final confrontation between the working class and the capitalist class. As he put it:

'The free trade system hastens the social revolution. It is in this revolutionary sense alone, gentlemen, that I vote in favour of

free trade.'

Engels's introduction provided a useful historical survey of protectionism — including which sections of the propertied classes in different countries had benefited from it and which had not at various times — and some background on what led to the McKinley Tariff, but also made some points about the effect of tariffs on different sectors of capitalist business which are still relevant today (tinyurl.com/35f65y5n).

One difference he mentioned was between those sectors which relied on imported materials and those which didn't. Manufacturers who obtained within the country the materials to transform into what they sold welcomed a tariff on imports of their product as protecting them from outside competition. On the other hand, those manufacturers who relied on imported materials did not want a tariff on them as this would increase the cost of producing their product. Nor did importers want tariffs generally.

This was seen today in the immediate reaction to Trump's 2 April 'Liberation Day' on Wall Street, where share prices reflect traders' views on the future profit prospects of the quoted firms. Shares in Apple whose smartphones are manufactured in Asia fell by 9 percent and 'Big multinational consumer groups were heavily in the red, reeling from tariffs on Asian production

hubs. Nike slumped 14 per cent'.

Exporters are not keen on tariffs either as their products are likely to be targets of any retaliatory action taken by other countries. America doesn't export much manufactured stuff (except weapons of war and pharmaceuticals). Apart from oil and gas, its main exports are agricultural products. Sure enough, this is what China's retaliatory tariffs, announced two days later, were aimed at. 'The latest measures are likely to have the most impact on US agricultural exports, including soyabeans, wheat and corn' (*Financial Times*, 4 April).

In short, not all its business sectors benefit when a country imposes tariffs. America today is no exception. Some capitalist businesses are in favour of Trump's policy but some will be lobbying for exemptions, even campaigning against him. Not that there is any guarantee that his protectionism will succeed in 'manufacturing manufacturers' in America, or, rather, in raising them from the dead.

In any event, as Engels noted: 'The question of Free Trade or Protection moves entirely within the bounds of the present system of capitalist production, and has, therefore, no direct interest for us socialists who want to do away with that system.'

McKinley was elected president in 1896 but was assassinated by an anarchist in 1901.

What is Marxism?

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

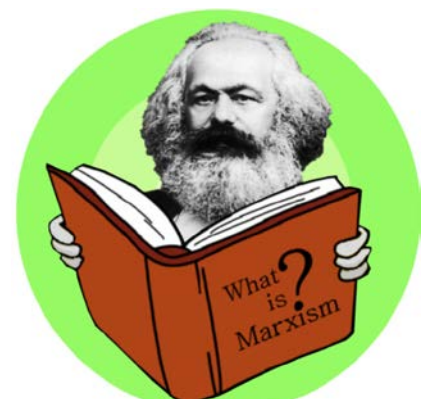
Karl Marx (and Friedrich Engels) gave us a method for explaining how society functions, based on materialist principles and analysis of the economic framework within which goods and services are produced. This body of work has been summed up as 'Marxist'. Since the 19th Century, these theories have been 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. Send enquiries to spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk. Bookings will close on 18th July or before.



Halo Halo

WHAT IS amongst the top ten American capitalist ‘opportunities’ (read scams) for becoming rich in the USA? One in particular is also popular in other parts of the world. Become a preacher. Grow a congregation. Rook them for as much money as you can.

At a Pentecostal Assemblies of the World Convention a preacher said it had cost him \$2,000 to renew his ordination and license. Can y’all contribute toward that? *Yahoo* reported that he ordered the doors locked on the one thousand people there and demanded that they each give twenty dollars. And the same from the online audience. Nice work if you can get it, Rev. He’s quoted in the piece as justifying the action on the following grounds: ‘The truth is, when finances are being received in any worship gathering, it is one of the most vulnerable and exposed times for both the finance and security teams. Movement during this sacred exchange can be distracting and, at times, even risky. My directive was

not about control it was about creating a safe, focused, and reverent environment for those choosing to give, and for those handling the resources’.

Chutzpah on a grand scale. Wonder if he had the American equivalent of Securicor waiting outside to safely carry off all the loot? Credit where it’s due, he’s merely following all those who recognised early on that religion offered power over the masses and oodles of boodle.

* * *

The Socialist Party is wholly in favour of free speech, even when religious nonsense is being propagated. That’s because we have a long history of refuting such hokum with empirical evidence. In the USA the First Amendment guarantees freedom of expression, and free exercise of religion except where it doesn’t.

In Kansas, according to *AlterNet*, the ‘Satanic Grotto, a group of Kansas religious anarchists’ wanted to hold a ‘black mass’ inside the Statehouse.

In a fine display of sensitivity, the SG

noted that ‘The event would not be the full “black mass” the group normally observes because that would involve nudity, drinking and other activities discouraged at the Statehouse. There also wouldn’t be fire or anything used in the ceremony that might pose a physical risk to the public’.

The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property organised an online petition. It’s described in the piece as a ‘traditionalist Catholic advocacy group’. Private property, eh?

Surprisingly not, the Kansas Governor responded with ‘computer says no’.

The article author points out that encouraging deference to religion can lead to ‘true believers’ resorting to violence to end perceived blasphemy. His example is the attack on Salman Rushdie in 2022, who was left blind in one eye.

Jonathon Turley, a US First Amendment lawyer, said: ‘Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner has announced that the government will be further cracking down on hate speech with a new working group tasked with defining “Islamophobia”’. The effort to crack down on “Islamophobia” could create a type of blasphemy standard if it encompasses criticism of the faith or its practices’ (tinyurl.com/bdaxfb46).

DC

Tiny tips

THE TOP 1 percent in the U.S... had a combined net worth of \$49.2 trillion by the end of 2024. The combined value of almost 100 million U.S. homes during the same time was \$49.7 trillion (**Newsweek**, tinyurl.com/r4wz58uk).

‘Woke’ is not a precise, scientific term. But it typically refers to the attempt to combat forms of oppression – like racism and sexism – on the basis of identity politics, through means like quotas, changes to language, and raising awareness ... ‘woke’ policies seek to ‘fight’ oppression on an individualistic basis, whilst completely jettisoning any idea of class struggle, or seeing oppression as being rooted in capitalist society (**The Communist**, tinyurl.com/3y3e8hp2).

Trucks carrying commercial goods, which are later sold in Gaza, are charged at least \$20,000...while aid trucks are also subject to extortion before crossing to the enclave. Organi is a Sinai businessman, politician and tribal leader allied with President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Organi’s name has become synonymous with unofficial profits

made out of the suffocating Gaza blockade, particularly from desperate Palestinians attempting to flee the fighting. MEE last year revealed that Organi made at least \$2m daily from Palestinians who left the Gaza Strip via the border crossing point with Egypt... (**MEE**, tinyurl.com/4uc2drtu).

While his crackdowns provoked outrage around the globe, Duterte and his brand of politics remained popular at home even after he left office. His daughter... riding on her family name, was elected Vice President in 2022 in a landslide victory alongside President Marcos Jr, himself the son of a former dictator who ruled the Philippines from 1965 to 1986 (**Time**, tinyurl.com/2bs4rku9).

A ceasefire in Ukraine is not about peace. It’s about money, just as the earlier war was. As all wars are, ultimately. An acceptable ceasefire for Trump, as well as for Putin, will involve a carve-up of Ukraine’s goodies. Rare earth minerals, land, agricultural production will be the real currency driving the agreement (**MEE**, tinyurl.com/3as72rek).

Tren de Aragua’s growth surged as a result of mass incarceration policies that began under Venezuela’s former President Hugo Chávez and expanded under current President Nicolás Maduro. Incarceration rates began to increase in 2009 and were exacerbated by police raids deployed in 2010 in marginalized neighborhoods across the country. Venezuela’s prisons became filled with young, poor men (**The Conversation**, tinyurl.com/3uuhmj5f).

The preconditions for a communist or socialist society are (1) the development of a productive potential sufficient to support the reasonable needs of the population and (2) a clear majority who want such a society and understand what it entails. The SPGB’s position is that precondition (1) has been met a long time ago, but we are a long way off from meeting precondition (2). If and when we do have a class-consciousness socialist majority, there is nothing to prevent us from immediately implementing the new society. There is absolutely no reason whatsoever to linger on with one or another form of capitalism a moment longer (**Letter in Weekly Worker**, tinyurl.com/4e2texk8).

(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.

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

Yorkshire Regional branch.

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

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

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:

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

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SCOTLAND

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 JITS!

(meet.jit.si/spgbsouthwales3).

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Has capitalism become financialised?

THE FINANCIAL crisis of 2007-2008 triggered by the large-scale collapse of mortgage-backed securities in the United States was an important catalyst in promoting the view that capitalism has become 'financialised'. Financial speculation has come to be seen not only as something increasingly autonomous with respect to the real economy (based on the production of commodities), but also as increasingly dominant in determining what happens in the latter.

The crisis was looked upon as being essentially a product of the short-sighted and irresponsible shenanigans of the financial community, aided by the New Financial Architecture (NFA) instituted in previous years and the radical financial deregulation this all entailed. In short, it was said to be the outcome of a steadily intensifying process of 'financialisation'.

Fictitious capital

Financial speculation grew out of the traditional credit system centred on banking and became more prominent with the rise of the joint stock company. Financial securities initially took the form of stocks and bonds but in the last few decades have proliferated into a bewildering array of financial products. They are all examples of what Marx called 'fictitious capital', a future income stream converted into a notional lump sum. A share certificate, for instance, exists largely as a paper claim on future profits to be paid out in the form of dividends.

There is a difference between fictitious capital and an interest-bearing loan provided by a bank to an industrial capitalist to purchase means of production. In the latter case this money capital is incorporated or utilised within the process of the expanded reproduction of capital. The bank takes a cut in the form of interest payments from the increased value – or surplus value – generated at the point of production.

This is not the case with fictitious capital for the simple reason that this does not actually function as capital. That indeed is the reason why it is called fictitious capital. It is not implicated in the expanded reproduction of capital.

Because the stock market comprises a separate market for the circulation of fictitious capital this encourages the illusion that such capital is somehow independent of the real economy – or even that it constitutes 'real capital besides the capital or claim to which they may give title' (Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3, ch.29. Penguin translation). Obviously, if fictitious capital was qualitatively identical to real capital



and able to interact with the latter on equal terms, so to speak, it would then be able to generate real wealth – real profits – all by itself and would cease to be dependent on the real economy for any income it lays claim to.

But, of course, this cannot be the case for the reason so succinctly spelt out by Marx, namely that a capital cannot exist twice 'once as the capital value of titles of ownership, the shares, and then again as the capital actually invested or to be invested in the enterprises in question'. The problem is that this is precisely what much recent commentary on the subject of crises would seem to imply.

If these 'financialisation theorists' are correct in what they say then this would suggest, as Stavros Mavroudeas has pointed out, that 'financial profits are not a subdivision of surplus-value' (and) 'the theory of surplus-value is, at least, marginalised' (and that) 'consequently, profitability (...) loses its centrality and interest is autonomised from it' (quoted in tinyurl.com/2rafv87w).

Needless to say, if true this would have certain practical implications.

Are we debt peons?

It would seem to suggest, for instance, that more importance ought to be attached to the problem of so-called 'secondary exploitation' rather than the primary exploitation that occurs in the workplace (and manifests itself in the production of surplus value). In other words, according to this way of thinking, workers are to be looked upon more as debt peons than wage slaves and, consequently, more attention should be paid to measures such as keeping interest rates down, rent controls, improved trading standards and so on as a way of alleviating their situation.

It is quite true that many workers do

indeed qualify as 'debt peons', burdened with a variety of debts such as student loans, personal loans, and mortgages. However, their status as debt peons is essentially a derivative one stemming from the economic precariousness they experience as wage workers. It is because of this that they fall into debt. They don't become wage slaves in order to pay off their debts as debt peons. If anything, it is often the other way round.

In any event, the basic premise of the financialisation theorists is questionable. The illusion that financial gains can somehow become autonomous with respect to the real economy can only be sustained if you focus on the micro-level – the individual investor of fictitious capital.

If an investor sold their shares on the stock market then, of course, they might very well realise a capital gain and be able to purchase tangible goods – real wealth – with the money they received. Their fictitious capital would not have been implicated in the production of real wealth and yet would have resulted in an augmentation of the investor's own real wealth.

However, if every other shareholder followed suit and simultaneously sought to dispose of their shares as well then the price of these shares would plummet to zero thereby demonstrating their essentially fictitious character. Of course, this hypothetical scenario is inherently absurd – after all, to sell your shares you need someone to buy them – but it does bring out the point that fictitious capital is not about value creation at all. It's at least partly about speculation and this was spectacularly demonstrated in the case of the 2007-8 financial crisis when the fictitious value of certain financial securities simply evaporated.

ROBIN COX

Just Stop Oil: the **failure** of a tactic

JUST STOP Oil was set up at the beginning of 2022 as an offshoot of Extinction Rebellion (XR) which had been launched four years earlier. The disagreement was over tactics not strategy. Both were committed to the strategy of getting 3.5 percent of the population to engage in non-violent, disruptive civil disobedience, the minority considered sufficient to spark off a popular movement to topple a government and impose a new policy. This figure was based on calculations by Erica Chenoweth, an American academic.

XR say on their website that they are committed to: ‘mobilising 3.5% of the population to achieve system change – using ideas such as “momentum-driven organising” to achieve this’ (extinctionrebellion.uk/about).

At one time they had added: ‘The change needed is huge and yet achievable. No regime in the 20th century managed to stand against an uprising which had the active participation of up to 3.5% of the population (for Erica Chenoweth’s research, see bit.ly/3Gn0NoV)’.

Roger Hallam, the driving force behind JSO, has put it this way: ‘You can basically save the next generation with 2 per cent of the American population mobilised, engaged in an intense intra-relationship between high-level disruption and intense mobilisation’ (*Times*, 24 October 2022).

And in his book *Common Sense in the 21st Century* (subtitled *Only Nonviolent Rebellion Can Now Stop Climate Breakdown And Social Collapse*) he writes:

‘We should not make the mistake of thinking “the people have to rise” in the sense of the majority of the population. We need a few to rise up and most of the rest of the population to be willing to “give it a go”.’

‘Momentum-driven organising’

The formal aim of XR was a non-violent rebellion to get a government that would adopt measures to achieve net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2025. Hallam, one of XR’s founders but more hard-headed and a more experienced agitator than the others, considered this too remote an aim to mobilise the 3.5 percent minority. In his view, the aim needed to be more concrete, but also one that was more immediately achievable. Initially, he chose ‘Insulate Britain’, to get the government to insulate every home in the country, as the immediate mobilising aim. Then at the beginning of 2022 he switched to stopping further drilling for oil in the North Sea.



Credit: Shutterstock

His thinking was the opposite of the Trotskyists. They put forward demands that they know can’t be achieved under capitalism in the expectation that those they get to support the demand will, when the campaign fails, turn to them for leadership to overthrow the capitalist state. Hallam’s view was to put forward a demand that *could be* achieved and that, when it was, could be presented as a victory for the movement, giving it self-confidence to carry on struggling for more, and more ambitious, objectives, eventually the toppling of the government and its replacement by one seriously committed to reaching zero net carbon in a few years.

We don’t have to judge whose tactic — Hallam’s ‘momentum-driven organising’ or the Trotskyists’ ‘transitional demands’ — is the less realistic since we reject the basic assumption of both self-appointed vanguards of a leadership manipulating followers. If there is going to be successful and lasting system change a majority must want and understand what it involves and actively take part in bringing it about.

Self-delusion

At the end of March Just Stop Oil announced that it was disbanding. The formal reason given for this was that its goal had been achieved. Oil had been Stopped. The current government had suspended giving further licences to drill for oil in the North Sea. Their website proclaims that ‘we have kept 4.4 billions of oil in the ground’ and that this was ‘one of the world’s most effective climate campaigns’ (juststopoil.org). This is just bombast and self-delusion.

The suspension of licences to drill in the North Sea had nothing to do with their campaign of disruptive civil disobedience. If anything, that was counter-productive as the stunts they pulled inconvenienced and annoyed people. It was in fact brought about through the ballot box when a new government, committed to suspending new drilling, was elected. That said, should the ‘economic headwinds’ prove too strong the government could easily reverse its position and may well.

In any event, JSO’s self-proclaimed ‘victory’ did not give the movement the momentum anticipated and so, from their own point of view, they failed. Their only achievement has been 15 of their members in prison under legislation brought in by the government to counter their actions. That includes Hallam himself who is serving four years, though he probably thinks that having martyrs is part of ‘momentum-driven organising’. That will prove to be a delusion too.

Their disbanding statement does, however, say that ‘nothing short of a revolution is going to protect us from the coming storms’ (tinyurl.com/mr3vz6m4). This is a change from previous statements whose language suggested that they would be satisfied with a change of government or of governance or even just of government policy. But what kind of revolution — minority-led or majority — and with what aim — a change in the basis of society from class ownership to common ownership or something less?

ADAM BUICK

Socialist election activity

The Socialist Party stood four candidates in the local elections at the beginning of May. Below are their election addresses.

Kent County Council Election Folkestone

Human needs or profit first?

We live in an economic system, capitalism, that ensures nothing gets built or created unless someone, somewhere expects to make a handsome profit. Human needs come very much second.

That is why Folkestone's stunning harbour is going to be submerged in ugly blocks of concrete and glass. They are built, not for the needs of local people, but to make a profit for the developers and the owners of the land. No surprise there. That is how capitalism works.

All around us everything crumbles, from schools to libraries and social services, even as the vast wealth of a tiny minority continues to increase. And this will go on so long as we keep voting for political parties which think this absurd and cruel system can be reformed.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain has for the last 120 years advocated a quite different society built on the common, democratic ownership of the planet and its resources. A society in which every one of us gets to participate in decisions like the building of new houses, the planting of crops, how we get our energy. A truly human society where sustainable decisions are made based on human needs and the need to maintain a healthy planet.

At current levels of science and technology the earth can easily provide an abundance of resources for everyone to live a happy and fulfilled life. Then there will be no need to artificially ration the necessities of life with money. We will contribute our physical and mental

labour freely and take freely from the common store.

That will need a world revolution. And every revolution starts somewhere. Why not Folkestone?

If you agree **VOTE SOCIALIST**.

Gloucestershire County Council elections Stroud

Capitalism or Socialism?

This might be the last Gloucestershire County Council Election. The government seems intent on reorganising the County and District Councils. This will result in fewer representatives and a concentration of strategic power in the hands of a regional Mayor.

This is democracy in the capitalist system: a choice between candidates for office with only marginally different sets of policies. Once elected those in office can tinker with the system but not the rules of capitalism: those without wealth are beholden to those who do, profit comes first not human needs, and can't pay – can't have.

But what can we do? Unlike the architects of local government devolution, socialists believe not that there is too much democracy, but that there isn't enough. The rules of capitalism have not been in place for all of human history and we don't need them in future. Getting rid of the rules of capitalism and creating a real democratic future can't be brought about from above. It has to come from a majority of people.

You can show support for real democracy, socialism, by voting for the Socialist Party of Great Britain on May 1st.

Socialism is a classless, stateless, wageless, moneyless society or, a democracy in which free and socially equal men and women co-operate to produce the things they need to live and enjoy life, to which they have free access: 'from each according to their abilities, to each

according to their needs'.

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism.

Our aim is to encourage others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we advocate.

We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

If elected, Piers Hobson will work for socialism at every opportunity, vote on issues according to the democratic decisions of his branch of the Socialist Party and always be for socialism and nothing else.

Lambeth Council by-election London

Real change, not damage limitation

Fellow workers,

They call it democracy but it's nothing of the sort.

Labour didn't even want this by-election. They'd rather stitch it up behind closed doors than face a real challenge. This isn't about serving the people, it's about protecting their grip on power. Councillors are parachuted in, selections are stage-managed, and decisions are made long before you ever see a ballot paper.

Meanwhile, rents rise, wages stagnate, benefits are cut, food banks multiply and estates are handed over to developers. Labour's record in Lambeth is clear enough.

Now they ask for your vote again. So do the Greens, Lib Dems and others who promise change but only offer better management of a system built on exploitation. They won't end your problems. They won't challenge the class system. They won't stop capitalism — they serve it.

No confidence in their system. No votes for our bosses' parties.

Until we end capitalism, nothing changes.

That's why the Socialist Party is standing in this election. Not for tweaks or token reforms, but for real change. Common ownership, democratic control, production for need not profit.

If you want that, you can show it by voting for the **SOCIALIST CANDIDATE**.



What's the deal with Greenland?

SIX MONTHS ago nobody would have imagined Greenland making headlines. Almost the only things most people know about the place is that it's not as big as it looks on maps, and it is covered in ice that's melting due to global warming.

Then came US Vice-President Vance's unwelcome and controversial visit to the island in late March. The ensuing furore fortuitously diverted media attention from 'Signalgate', the disastrous security blunder which made Trump's senior appointees look like fools. Democrats furiously demanded the resignation of Mike Waltz, the National Security Advisor, who inadvertently included a journalist in top-secret discussions about bombing the Houthis in Yemen, and Pete Hegseth, the Defense Secretary, who blithely joined in the chat from his – possibly monitored – hotel room in Moscow. Russia, be it noted, is friends with Iran, who are friends with the Houthis. Republicans too must have been quietly alarmed at such blithering incompetence on the part of people put in charge of US national security. Trump's self-estimation as a genius clearly depends on him surrounding himself with loud-mouthed buffoons. His protégés duly followed Trump protocol – lie, deny, and go on the offensive – but he probably realised that he ought to sack them and hand the Democrats a big win, because covering for them would undermine his own credibility. But as we later saw with his astounding tariffs and subsequent craven roll-back, he believes his credibility is indestructible.

A handy diversion

In the event, Vance's impromptu and perhaps calculated excursion to the Pituffik airbase in Greenland provided a useful distraction from the Signalgate fiasco. Vance publicly hectorated Denmark for its supposedly poor stewardship of the island, reinforcing Trump's claim that a US takeover was not just desirable but inevitable. Not surprisingly the Danes were politely enraged, saying 'this is not how you talk to your allies' and calling the move Trump's 'Crimea script'. Even Pituffik's own commander tried to distance herself from Vance's remarks, promptly earning herself the sack. The Greenlanders were also not best pleased. In polls, 80 percent of them want independence from Denmark, but 85 percent of them do *not* want to be annexed by the USA. What they *do* want, one can only imagine, is some sort of unworldly solution in which they no longer have to scrape by on Danish subsidies yet somehow manage to prosper as a lone



Credit: Christian Klindt Soelbeck/REUTERS

island state the size of western Europe, with no industry or infrastructure, or even roads, and a population only one third the size of the Isle of Wight's.

There is zero chance of that happening, because Greenland is just too important to major powers. Trump has been wanting Greenland since his first Presidency in 2016, and the US, for various reasons, has been wanting it since 1867. That was the year the US bought Alaska off the Russians for \$7m. The US Secretary of State William H Seward, who oversaw the Alaska purchase, was also keen on buying Greenland and Iceland at the same time, in order to wedge Canada in on three sides and force it eventually to become part of the US. Trump may well be aware of this Seward plan, which would add context to his comments about annexing Canada. In 1868 Seward began negotiations with Denmark to buy Greenland. But Congress failed to ratify his similar plan to purchase the Danish West Indies (now the US Virgin Islands), and the Greenland plan was dropped.

Following a wartime occupation from 1941 to 1945 to stop a German invasion of Greenland, in 1946 the US secretly offered to buy it. Denmark refused, but did allow the US to build air bases there, as both countries were in the process of founding NATO. US interest in Greenland was now mainly military, as the island sits in the middle of the shortest missile flight path to Russia. It's also part of a crucial choke point in the North Atlantic called the GIUK Gap, between Greenland, Iceland and the UK. Were Russia inclined to attack the US east coast using its Northern Fleet, based at Murmansk on the Barents Sea, its forces would have to pass through the gap (tinyurl.com/3r499ymm).

At the same time, a good reason not to press the Danes too heavily on the issue would have been that Denmark sits across the mouth of the Baltic Sea, meaning it could potentially bottle up the Russian Baltic Fleet at Kaliningrad.

Cold war refreezes

US interest cooled somewhat after the Berlin Wall fell and relations with Russia temporarily became less frosty. But now Russia has remilitarised all its old Soviet naval bases in the Arctic, heavily outnumbering equivalent NATO bases, with increasing Russian submarine patrols around the GIUK Gap (tinyurl.com/yd9e2cy6). The global internet has also intensified concerns over this gap, as critically important undersea data cables pass right through it, or just south of it, making them vulnerable to submarine sabotage. This could potentially blind the USA and cripple its ability to respond in the event of any future Russian incursion into, say, the Baltic States or Finland.

In addition, the US needs ground stations for its military satellites, including in the Arctic Circle. Two of these are in Alaska and Svalbard, but the main base is Pituffik, scene of Vance's recent outburst against Denmark. And the US very likely wants many more such bases on the island. As things stand, Greenland is *terra incognita*, a 'security black hole' that's impossible for Denmark's meagre forces – mostly one aeroplane and some dogsled teams – to effectively monitor (tinyurl.com/yt8umdjn).

Not just wargames

There are also pressing non-military

considerations. As the Arctic melts and the sea lanes open up permanently, Greenland could come to dominate global shipping, due to the fact that the two trans-Arctic routes, the Canada-hugging Northwest Passage (NWP) and Russia-adjacent Northern Sea Route (NSR) have the potential to cut 4,000 km off the Panama route and make the Suez Canal largely redundant. Just as the US wants back control of the Panama Canal, it will also be keen to control this polar traffic. Annoyingly for the US, in 1985 Canada claimed sovereignty over the NWP, while the US insists it is an international waterway. That might be another reason why Trump wants to annex Canada.

Then there are the untapped resources. Greenland could be the key to breaking China's near global monopoly on producing rare earth elements (REEs) and critical minerals, as the biggest deposits of these outside China are in, you guessed it, Greenland. It is thought to have the 6th largest deposit of uranium in the world, and to be very rich in lithium, REEs, graphite, iron, nickel and copper. There is also gold, along with diamonds, rubies, sapphires and a host of other quartzes and gemstones. It has 43 out of the 50 critical minerals needed for the US economy, in particular green tech and electric vehicles. Elon Musk and the other tech bros have declared an interest for this and other reasons, including the fact that the vast territory and freezing temperatures are ideal for server farms, of which an order of magnitude more may be required to enable the AI revolution (tinyurl.com/ybysh93v). And then there are the estimated reserves of oil and gas, which put Greenland on a par with Nigeria and Kazakhstan, and superior to Qatar.

What's in it for the Inuit?

Almost certainly nothing. The local population doesn't have the people,

money, skills or infrastructure to exploit any of this stuff themselves, so Greenland is a sitting duck for whichever major power acquires it, either through a business deal or by military action. What could very well happen if these resources are exploited in an unregulated way by a ruthless foreign power is that Greenlanders could suffer the notorious 'resource curse' of places like the Congo, with the country becoming a corrupt rentier state whose ruling elite siphon off the wealth and defend their position by becoming more repressive and authoritarian (youtu.be/x8j2uWw3WfU). Faced with this awful prospect, the idealistic islanders may realise that their best chance is to do some kind of mutual back-scratching deal with the US, while retaining a fig-leaf of independence.

Deals under the table

After the Vance visit, Russia's Vladimir Putin told journalists that relations between the US and Greenland were nothing to do with Russia, and that he had no interest in the place. This blithe response strains credulity, given Russia and China's keen interest in the NSR, and given that a US takeover of Greenland would be as much of a strategic threat to Russia as Ukraine being in NATO, if not more so. Missiles based in Greenland, especially hypersonics, could take out Moscow, St Petersburg and Murmansk before the Russians could even react. And that's beside the fact that Russia is – since the Ukraine invasion – now hemmed in with the addition of two new NATO members, Finland and Sweden, as well as NATO Norway.

One possible explanation for Putin's professed indifference is that Transactional Trump has offered a private deal in which Trump takes Greenland and Russia gets to keep its captured territory (and the largest European gas reserves outside Norway) in Ukraine.

Is a similar Trumpian quid-pro-quo over

Taiwan possible, making for a three-way neo-colonial carve-up? On the face of it, no. Hegseth continues to sabre-rattle at China by reiterating US backing of Taiwan (tinyurl.com/mvpkpf5t), and Vance is also waving his stick at China for wanting to expand operations in Greenland. But China has operations almost everywhere, and anyway rejects any comparison with Taiwan, arguing that Greenland is a sovereign foreign state whereas Taiwan is China's intrinsic territory. Why would they do a deal over what they see as already theirs?

Even so, TSMC and other Taipei chipmakers are racing to set up shop in Texas, California and Arizona in an energetic US bid to make Taiwan less of an Achilles heel for western tech industries. Should this attempt succeed – and there are wage-rate, skill-set and supply-chain reasons why it might not – US support for Taiwan could evaporate.

Take the money and run?

It seems hard to believe that the US would actually invade Greenland by force. But given its tiny population of around 56,000, one intriguing possibility is that the US could wait until the expected declaration of independence from Denmark, and then offer to pay the entire Greenland population \$1m each to buy the place. \$56bn might sound like a lot but it's approximately what the place is valued at in potential revenues, and it's only 1/15th of the planned 2025 US military budget, or about 1/8th of the US annual debt-servicing bill. That way, Greenlanders could all be millionaires and retire to beach houses in Bali. But would they take the payout and emigrate, or opt to stay poor for the sake of patriotism? It's hard to say. Nationalism is powerfully embedded in capitalism's ideology, and objective logic often plays very little part.

PJS



Credit: Getty Images

How we live and how we might live (concluded)

IN A voluntary society without a monetary incentive, who would choose to do the dirty work? Wouldn't people avoid it (surely that's human nature)? And wouldn't that have serious consequences for society?

Talk to an apologist for capitalism and you will almost certainly be told at some point that the system's competitive private property structure is well adapted to meet the demands of 'human nature'. According to capitalist apologists our 'nature' is self-interested and competitive. How do they know this? Well, they say, look around at the way people actually do behave. Competitive and self-interested behaviour is to be found everywhere. As socialists, we have no disagreement with that. In property-based societies like our own, selfish and competitive behaviour is ubiquitous.

But does that define our 'nature'? In reality, we know this simple model of 'human nature' leaves a lot out. We can begin by drawing our apologist's attention to Douglas Adams's parable of the puddle: one rainy morning a puddle wakes up in a large pothole. It scans the world around it and is delighted to discover that the pothole is exactly the right shape to accommodate it, and the same is true for its companion puddles and their potholes. The puddle therefore concludes that the world has been designed specifically for the needs of puddles. We can apply this analogy to our current society and ask whether capitalism's private property system has been designed to accommodate an intrinsically selfish and competitive 'human nature' as the capitalist apologist claims, or, on the contrary, whether the competitive and selfish behaviour we see around us, is a learned strategy for surviving in capitalism.

Wide range of capacities

If we look at human behaviour with a more inclusive eye, we can see that even in a capitalist society, people's behaviour is not solely competitive and selfish, but is often deeply co-operative and generous. Modern capitalism itself consists of huge businesses which employ thousands of people all co-operating together. In our domestic lives, family members support each other, they help out friends with time and money, and they give generously to charitable causes at home and abroad. Donald Trump's withdrawal of USAID, for example, while applauded by his ideological supporters, has also generated a large backlash as evidence builds of the deadly effects of withdrawal on the



Credit: Adobe Stock

populations USAID previously supported.

Human beings are capable of self-interested and competitive behaviour, and also co-operation, kindness and generosity. Rather than 'human nature', it would be more accurate to speak of a wide range of 'human capacities'. We then have to ask what determines which of our capacities predominates in an individual or in a particular society, and under what circumstances. Research in social psychology points to the fact that though we have a capacity for both co-operation and competition, both are socially learned behaviours. If a society is organised on the basis of property relations that isolate individuals and set them in competition with one another, then the best way for its members to survive in such a system will be to behave competitively. If society is organised to produce what we need co-operatively and without private ownership or the profit motive, then this is how things get done, and everyone learns and values much more co-operative behaviour.

At this point our apologist will still insist that even if we have a wide range of capacities, without externally imposed incentives like money wages, individuals will 'naturally' gravitate to doing pleasant or interesting tasks and to avoid unpleasant ones. If you ask most people would they rather do something they enjoy than something they don't, we can probably guess the answer. But dirty work is not necessarily unenjoyable. Many people in the UK and elsewhere do dirty jobs for low wages. It is also the case that all actions have consequences. And those consequences may in themselves be pleasant or unpleasant. Very often actions we find pleasant to do have unpleasant consequences that we want to avoid and vice versa. Humans are not robots,

but conscious beings that can estimate consequences and judge how they act on that basis.

Psychological needs

According to research in social psychology, humans have three psychological needs which motivate us strongly to act. We have a need for 'relatedness' with our fellows, a need for autonomy and a need to obtain mastery over our environment.

Relatedness: Human beings have never lived isolated lives. We are social creatures and we seek to act and live our lives in collaboration with others. Moreover, we commit ourselves to looking after those we identify and bond with. In capitalist society where the property-based employer-employee relationship divides us economically and forces us to compete, we do not go to work to provide for society in general, but for a wage in order to support ourselves and our families. Our ability to expend time and resources to care for others outside our narrow circle of family and friends is necessarily limited, and if it cuts into the time available for employment, comes at a cost to ourselves. In a socialist society of common ownership and free access, productive activity is not carried on directly to meet our own needs. Our needs are met freely, and we freely give our time to meet the needs of the community of which we are a part. In such a society the circle of those we act for and identify with widens dramatically. And because we have free access to the things we need, the time we give to others never affects our entitlement.

Autonomy: We are motivated to seek relatedness, but we are also motivated to seek personal autonomy, the ability within society to freely make our own choices

and decisions. Autonomy is different from 'independence' which is a powerful buzz-word in capitalist apologetics. 'Independence' has to do with not relying on others. This means that autonomy, the freedom to choose, is compatible with our human need for relatedness, but independence is not. Although capitalist ideology often likes to deny it, our lives are wholly dependent on others, from our first breath to our last. Human beings as we know from experience have a capacity to dominate others. But we also have a powerful drive: a capacity to resist domination. We do not feel comfortable when others exercise power over our lives. People can only dominate us, however, if our society is organised in ways that allow some individuals to stand in the way of our access to the means of life, as occurs in capitalism's wages system. Dominance hierarchies of this kind limit our freedom and control. A voluntarist society like socialism which is organised without a dominance hierarchy allows us much more autonomy (freedom) and relatedness.

Mastery: Human beings in general are strongly motivated to seek mastery. It may be that we want to become a better guitarist, to produce better carpentry joints, to write better poetry, to bake fancier breads, to become a better astronomer, to invent new technologies. Our drive to achieve mastery in our skills and knowledge often provides good illustrations of the activity/consequence relation discussed earlier. In order to achieve mastery of the guitar for instance, many people are prepared to put themselves through hundreds of hours of a monotonous and often frustrating learning process while painfully developing the calluses on their fingertips which allow them to play their chosen instrument. Satisfaction may be the end goal of our activity, but it may not at all be a feature of the activity itself.

Extrinsic motivators like money tend

to suppress our intrinsic motivations for relatedness, autonomy and mastery. In a voluntaristic socialist society without dependence on an employer, we become free to make our own decisions about how we act and how we develop our skills. Without the blinkers of the wages system, which subordinates our actions to a narrow self-interest, we develop a much broader concept of our mutual interdependence. To the extent that some work, therefore, remains 'dirty', our much-extended sociability and a shared identity allows us to find value and meaning in contributing to the communal process of meeting our collective needs. And because we have much extended choice, there is also much we can do to eliminate 'dirty' work altogether or to make it more attractive.

Questions to ask

1. Is the 'dirty' activity necessary? Maybe we are happy to live with the consequences of not doing it. The consequences of certain mining activities for precious jewels, for instance, we might choose to live without.
 2. If we can't live with the consequences, is the work really that unpleasant? We often exaggerate how unpleasant some work is. Many people happily do work that others find 'dirty'. The dirtiness of 'dirty' work is often an exaggerated response to a society that identifies 'cleanliness' with status so that we respond to this kind of work with exaggerated disgust. Some people find pleasure in hard physical work, even if it is in 'dirty' conditions
 3. If we cannot live with the consequences of not doing the work, and the work is genuinely unpleasant, can we do it a different way? In a socialist society, providing for human need means looking after ourselves in all our roles including that of producers.
- 3a) Can we make the work 'cleaner'? A

significant amount of 'dirty work' in capitalism is only dirty because it is more profitable to organise it that way than to clean it up.

- 3b) Can we mechanise the work, wholly or partly?
- 3c) Can we make it pleasanter, by providing, for instance, a better environment, better tools or better protective equipment?
- 3d) Can we share 'dirty work' around more, so that no one does it as a full-time occupation unless they want to?
- 3e) Can we make the task more sociable, obtaining satisfaction through working together as part of a self-managing team for a common social goal.
- 3f) Can we find resources and means of having fun while doing it? This may seem like a flippant suggestion, but, if so, ask yourself why? Human beings are a playful species. Under capitalism's system of employment, time and productivity mean money for the capitalist, so we are taught to be serious in our jobs, to work hard, and to keep our heads down. In socialism, we decide how to balance the effort or unpleasantness of production against how much we think we need.
- 3g) Can we make the work creative or instructive so that those doing it can advance their knowledge and skills?

Capitalism or socialism?

So, what conclusions have we drawn in this series of articles? We have argued that capitalism is a system based on the employer/employee property relationship which isolates individuals economically from one another and forces them to compete at all levels of society, and that competition frequently spills over into all kinds of conflict, from domestic disputes to gigantic, mechanised world wars. It is the source of poverty, climate crisis, pollution and loss of species diversity.

Socialism, by contrast, is a system of free access, free association and common ownership of the means of production by the whole of society. It extinguishes the profit motive and wasteful competition, undercuts the private ownership of capital and releases a vast amount of labour power tied up, for instance, in the management of capitalism's monetary system. It undercuts the motivation for greedy behaviour, turns work into productive activity, and laziness into leisure. It also eliminates the need for extrinsic incentives such as money and provides genuinely human motivations like relatedness, autonomy and mastery.

HUD



The end and the means

THE SPGB has a single aim: the establishment of a society in which all productive resources (land, water, factories, transport, etc.) are taken into common ownership, and in which the sole motive for production is the fulfilment of human needs and wants. This aim is central to the SPGB's view on the role of 'the party'.

The abolition of private property in the productive resources will be mirrored by free and equal access for all to the wealth (food, clothing, housing, telecommunications, health and education services, entertainment) that can be produced socially. Its abolition will also be mirrored by democratic control of those productive resources – there will be a need, for example, for informed decision-making about how much effort is to be expended on the consumption goods and services mentioned above and how much effort to expend on production goods (like machinery and new factories). This would take place on a local, regional or wider level, depending on the scale of each issue.

Clearly, such a society will not build a completely new system of production from scratch. In fact, it depends for its establishment on the existence of the productive capacity that wage workers have developed under the rule of capital. It will inherit, or more precisely, appropriate the existing system of production, which is, of course, an interconnected worldwide system. This of course means that the new society must be worldwide.

Considered from the perspective of the current situation, where a minority own and/or control almost all of the productive resources, where production is determined solely by the need for profit, realised by the production and sale of commodities on a world market, we can describe the key aspects of the socialist (for us, socialist and communist mean the same thing) society that the SPGB advocates as one that is without classes, without money or any other form of economic exchange, with neither states nor frontiers. And one in which people work collectively and co-operatively to meet society's material and psychological needs.

It's not for us to describe in detail how people will choose to organise their lives once a socialist form of production has been introduced: the different resources, technology and mindsets which will exist then are difficult (impossible?) for us to empathise with now. But there is one very important fact of which we can be sure,

and it this: where there is free access to socially-produced wealth, there will be no connection between what an individual consumes and the amount or type of work that they do or don't do at any given time in their life. The lash of poverty, or threat thereof, that the owning class currently wields over the wage-earners to coerce them into work, will no longer exist.

Yet the natural circumstance that we, as a species, need to work in order to survive (and also, we would argue, to fully realise ourselves as human beings) will remain, despite the utopian nonsense about fully automated luxury communism.

So, throughout and after the revolution, the majority will have to be ready to be act as proactive participants in the socialised system of production, and have the confidence that a socialist form of production will better serve their various needs and wants than the capitalist system ever could.

For the SPGB then, the role of the revolutionary party in the present non-revolutionary situation is to put forward the case for a socialist system and against the capitalist system, to help our fellow workers to understand why, as wage earners, they can never be free from economic insecurity and exploitation, and to understand that the threats of war and environmental devastation have their roots in the capitalist system of production.

Obviously, we must seek to attract members to share the work of developing and spreading socialist ideas, but we have never tried to do so by promoting reforms of capitalism – nor will we do so in future. Experience has shown that the dynamics of capitalist economics turn reformism into an eternal misery-go-round that might catch a few crumbs as they fall from capital's table during a boom, only to have many of them sucked away again in the inevitable succeeding slump.

For this reason, when the SPGB stands candidates in general and local elections, we make clear our stance against reformism, as opposed to all reformist parties left or right. We stand candidates in capitalist elections in order to make use of what passes for 'democracy' to promote socialist ideas until such a time that enough socialists are voted in to power over the state machine in order to abolish it, as part of the revolutionary process, and establish an administration of things rather than a government over the people.

If we are to establish the non-coercive, non-hierarchical, classless society, the



majority will have to understand, want and be actively involved in the attainment of the objective. Given that mass socialist understanding, the political vehicle the socialist majority choose to win control of political power must be fully democratic, reflecting the sort of society they are seeking to establish.

So, the mass socialist party must not be a vanguard party controlled by a leadership, but a democratic party controlled by its members; in fact there must be no leaders or leadership, just administrative bodies carrying out the democratically-arrived at decisions of a membership that wants and understands socialism. When there is a mass socialist party with aligned parties across the world, the revolution will be a more readily-achievable goal, and so the party should have practical proposals for how the means of production will become owned in common.

The party in a pre-revolutionary climate, such as now, has to primarily work to attract support to grow the movement. It should be organised in a way which puts the principles of democracy, equality and co-operation into practice as far as possible. This demonstrates that people can work together in ways which go beyond what is demanded by capitalist organisations with their hierarchies, to get as close as we can now to unalienated labour. To this aim, the SPGB is organised through branches, which nominate delegates to various committees to carry out party work, with some roles and decisions agreed through majority vote of the membership as a whole. This framework isn't intended as a blueprint for how organisations should be run in socialism, and it would also likely have to be adapted to suit the circumstances and size of a mass socialist party, but what would remain constant are the socialist values underpinning the organisation.

(Originally published in Prometheus in response to a request to contribute to a discussion there on the nature of a workers' party. tinyurl.com/Endandmeans)

Small is ... small

LETS, OR local exchange trading systems, boil down to being localised barter clubs each of which has its own purely digital or recorded currency or credit system. Participants keep their own individual accounts which are, in effect, a register of the credits they earn or spend depending on the goods or services exchanged.

An important difference between this and a conventional money system is that we are not talking about a *quid pro quo* exchange being effected between participants. In some ways it resembles or aligns with a model of generalised reciprocity which lies at the heart of a socialist society but there are important differences as well.

Timebanks, unlike LETS schemes, do not have their own local currencies as a metric for keeping tabs on transactions. The only metric used is time spent in making a labour contribution. Moreover, and again unlike LETS schemes, the way in which labour time is evaluated is strictly egalitarian. Thus, one hour of labour performed will equal one 'time credit', regardless of the type of service performed.

By contrast, in the case of LETS schemes, there is some scope for negotiation over the price of the service or good offered in terms of the local currency (and hence, also, the possibility of a degree of transactional inequality). This makes such an arrangement somewhat closer in certain respects to a conventional market economy than is true of Timebanks.

Both LETS schemes and Timebanks are examples of highly circumscribed, or localised, 'exchange rings;' by their very nature they cannot be implemented on the large-scale society-wide basis. What that means, in the case of both LETS schemes and Timebanks, is that they will be rather restricted with regard to the range of activities individuals can engage with these arrangements.

Since they basically involve face-to-face interactions, this suggests that the forms of activities this might entail would be more along the lines of some form of personal service such as repairing someone's car or computer or tidying up their garden. Obviously, you could not really operate a modern railway system or a power station on the basis of a LETS-type arrangement.

However, this is not to detract from the value of such arrangements as a means of coping within existing capitalist society. There are also certain benefits to be gained in terms of fostering a kind of outlook more conducive to a post-capitalist

society. In these cases, the emphasis is very much on forging relationships with other individuals and building local communities. Thus, the underlying logic is radically different from that pertaining to market transactions which are *quid pro quo* by nature and socially atomising in their consequences.

Workers' co-ops

Most of the advocates of so-called 'market socialism' have seen its basis as the state ownership of the means of production. However, that particular version needs to be distinguished from earlier versions, such as 'Proudhonian socialism' or 'mutualism', that go back to the 19th century and which have enjoyed somewhat of a revival following the collapse of Russian state capitalism

These versions envisage a role for the market in 'socialism' but emphasise, instead of state ownership, various kinds of worker-owned institutions – such as co-operatives and credit unions – as the instruments through which such a system of 'market socialism' would operate.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to see quite how they connect with the basic ideas of socialism as a post-capitalist society. The classical or Marxian concept of socialism derived from the observable fact that the process of production was becoming increasingly socialised. There is nothing that is produced today that does not involve, directly or indirectly, the labour inputs of countless numbers of workers right across the world. Hence socialism – at least as it was traditionally conceived – entailed bringing the pattern of ownership of society's productive resources into line with the character of modern production itself.

In other words, social ownership of the means of production is the logical expression of the social character of production. But social (or common) ownership also, of course, logically entails the complete exclusion of buying and selling since the latter implies private, or sectional, ownership of these means.

It does not matter that the members of a co-operative, say, might own it in common amongst themselves (and hence, to the exclusion of everyone else). It is still a form of sectional ownership. The relationship of such a co-operative to the world around it is, essentially, a capitalist one since it has to purchase its inputs and sell its outputs – not to mention, generate profits in order to effectively compete as well as compensate its workforce in the form of wages. These are all, needless to say, the tell-tale indicators of a capitalist mode of production.

In effect, what the exponents of this form of 'market socialism' advocate is the continuation of private, or sectional, ownership of the means of production as far as the wider world is concerned – even if one might grant that, internally, the set-up pertaining to a co-operative, say, may well be a lot more equitable compared to a conventional business and that working for such an institution may likewise be a lot more congenial.

There is also the point to consider that the scope for co-operatives is quite limited in the context of the pattern of capital ownership within the larger capitalist society and may even diminish should the increasing concentration of capital in the hands of a few giant corporations become more pronounced than it already is.

ROBIN COX



Credit: Shutterstock

Prophecies about productivity

‘SKY TO cut 2,000 jobs at its call centres in pivot to AI’ (*Times*, 28 March) is a typical headline these days as generative AI (like ChatGPT) is applied to white-collar work.

In an experiment carried out by an American firm of management consultants in 2023, call centre workers using AI handled 13.8 percent more customer enquiries per hour than those without, business professionals wrote 59 percent more documents per hour, and programmers coded 126 percent more projects per week. Averaging these, they came up with a figure of a 66 percent increase in productivity from applying AI. This they described as a ‘big deal’ because this ‘equate[s] to 47 years of natural productivity gains in the United States’ (tinyurl.com/rhc78n83). But they were not comparing like with like.

They took into account only the work-time saved at the last stage of production, ignoring the labour previously expended, which would include in the case of their experiment labour spent on developing, installing and maintaining the AI system. If this had been taken into account, the productivity increase would be much smaller.

That developing and installing AI involves considerable amounts of labour is illustrated by a Sky spokesperson saying that ‘it was making a multi-million pound

investment in its Livingston site, near Edinburgh, as part of a transformation “to deliver quicker, simpler and more digital customer service” (tinyurl.com/yck6n7wk).

As the November 1979 *Socialist Standard* explained: ‘In everyday language a motor car is said to be ‘produced’ by the workers who assemble it, and bread to be ‘produced’ by workers in the bakehouse; but the labour of these workers is only a part of all that required to produce cars and bread. As Marx put it: “We must add to the quantity of labour last employed the quantity of labour previously worked up in the raw material of the commodity, and the labour bestowed on the implements, tools, machinery and buildings with which such labour is assisted” (*Value, Price and Profit*, chapter VI).

Let us assume that the ‘previous’ hours of labour needed to produce a commodity are 80, and the ‘last’ hours are 20 — a total of 100 hours. Let us further assume that without additional investment, but merely by simplifying the last operation, it becomes possible to reduce the necessary hours from 20 to 10. It then takes only 90 hours in all, in place of 100. Productivity will have risen by about 11 per cent. But if ‘productivity’ is calculated — wrongly — on the last operation only, it will appear to have increased by 100 per cent. Would

anyone be so foolish as to look at it in that way? Well, yes — it is happening every day.

A news item about the introduction of a new machine operated by two men instead of the former ten will be presented as ‘two men do the work of ten’, as if the making and maintenance of the machine did not absorb additional labour. So productivity in that example will be said, wrongly, to have been multiplied by five. (...) As Marx explained, the amount of labour that is saved is not the whole saving on the last operating process, but the difference between that amount and the additional labour required for the new equipment (*Capital*, Vol.I. Kerr Edition, pp. 426-7). This is the true measure of increased productivity.

The mistaken theories have been responsible for a continuous enormous exaggeration of the increase of workers’ output, and corresponding false assumptions about the growth of unemployment. (...)

The consequence has been that every advance in technology — the steam engine, the internal combustion engine, computers and automation — and now the silicon chip — has given rise to prophecies that enormous numbers of workers would soon be out of work permanently’ (www.marxists.org/archive/hardcastle/1979/busy_nothing.htm).

Obituary – Andy Malone

Glasgow Branch regrets to report the passing of Andy Malone at the age of 81. Andy joined the Socialist Party in February 1969 having previously been a member of the Communist Party from which he had resigned in 1965.



This was at a time of much activity in Glasgow Branch in which Andy became involved.

In 1973 Andy’s membership of Glasgow Branch ceased, but only because he went to live in New Zealand where he joined our companion party (SPNZ) there. On his return to Glasgow in 1979 he, of course, rejoined the branch and once again became involved in the work of the party.

He refused to be defined by his employment. Real life was what mattered: his family, his interests and the struggle to overthrow this vile system.

Andy was a scathing critic of the idiocy and cruelty of capitalism and always ready to challenge nonsense whenever he heard it, but he was also willing to have discussions with both those who agreed and disagreed with him. He was very generous with his time and resources. He was an avid reader of many subjects, including history, physics, biology, logic and science generally. Many party members and non-members alike benefitted from access to his vast knowledge and his library. If a subject came up in discussion, usually Andy would have at least some knowledge of it and at least one book about it!

Back in the days when the branch often had several outdoor propaganda meetings on a Saturday and one on a Sunday, Andy would often be at one of those meetings selling the *Socialist Standard* and other literature and discussing with members of the audience.

Some Glasgow members will remember, only a few years ago while leafletting at George Square, an amiable discussion they and Andy had with a group of Christians who had some misconceptions about both socialism and socialists. Later that day, Andy discovered some anarchists who turned up and a useful discussion and exchange of literature ensued.

Andy was also an enthusiastic and accomplished chess player. His main use for computers was not as a general purpose problem solving machine, nor even as a word-processor, but to check out and assess the latest chess programs.

His contribution to the cause of socialism was outstanding, but his regular attendance at our social events has also given branch members many treasured memories. This is a sad time for all who knew him but especially for his wife Jean and all his family, friends and neighbours.

We will all remember him with great affection.

JC

Lessons from Adolescence

Credit: Netflix



A LITTLE over a year since *Mr Bates vs The Post Office* reminded us that TV drama can still have an impact, Netflix's *Adolescence* has also shaped debate in Parliament, online, in the media and round the proverbial water cooler at work. *Adolescence* has been particularly resonant because the issue of violence from young males which it raises feels both more emotive and widespread. The story centres on a 13-year-old boy who is accused of stabbing a girl from his school. Each episode covers an hour at intervals after the murder, with the first showing Jamie's arrest at his home. Episode two follows the police's initial visit to the children's school, the third is a conversation between Jamie and a psychologist some months afterwards and the last episode looks at how the rest of his family are managing over a year later. The performances from Owen Cooper as Jamie and Stephen Graham as his father Eddie are particularly gripping, with Graham also co-creating and co-writing the series. Impressively, each episode was filmed in one continuous take, which must have involved intricately structuring and choreographing the scenes to get the camera and the actors in the right places at the right times.

The drama gives less emphasis to the details of the murder than to the circumstances around it, gradually bringing out the combination of reasons behind Jamie's actions. His family isn't portrayed as dysfunctional apart from his father's anger, described as a generational trauma passed on to Jamie. His own anger is shown sparingly and as being fuelled by online culture. The 'manosphere' to which Jamie is drawn, of emojis, incels, influencers and abusive messages has led him to a view of women which leads to his

crime. The script tends to understate the causes: Jamie is outwardly 'normal' rather than obviously aggressive. Online discourse isn't explored in detail, other than several brief scenes where aspects of the 'manosphere' are mentioned, hinting at its links with far-right ideology. The meanings behind kidney bean emojis and 'taking the red pill' explained by the teenage characters would have been new to many viewers. An effect of this is to tell parents that they may not have understood the nature of online cultures their children are being tempted into, and how this can almost casually slide them into violence. In some ways, this is a modern version of past moral panics about the influence of horror comics, video nasties and computer games on young people, although this feels more serious, given today's climate with the rise in knife crime and misogyny.

Much of the discussion sparked by *Adolescence* has concentrated on 'toxic masculinity', rather than another factor in what influenced Jamie. His school is depicted as a grim and tense place for children to learn in, taking into account that the scenes there are set only a few days after the murder. The teachers are depicted as policing behaviour more than teaching, while the regimented routines and drab walls aren't much different from those of the police station or detention centre seen in other episodes. Our society's institutions and environments encourage and reinforce alienation, with Jamie representing its extremes.

Adolescence isn't a case study, although because it's fiction perhaps it can be spoken about more openly than real cases. Its release was certainly timed well to contribute to a broader debate. In the same month, former England

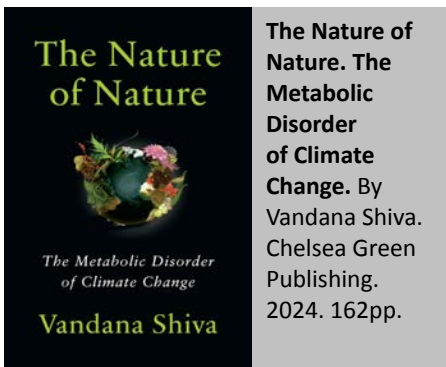
football manager Sir Gareth Southgate, giving the BBC's annual Richard Dimbleby Lecture, said that today's young men need more wholesome role models rather than 'callous, manipulative and toxic influencers' online. Also in March, the Centre of Social Justice published its *'Lost Boys'* report which describes an increasing divergence between the future prospects of boys and girls, with girls now more likely to later have higher qualifications and higher-paid employment.

Various right-wing vloggers (and Elon Musk) opined that *Adolescence* is liberal-lefty propaganda which demonises white males and distracts from the proportion of stabbings committed by black youths. Their dislike of the drama is presumably due in part to its criticisms of the 'manosphere' they represent. Right-wing commentators were also more likely than those on the left to say that it is being used by the government to justify legislation about regulating online activity. The Online Safety Act 2023 passed into law under the previous Conservative government, and its implementation is still in progress under Labour's regime. The Prime Minister met with the series' creators and backed MP Anneliese Midgley's call for it to be screened in schools with the aim of helping to deter teenage boys from misogyny and aggression. Secondary schools are already obliged to include 'Relationships and Sex Education' on their curriculum and updated guidance to cover sexual violence is being planned. Even if the state's approach of embracing the programme and saying they are taking action over the issues it raises is sincere rather than cynical, it's still a better PR move than ignoring or disputing the drama.

Adolescence has, at least for a few weeks, connected together various attempts to address concerns about some young males. But to what extent can tightening up legislation about online activity or showing the series in schools or promoting different role models counter misogynistic violence? The context of the problem remains. Titling the drama 'Adolescence' points towards the root of the issue being with younger people, especially boys. However, the real cause is found with the social conditions which shape adolescence. Therefore deeper social change is needed, although this risks being ignored among the piecemeal reforms and proposals.

MIKE FOSTER

Nature



The Nature of Nature. The Metabolic Disorder of Climate Change. By Vandana Shiva. Chelsea Green Publishing. 2024. 162pp.

This is a wonderfully eloquent treatise on the human relationship with food and how that relationship is being disrupted by the despoiling of the earth and biosphere that is taking place and by the earth being treated as ‘raw material for industrial production’. In essence, it echoes the famous line from Rousseau: ‘You are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody’ It imparts with the utmost urgency messages such as ‘biodiversity erosion has now become an extinction emergency’ and ‘the climate crisis has become a climate emergency’, not simply stating them as unevicenced opinion but backing them up with research and evidence gathered over decades from the most well-informed scientific sources.

The author is particularly scathing about ‘agribusiness’ (also referred to as ‘the chemical and industrial food corporation’ and ‘the Poison Cartel’) and the alarming rate at which it is not only destroying biodiversity and the environment with its methods of cultivation and extraction but is now also, in response to criticism of its activities and consumer concern, pretending to ‘decarbonise’ its industrial food chain by what it falsely calls ‘regenerative agriculture’. Even its investment in meat (and dairy and egg) substitute products as a supposed replacement for intensively produced food is, she argues, a way of bamboozling consumers into thinking switching to such products (referred to here as ‘fake food’) somehow helps to lessen degradation of the biosphere and pressure on natural resources. Most of it, she claims, even when plant-based, is in fact just as ultra-processed, chemically and resource intensive and harmful to health as food produced and marketed through the conventional industrial food systems and just as, if not more, wasteful of the earth’s natural resources. The result, she states, is that it ‘ignores our relationship with nature’ and ‘reduces the bio-diverse, self-organised, living earth to raw material for the money machine’.

All of this of course means that the author is profoundly opposed to the so-called ‘deep green’ agenda of renewability,

regarding it as no more than a sop to the growth mantra of industrialised production. She sees the complex infrastructure needed to set up, deal with and maintain ‘renewable’ activities and technologies as both continuing to rely on fossil fuels and involving at least as much savage exploitation of the earth’s fragile resources, both biological and geological, as in ‘non-green’ methods of production. So she is intensely critical of apparent environmental champions such as George Monbiot, referring to him as one of ‘the messiahs of fake food’ for his claim that ‘lab-grown food will soon destroy farming – and save the planet’. Such a view she dismisses as ‘false at every level’, since ‘being energy, resource and capital intensive, the lab food and fake food economy is highly non-sustainable’. A ‘greenwashing operation’ pure and simple and a massive fraud is the way this book’s author sees all this- at best an exercise in rearranging the deckchairs. But, even worse, it is, she tells us ‘a fully fledged counterfeiting operation that aims to gain control over our diets by making food ever more dependent on the multinational companies that produce and patent it’.

All this constitutes a searing indictment of capitalist industrial production, even though the author does not once in this book use the word ‘capitalist’ or ‘capitalism’, preferring instead to use terms such as ‘maldevelopment’ or ‘the economy of greed’. This may be a deliberate choice on her part so as not to lay herself open to any accusation of political partisanship as opposed to following the evidence of facts and science. Nevertheless, it is still clear that she is describing what socialists call commodity production, i.e. the production of goods for sale on the market with a view to profit for the tiny minority class who own the means to produce them. And she does show that she knows of the existence of this class (she mentions ‘the 1%’ on several occasions), that they are ‘predatory’ and that their activity ‘places profits above nature and people’. Yet there is no evidence in her book to indicate that she is looking outside the framework of commodity production for a different way of doing things.

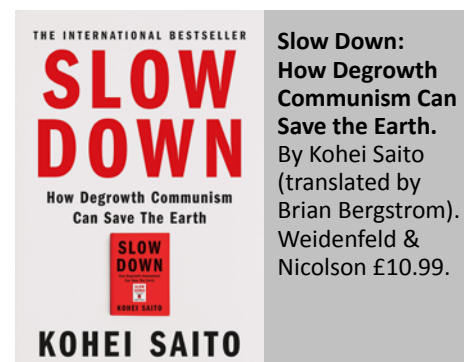
At the same time, she has ‘an alternative path’ to propose to the current system’s ‘chemically grown and highly processed’ methods of food production. This consists of methods of production that would be ‘ecological not industrial ...conserving and regenerating the earth’s biodiversity’, and these would involve ‘following the ecological laws of the earth – the law of diversity and the law of return, shortening the distance between producers and consumers, deindustrialising and deglobalising food systems to reduce emissions and enhance health’, thus

offering ‘solutions to the climate crisis, the extinction crisis and the hunger and health crises, because the health of the planet and our health are interconnected’. It must be said that this is nothing if not an admirable vision. The snag, however, is that the author seems to see it as achievable within the framework of the present system of buying and selling and production for profit – and this by means of social pressure and the goodwill and actions of governments. Unfortunately this ignores the reality that all governments of all kinds and stripes are servants of that system (i.e. the capitalist system) and their role is one of oversight and of attempting to make it run in the least worst way. They are not in the business of overthrowing it or regulating it for the common benefit – or indeed for anyone’s benefit other than that of the small minority who already monopolise the planet’s wealth.

The existing method of production and distribution, with its growth imperative and its commodification of everything, has, as this book so trenchantly informs us, seriously damaged and may well be on the way to completely destroying the natural environment. How can we prevent this going any further and reversing it? Not via tweaks to the way the current system works but by a democratic political movement expressing a majority will of the world’s people to cooperatively organise a leaderless, stateless society without governments, without markets, without buying and selling and with free access to all goods and services – a society which will recognise the necessity to produce and distribute sustainably while being sensitive not just to the needs of the human species but to the whole biosphere, the whole environment of which we are a part- the real ‘economy of care’ that Vandana Shiva so passionately advocates for but offers no realistic path to.

HKM

More and Less



Slow Down: How Degrowth Communism Can Save the Earth. By Kohei Saito (translated by Brian Bergstrom). Weidenfeld & Nicolson £10.99.

It is well known that Karl Marx never completed his major work *Capital*. Just the first volume was published in his lifetime, and two further volumes, edited by Friedrich Engels, only appeared after his death. Kohei Saito argues here that Marx did not finish *Capital* because in his later

years he became interested in scientific and what would now be called ecological issues. He did not publish much on these topics, but he left a lot of notes and excerpts from other writers, which are only now being put together as part of MEGA (Marx–Engels Complete Works). Saito's book was discussed in the November 2024 *Socialist Standard*.

Saito further claims that Marx turned his back on productivism, the view that under capitalism productivity would continue to rise to bring about socialism (a well-known passage from the *Communist Manifesto* states that the capitalist class had massively expanded the productive forces). Marx argued, for instance, that capitalist agriculture led to depletion of the soil and disruption of the metabolic interaction between nature and humans, and he later praised communes in non-Western societies, such as Russia. This also involved a break with 'Eurocentrism', which supposedly involved projecting European history onto the rest of the world.

Saito criticises what he terms Accelerationism, the idea of completely sustainable economic growth. He associates this view with Aaron Bastani, author of *Fully Automated Luxury Communism* (on which see the June 2019 *Socialist Standard*). He claims that the improved productivity and replacement of fossil fuels envisaged in FALC would in fact lead to 'increased plunder of the earth'. His solution is degrowth, which for one thing involves a greater spread of the commons and 'collective management of productive activity', thereby reducing the artificial scarcity of capitalism and increasing abundance, while at the same time cutting the hours of work needed. Degrowth is simply not possible under capitalism; rather, a steady-state economy based on sustainability is what is needed.

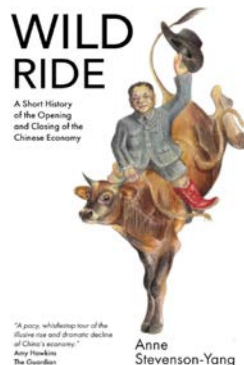
A chapter entitled 'Degrowth Communism Will Save the World' presents the author's positive proposals, divided into five points. The first of these is the transition to an economy based on use value: fulfilling people's basic needs would be given priority over increasing GDP. But here we meet the first real problem: it is just not clear whether Saito wishes to do away completely with exchange value and the whole idea of GDP. The second point, already mentioned above, is to reduce work hours, which need not imply increased use of automation. Thirdly, abolish the division of labour, as work will be more attractive if it involves a variety of tasks and activities. Further, the production process must be democratised, which includes the use of open technologies, those which 'relate to communication and co-operative industry'. Lastly, priority must be given to essential work, labour-intensive activities that cannot be automated,

such as care work, in contrast to the meaningless 'bullshit jobs' identified by David Graeber. A system built on these lines will be 'equipped to satisfy people's needs while also expanding the capacity for society to address environmental issues'.

The author summarises his position as follows: 'the foundation of communism is the equal, communal management of the means of production as a form of commons – that is, as something distinct from private ownership or ownership by the state'. Socialists would agree with this, but unfortunately, he then goes on to accept the existence of the state as a means of getting things done, such as creating infrastructure. Perhaps he does not mean by this some kind of centralised organisation that enforces the rule and interests of a minority, but he could have been a lot clearer here. In fact, his description of future society is mostly fine as far as it goes, but he does not refer explicitly to three crucial aspects, the abolition of the wages system, the ending of production for sale and the abolition of class divisions. Without these, whatever exists will not be socialism/communism, whether it implements degrowth or not.

PB

China



Wild Ride: A Short History of the Opening and Closing of the Chinese Economy. By Anne Stevenson-Yang. Bui Jones, 2024. xxii +149pp.

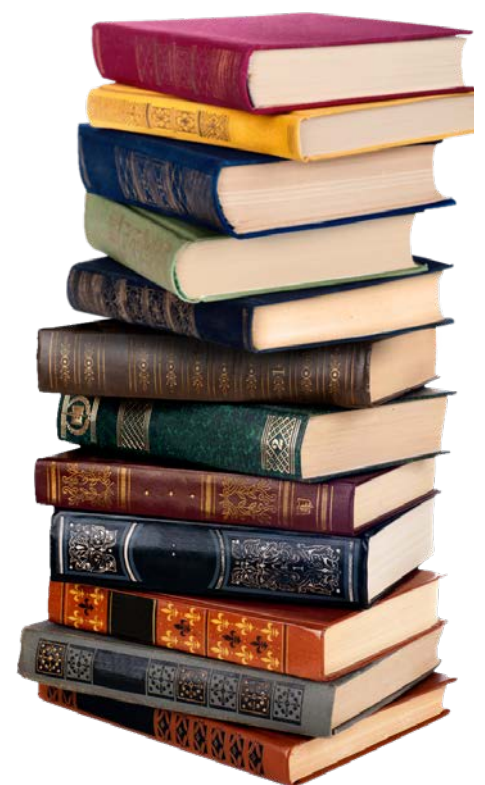
This book really is Chinese capitalism up close. Its American author, the mother of a Chinese family, spent over 25 years living in China between the 1980s and 2014, first as a journalist and then as an entrepreneur in publishing and software. This gave her experience of life in China both in its social dimension and, more relevantly to this book, in the economic twists and turns that followed the Mao era (late 1970s onwards) leading right up to the present day. She presents the knowledge gained from this experience in a fascinatingly detailed way and with a turn of phrase that makes it far more readable than any recent academic study of that country's development.

Unlike many commentators who seek to differentiate China's economic system from that of the West, she has no scruple about labelling it as capitalist, understanding that, even if the country is far more socially and politically coercive than Western liberal

democracies, it still operates, as Western capitalism does, a system of production for profit which divides its population into two main classes, a small one of extremely wealthy people, whether private individuals or state bureaucrats, and a vast majority of others who are forced to survive by selling their energies to an employer (again whether state or private) for a wage or salary.

The 'wild ride' of the title refers to the various iterations Chinese capitalism has been through since the extremely backwards state-run capitalism of Mao's reign (which by the way she calls 'socialism' – something we would not accept), and her analysis is detailed and compelling. She sees the 'ride', even if in many ways smoke and mirrors, as broadly progressive in the sense of bringing alleviation to poverty in China and, while the system remains politically authoritarian, of being less nakedly repressive than the previous era. However, she sees things as having gone backwards since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, both in terms of autocratic state control over the population and of state capitalism reasserting its primacy over private ownership of capital. And she is pessimistic about the chances of this changing any time soon. It should of course be added that other commentators on China take a different view and think the pendulum is more likely to swing the other way, ie towards the freer, more open exchange of ideas which tends to characterise advanced capitalist development and provides a better terrain for the spread of socialist ideas. But this remains to be seen.

HKM



The Common Market: In or Out – Does it Matter?

FOR THE first time in British History—a referendum. A device often used in other countries; Norway voted in such a manner to keep out. This vote, largely favoured by the anti-marketeers in the Labour Party, will resolve the decision for the Government. Mr. Wilson, when recommending the terms said “This is one of the most important parliamentary occasions in our history”. Not so. The British people are only being asked to endorse the continuation of capitalism, in or out, and they do this at every General Election. As yet, they continue to give this endorsement.

To remain in or get out has produced a weird assortment of protagonists. IN—Mr. Wilson and some members of his cabinet ally themselves with Mr. Heath, Maudling, the Liberal Party, the Confederation of British Industry, the Farmers’ Union and generally speaking ‘big business’. OUT—this includes an even weirder assortment. The Communist Party, Enoch Powell, Benn, Foot,

Shore, the National Front and the TUC. (...)

How you will vote is your concern. We tell them to stuff their referendum. The real issue that the workers should tackle is Common Market or Common Ownership.

We and our sympathisers will vote. We shall register on our papers our commitment for Socialism. The question you are being asked to answer—In or Out—is of no concern to members of the working class. Whatever the outcome of the vote, Capitalism will continue. And continue it will until you and a majority like you take the revolutionary step of deciding to abolish capitalism in all its forms and to bring into being a new society. (...)

Away with all the trappings of capitalism—tariffs, customs duties, monetary union, competition, buying, selling etc. Vote for nothing but Common Ownership.

(Socialist Standard, May 1975)

Action Replay

Net income

IN THE August 2024 Action Replay we wrote about the struggles of players in the lower reaches of professional tennis.

But it’s not just those below the top echelons who need support. The Professional Tennis Players Association (www.ptpaplayers.com) aims to ‘Provide protection and support for players and advocate for their best interests’. It focuses on the top 250 singles players and the top 100 doubles players (men and women in both cases), but claims to service players of all rankings, and aims to extend this to cover junior and retired players too. Mind you, it is probably lower-ranked players who would be most in need of the association’s support.

Among other things, PTPA offers free legal aid to players involved in anti-doping and anti-corruption cases, provides medical opinions and recommendations, offers resources to support players’ mental health and (most importantly, no doubt) enables players to receive discounts at Hilton hotels.

Recently, the PTPA began legal action against the sport’s various governing bodies (BBC Sport, 18 March). There are allegedly too many tournaments, which many players are effectively forced to enter. Moreover, players do not receive a large enough percentage of the revenue generated by the top tournaments.

According to the PTPA Executive Director, ‘players are trapped in an unfair system that exploits their talent, suppresses their earnings, and jeopardises their health and safety.’

The top twenty men’s and women’s players recently asked for more prize money in the four biggest tournaments, the Grand Slams. Losing in the first round at Wimbledon earns a player £60,000, but many lower-ranked players still struggle to get by. In the year to July 2023, the All England Club (which runs Wimbledon) had an operating profit of just under

£54m, but ninety percent of that was paid to the governing body, the Lawn Tennis Association. Zheng Qinwen, the world number eight, said ‘increased prize money would be particularly welcomed by lower-ranked players, who can struggle to make ends meet at other times of the year.’

PTPA is rather different from most trade unions, and many professional sports have unions for players; for instance, the International Federation of Professional Footballers (FIFPRO) consists of sixty-six national players’ associations. All of which shows that even those better off than most people still need to have their interests protected against the powers-that-be of one kind and another.

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.

May 2025 Events

World Socialist Movement
online meetings

Sundays at 19.30 (IST) (Discord)

Weekly WSP (India) meeting

Sunday 11 May 10.00 (GMT + 1)

Central Online Branch Meeting

Friday 2 May 19.30 (GMT + 1)

May Day meeting

Friday 9 May 19.30 (GMT + 1)

To be arranged

Friday 16 May 19.30 (GMT + 1)

Democracy and the Social Republic

Speaker: Darren Poynton

Some thoughts on the transformation of the state

Friday 23 May 19.30 (GMT + 1)

Who is working class?

Speaker: Kevin Cronin

Focussing on the USA and its history in terms of how sections of the working class there become divided from other elements on the basis of 'identity politics' and are then used to promote the interests of capitalism there.

Friday 30 May 19.30 (GMT + 1)

Have you heard the news?

Discussion of recent events

Socialist Party Physical Meetings

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.

BURFORD (Oxfordshire) Saturday 17 May 10.30-16.30

Levellers Day

The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event
Warwick Hall, Burford OX18 4RY

MANCHESTER Saturday 31 May, 2pm • Populism

This talk will look at the main ideas behind populism, such as the supposed distinction between an elite and 'the people'. How close is this to the Socialist class analysis of capitalism? We will also look at the policies of Reform UK, and ask if it is a populist party. And can populist policies really make a difference to the lives of most people?

Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester city centre

CARDIFF

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

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

NEW ONLINE READING GROUP

A short series of meetings to discuss Marx on the causes of capitalist crises. Starts Wednesday 21 May, at 7.30pm. For details, contact spgb.ed@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.

Follow the money



A RECENT BBC investigative programme (File on Four) focused on the financial crisis in British universities, revealing how most of them are urgently trying to make savings by cutting staff numbers and courses on offer. It showed how one of the underlying factors is the falling numbers of students from abroad who pay higher fees than domestic students and on whom many universities have become reliant. The result, so the programme disclosed, was desperate attempts by some institutions to recruit overseas students, even to the extent of overlooking poor qualifications or poor knowledge of English, which may lead to cheating in exams and other assessment exercises and which is then also often overlooked.

The customer is right

But, as I frequently hear from friends in my own local university, the reverberations of the funding problems are more wide-ranging and are causing considerable stress and insecurity to those employed there. One of the greatest concerns for academic employees, apart from the ever-present risk of being pressured into 'voluntary' severance or simply declared redundant, stems from the fact that the customer (ie the student) is now very much 'in charge'. Gone are the days when universities were largely funded by government and regarded by most as places of 'higher learning' which didn't need to be too concerned about where the money was coming from. Gone are the days when students, apart from not being charged for the tuition they received, received local authority grants to cover their living expenses. And gone too are the days when students would look up to their lecturers and see university education as a bonus that would serve them in all manner of useful ways in the years to come. Now that governments no longer fund universities to any significant degree and students have to pay for both living expenses and tuition out of their own (or their parents') pockets, the tables are well and truly turned.

The anxiety of universities to attract students and then keep them happy when they get there has meant that the students now largely regard their lecturers as servants and are ready to complain and demand redress when things (even small things) don't go entirely to plan for them – for example if they don't feel sufficiently well instructed (or even 'entertained') by a lecturer or are given lower exam marks than they hoped for or expected. And such complaints are taken deadly seriously by the university authorities themselves with lecturers required to explain themselves and a student's dissatisfaction not infrequently resulting in a rap over the knuckles for their lecturer or even a formal disciplinary process. And the students' assessment of their lecturers' 'performance' and the 'scores' they are asked to give to them at the end of each module will feed into the university's decision about whether, for example, a lecturer passes probation, is promoted, or is made redundant if reductions in staff costs are deemed necessary. And though campus trade unions rail against this, they are, so I'm told, rarely successful in achieving any relaxation of these policies or reversal or mitigation of penalties imposed on individual union members who go to them for help.

Obedient zombies

The other thing my university friends tell me is that those who manage to negotiate the hurdles and achieve promotion to higher posts are then required to administer the above processes. In other words, they are required to put the fear of god into their 'lower level' colleagues. And just like most others detailed to do 'the dirty work' in the repressive regime that employment represents, they usually agree to it and so accept the role of (as one of my University friends puts it) 'obedient zombie', even if some at least carry out the tasks required of them with some reluctance but maybe justifying it to themselves on the grounds that they are somehow acting in everyone's collective interest.

The student-as-paying-customer model

that now prevails is also backed up by government policy whereby anyone dissatisfied with the service they have received from their university has the choice of two different bodies they can complain to – either the Office for Students or the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. They can claim redress either in the form of changes to their grades or financial compensation from their University. But, over and above this, universities run scared that such complaints, if upheld, may be made public and so risk damaging their reputation and discouraging future students from applying, which would adversely affect their already precarious financial position. This of course increases the pressure put upon staff and departments within the university to make sure that, if complaints are made to them by students, 'satisfaction' is given, so that such complaints do not risk being taken outside the University with the possible consequences of that. Hence the prevailing mentality of 'the student is always right'.

Money, money, money

What does all this mean for university staff in the current system? It means, for one thing, long hours to fill in for the work of staff who have left via 'voluntary' severance or redundancy. It means that other aspects of their work, in particular their research, that they may have been hoping would give them satisfaction and inspiration and increase the sum of human knowledge in their discipline takes second place to something that may seem to have become a meaningless and alienating grind. And it means more stress and insecurity of not knowing if their job will be safe come the next money-saving operation – whichever euphemism is used for it (take your pick between 'reorganisation', 'review', 'restructuring', 'redesign', or anything else). The undeniable reality is that the system we live in, in employment and much else, dictates that money shall be the ultimate arbiter. In extreme cases it may decide whether people live or die. In others – and this applies to university employees – it will decide whether they feel relatively comfortable with their life on a day-to-day basis or whether they lead an anxious and insecure existence sweating on their employer's judgement about whether there is enough money in the coffers to continue employing them.

HOWARD MOSS