

THE

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# SOCIALIST STANDARD

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

## How governments fail



Also: Response to our question  
 Palestine: the failure of  
 Jewish nationalism  
 Public and private

Just another day  
 Unchained: living without money  
 Justice isn't for us  
 How Labour changed



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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'

# None of the above

AT THE next general election most voters in England are likely to have a choice between candidates representing six different parties: Labour, Tory, LibDem, Green, Reform UK, and the new Corbyn party. In Scotland and Wales, with the nationalists, it will be seven. This appears to extend democracy by offering voters a wider choice. But does it?

What, on paper, is on offer? Labour is in office nationally and has pledged to bring about economic growth and to improve education, housing and social amenities funded by the increased tax income that will be a by-product. The Tories are also promising growth but by giving even more in favour than Labour of giving private capitalist enterprises free rein. The LibDems promise an economy that works for everyone. The Greens promise to pursue reforms to benefit the environment. Reform UK says that cutting back on immigration will improve things for the rest of us. The new Corbyn party wants to return to what Labour promised in the 1970s by redistributing wealth and income more evenly.

Labour and the Tories — the Ins and

Outs of British politics — have had many chances to implement their policies and have both consistently failed. It is tempting to conclude that it's because their leading members are bungling incompetents, corrupt or nasty people, or, in the case of Labour, sell-outs. Some of them undoubtedly will be but that's not why they fail. Even if they were all competent, well-meaning and honest it wouldn't have made any difference. Replacing them in office by the members of some third party such as the LibDems have traditionally been or of some new protest party such as Farage's wouldn't make any difference either.

The reason Labour and the Tories fail, and why the others would too, is because they all accept capitalism and believe that the government can make its economy work for everyone. But it can't. Capitalism is based on the resources needed to produce wealth being in the hands of a minority and used to produce goods and services for sale with a view to making a profit. This is what drives the economy and is what all governments have to respect and

implement. Governments don't control the way the capitalist economy works. It's the other way round. The coercive economic laws of capitalism impose on governments what they can — and can't — do. Governments can't conjure up growth, can't give priority to the environment, and can't redistribute wealth and power.

In this way conventional politics is based on an illusion. Governments are assumed to be able to do what those elected to office say they will. And so elections are seen as being about voters choosing what policies they would like to see pursued or what reforms they would like to see enacted by voting for the candidates of one or other political party that they consider would best do this.

There is a choice at elections but it is a choice of which grouping of politicians is to carry out what the workings of the capitalist economy demand. It's a choice as to which of them is to preside over capitalism's operation and implement its priorities.

Faced with this limited choice, socialists, opposed as we are to capitalism and all of its works, say 'we are not voting for any of you'. What is needed is a change of system not a change of politicians in office.

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# A wealth of hallucinations

ANYONE WHO still thinks YouTube is just funny cat videos may be astonished that it is now the UK's second-most watched media service after the BBC, and ahead of ITV ([tinyurl.com/bdxxha9r](https://tinyurl.com/bdxxha9r)). It's still got funny cats, but now they're wearing trousers, beating up sharks and rescuing babies ([tinyurl.com/3pdmw5c](https://tinyurl.com/3pdmw5c)).

There are other, hyper-realistic videos, in which a gorilla beats up a crocodile (or a tiger), swinging it around and pounding it like a baseball bat. The videos look real, and while common sense tells you they can't be, there's no way to know for sure.

And that, right there, is the problem. When a *South Park* episode recently featured a naked Donald Trump having a desert epiphany with his own talking micro-penis, everyone understood it was a deepfake for comedic effect. But when videos emerged of migrants climbing out of small boats, thanking Labour for 'free buffets' and £2,000 e-bikes to make Deliveroo runs, burning the Union flag and gloating about being housed in 5 star Marriott hotels, no such understanding existed. Instead the videos racked up hundreds of thousands of views, no doubt to the delight of Nigel Farage and his ilk ([tinyurl.com/2ay7ze4b](https://tinyurl.com/2ay7ze4b)).

It's not just malicious deception at work. Gen-AI has a well-known hallucination problem. In one example, Google's AI Overview told council house tenants they could be evicted to make way for asylum seekers, a claim described by a housing solicitor as 'horseshit of the highest order' (*Private Eye*, 8 August 2025). Then there's Grok (Musk's Hitler-worshipping AI), now complete with a 'spicy' mode which spits out nude deepfakes of Taylor Swift without being asked ([tinyurl.com/48efmyy5](https://tinyurl.com/48efmyy5)).

Red flags are going up everywhere as the Trump regime goes full Rambo on deregulating 'woke AI', despite the demand for guardrails by US states ([tinyurl.com/y2rudn22](https://tinyurl.com/y2rudn22)). Even some tech bosses themselves are expressing concern, following reports that chatbots are explaining to children how to get drunk or stoned, hide eating disorders, and even write suicide letters to their parents. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman says the company is studying the problem of 'emotional overreliance', allegedly common among young people: 'There's young people who just say, like, 'I can't make any decision in my life without telling ChatGPT everything that's going on. It knows me. It knows my friends. I'm gonna do whatever it says.' That feels really bad to me' ([tinyurl.com/5t385kbu](https://tinyurl.com/5t385kbu)).

Why would anyone 'confide' in a



Credit: Adobe Stock

chatbot, you ask? Because they're never judgmental, unlike humans, according to one recent confession in the *Guardian*: 'At astonishing speed, the AI responded – gently, intelligently, without platitudes. I kept writing. It kept answering. Gradually, I felt less frantic. Not soothed, exactly. But met. Heard, even, in a strange and slightly disarming way' ([tinyurl.com/447b2jkm](https://tinyurl.com/447b2jkm)).

AI never gets tired or bored or angry with you. It's never too busy or distracted. It never has selfish interests of its own. It will never abandon you. One can't help thinking of Sarah Connor in the *Terminator 2* film, where she speculates on the irony that the T800 robot, designed to kill, would in many ways make a better father for her son than a real human, for these very reasons.

OpenAI just released ChatGPT 5 last month, which Altman describes as a 'significant step along our path to AGI [Artificial General Intelligence]': 'It's like talking to an expert—a legitimate PhD-level expert in anything, any area you need, on demand' ([tinyurl.com/56w2nkk9](https://tinyurl.com/56w2nkk9)).

Whether or not AGI, however you choose to define it, is a real and achievable thing or an ever-receding rainbow fantasy, the tech companies can't risk someone else getting there first and are throwing everything they've got into the race. Socialists know very well that when profits are at stake in capitalism, ethics generally go out of the window. Even so, some AI firms are seeing the potential profit in 'ethical AI' systems. The reasoning is that if your business has a need for AI, you'll be more likely to buy an 'ethical' one which, for example, doesn't tell kids how to kill themselves, because there's less chance of litigious blowback from grieving parents.

As a response to GPT 5, Anthropic released their latest version of Claude, along with a paper describing how they're trying to make Claude 'ethical' by using what they call 'persona vectors' to steer

its behavioural traits. Counter-intuitively, they 'teach' Claude how to be evil, as a kind of vaccine against the behaviour: 'When we steer the model with the 'evil' persona vector, we start to see it talking about unethical acts; when we steer with 'sycophancy,' it sucks up to the user; and when we steer with 'hallucination,' it starts to make up information. This shows that our method is on the right track: there's a cause-and-effect relation between the persona vectors we inject and the model's expressed character' ([tinyurl.com/2sxvmyxe](https://tinyurl.com/2sxvmyxe)).

The *Economist* points out that Anthropic is generating huge interest due to its focus on 'interpretability', which lets you 'see inside the model' and understand how it arrives at its answers, something you can't do with so-called black-box systems, whose responses you therefore can never really trust. Even so, CEO Dario Amodei is in no doubt what's ultimately at stake in the race for AGI, and it's not ethics, or even profits: 'if you just imagine what it is like if we versus our adversaries [he means China] suddenly received a nation of 50 million polymathic geniuses [...] There's no theory in which it doesn't result in an enormous geopolitical advantage [...] I worry that AI, in being such a powerful technology... could lead to longer-lived authoritarian governments, that it could lead to dictatorships which are much harder to displace [...] This is about a contest between systems of government' ([tinyurl.com/mtdw4dfv](https://tinyurl.com/mtdw4dfv)).

Amodei thinks there's no way to stop AI now. It's like a speeding train. All you can do is try to steer it. But that's what everyone says about capitalism too. And anyone who thinks they can steer that is suffering the biggest hallucination of all.

PJS

# Capitalism *is* mental

## Dear Editors

THANK YOU for publishing 'Capitalism is Mental' (*Socialist Standard*, August), it's one of the few pieces I've read in a socialist publication that genuinely tries to link mental health, neurodivergence, and class struggle. I agree with much of it, but I'd like to go further.

I'm an autistic, working class man in my fifties. I wasn't diagnosed as a child we didn't get diagnosed where I was from. You just got told you were difficult, thick, lazy, or weird. I spent most of my life thinking I was broken. Now I know the truth: I was *wired differently*, but the world was never built for people like me.

Autism, ADHD, PTSD, anxiety we talk

about these things like they're individual conditions. but they're shaped by the world we live in. If you take a sensitive, pattern seeking kid and throw him into a world of noise, fear, chaos, poverty, and pressure, what do you think happens? You get trauma. You get shutdowns. You get rage. You get silence.

I don't think people fully understand how *classed* this all is. Most working class people don't have therapists. We have panic attacks on night shifts. We cry in the car outside our work. We get sectioned or sedated or sacked. Our 'mental health support' is a bottle of lager and a walk with the dog, if we're lucky.

I've heard much of the left talk about 'neurodiversity' like it's a fashion. They go on about identity and inclusivity, but they

rarely ask who's being left out. I'll tell you who: lads like me. Men who mask it for 30 years. Women who get called dramatic. Kids who are fobbed off with 'poor parenting'. We don't get soft landings we get hard floors.

So yes, capitalism is mental. But it's also *murderous*. It strips meaning from life, blames us for not coping, then sells us back the cure in pills, pop psychology, or mindfulness apps. All the while, it's *our* nervous systems not theirs breaking under the pressure.

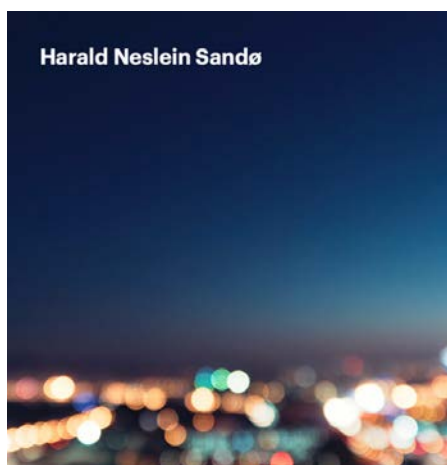
I'm glad your article spoke about neurodivergence as resistance. I've come to see it that way too. We're not broken. We're canaries in the mine.

**PABLO WILCOX**

## Response to our question

LAST MONTH'S *Socialist Standard* contained a review of a new book entitled *Waking Up. A Journey Towards a New Dawn for Humanity*. Though a work of science-fiction imagining a world with far more advanced forms of technology than currently exist, it advocates and attempts to describe the same kind of society the Socialist Party has campaigned for throughout its existence – stateless, moneyless, marketless and with common ownership, voluntary cooperation and free access to all goods and services. It depicted, to use the author's own words, a society of 'seamless harmony between humans and nature' with everyone leading 'their own versions of a good life, respecting each other and the planet'.

One reservation the review had, however, was that there was no explanation of how we got there in the first place, how it all happened. The book's author, Harald Sandø, has now taken up that challenge by providing a short, imagined account of the 'shift that changed everything', of the 'move from a system of money, ownership, debt, competition, war and scarcity to a world of cooperation, sharing, abundance and peace'. He has also said he may integrate this into a future edition of the book. It happened, his account says, via a shift in consciousness of a 'spiritual' kind, whereby people voluntarily 'began questioning the foundational assumptions of the system'. Even billionaires did this and this



**WAKING UP**

**A JOURNEY TOWARDS A  
NEW DAWN FOR HUMANITY**

was especially important since they were the ones who funded the new system. They became out-and-out philanthropists redirecting private property to become 'humanity's shared inheritance', so that 'paradoxically enough the new moneyless world was created with money'. All this, we are told, happened in an entirely voluntary way with 'no war', 'no forced redistribution' and 'no bloody revolution'.

We have in common with Harald Sandø

one important aspect of this vision. That is the idea that the shift from the current society of private ownership and control, gross inequality and production for profit – which we call capitalism – to a society of common ownership, economic equality and production for need – which we call socialism – requires a profound shift of consciousness by the overwhelming majority of the population. We cannot, however, regard as plausible his notion that this will somehow be triggered by the generosity of billionaires electing to share their fortunes. Rather we see the prime condition – the sole condition in fact- for such a change in a spread of consciousness among the vast majority of wage and salary workers, which will then impel them, by democratic use of the vote, to take the power necessary to abolish capitalism and set about organising a genuine socialist society- very much of the kind looked forward to by the author of *Waking Up* and by a good number of others with a similar vision.

So though we welcome this book as, to quote the author's own words, 'a canvas for exploring possibilities' and 'an invitation to imagine, question and reflect', we would insist on the need for democratic political action by the majority as a prerequisite for the successful establishment and organisation of the kind of society we share his desire for.

**HKM**

# Corbyn's crumbs of comfort

'WE WILL only fix the crises in our society with a mass redistribution of wealth and power. That means taxing the very richest in our society', tweeted Corbyn on 24 July announcing the launch of a new political party ([tinyurl.com/4pxh9jpe](https://tinyurl.com/4pxh9jpe)).

That sounds radical but a 'mass' redistribution of wealth is not the same as a 'massive' redistribution, only a redistribution to some mass of people. Interpreted literally, it would mean that some of the wealth of the very richest is to be taken from them through taxation and distributed amongst a large number of individuals. Let us say from the top 1 percent to those in the bottom 50 percent.

According to the Office for National Statistics, 'In the April 2020 to March 2022 period, the wealthiest 1% of households held 10% of all household wealth in Great Britain, which was the same as the proportion held by the least wealthy 50% of households combined'.

The wealth tax proposed by former Labour leader Neil (now Lord) Kinnock and others of 2 percent of wealth holdings of over £10 million has been estimated to raise £24 billion a year ([tinyurl.com/279yzvfn](https://tinyurl.com/279yzvfn)). The total number of households in the UK is

about 28 million, so 50 percent is 14 million. £24 billion divided by 14 million is about £1,714 (£33 a week) per household. No doubt a welcome amount for the families concerned but hardly enough to bring about any permanent improvement in their condition. Even if it is used to improve services rather than as a cash payment, £24 billion divided amongst 14 million is not going to be able to provide much of an improvement.

But perhaps the 'mass' that is to benefit from this redistribution is not to be as large as that. In an article in the *Guardian* (30 July) ([tinyurl.com/yc344dhp](https://tinyurl.com/yc344dhp)) introducing the new party, Corbyn wrote that one of its policies would be to make 'the wealthiest in society pay a bit more in tax to ensure that everyone should live in dignity'. About 20 percent of the population are considered to live in poverty ([tinyurl.com/ysvd5r28](https://tinyurl.com/ysvd5r28)). If the £24 billion were to be divided only amongst the bottom 20 percent, some 5.6 million, the amount per household would be £4,286, or an extra £82.42 a week. This would certainly help but whether it would be enough to allow them to live in dignity is another matter.

The original tweet went on to say the 'mass redistribution of wealth and power' intended to 'fix the crises in our society' would mean 'bring[ing] energy, water, rail and mail into public ownership'. But what about the rest of production? Seemingly that is to rest in private capitalist hands, so the 'our society' the new party is talking about is present-day capitalist society of minority class ownership and production for profit.

Creating an egalitarian society through a redistribution of wealth within capitalism is a pipe-dream as it goes against the logic of the system. Capitalism is based on a minority owning the means of wealth production and on these being used to generate profits that are accumulated as more wealth for the owners. Inequality of wealth ownership and the tendency for the wealthy to get wealthier are built into the system.

Attempting to counter this will mean that the new party will end up being a mere party of protest, spending its time criticising the government for not doing what it 'demands' and 'resisting' when the workings of the capitalist economy force the government to make things worse.



## New Socialist Party official t-shirt

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# Halo Halo

THE NEGATIVE and potentially fatal effects of belonging to a cult are well-documented. There are many accounts written by those who escaped from the clutches of a cult. Within a cult subordination to another's will can result in handing over total life control, including financial assets, essentially being a slave, to whom anything might happen, including sexual abuse, and at worst being forced into mass suicide.

History is littered with individuals who claimed some sort of 'divine' right or 'divine' spirit to coerce others into providing them with wealth and power, from Indian gurus influencing people in the music industry to American and other evangelists who offer not just 'afterlife' but material wealth in the here and now. Just send us twenty dollars or more...

Among Wikipedia definitions of cults is a comparison to 'miniature totalitarian political systems'. A 2021 piece in *Psychology Today* says

'no one joins a cult; they are recruited by systematic social influence processes' and 'destructive individuals and cults use deception and undue influence to make people dependent and obedient'. Also, 'cult leaders are typically malignant narcissists and want people who will be obedient to them'. On vulnerability it says, 'no one joins a cult voluntarily; they are recruited into it. There is lack of informed consent. Everyone has vulnerabilities' ([tinyurl.com/by2rdk54](https://www.tinyurl.com/by2rdk54)).

The best way to highlight the dangers of cults is to shine a light on them. In late July/early August the BBC ran a two-part documentary on the Jesus Army – *Inside the Cult of the Jesus Army*. They also ran a piece related to the documentary titled *'Investigating one of the UK's most abusive cults'* ([tinyurl.com/4rrkvsnr](https://www.tinyurl.com/4rrkvsnr)). The effect that membership can have upon an individual's mental health is highlighted by the comment of an ex-member of the cult: 'One contributor, Nathan, "despite

struggling to come to terms with the fact he was groomed and sexually assaulted, admitted he would likely return to the Jesus Army if it reopened"'. A documented aspect of cults is the sexual abuse that takes place within them: 'About one in six was sexually abused, according to a review of the damages claims of some 600 individuals'.

Around the same time *The Guardian* ran an article called *The rise and fall of the British cult that hid in plain sight* ([tinyurl.com/4jdf5umu](https://www.tinyurl.com/4jdf5umu)). It's a long piece by an ex-member of the Jesus Army, a woman who, when quite young, was forced into the Jesus Army by her 'normal' family joining it. She echoes Nathan's comment by explaining that the reason people stay in cults is due to 'the thought of leaving a domestic relationship, with the additional anguish of abandoning one's family, friends, money, job, and support system, along with the inherent threat of going to hell'.

The only 'hell' that exists is the current social system which encourages predation on people who are alienated from their fellow human beings because capitalism encourages the pursuit of wealth and power by whatever means possible.

**DC**

## Tiny tips

The latest Oxfam report which was released at 4th UN Financing for Development meet in Seville, Spain, shows that since 2015 the top 1% people in the world have amassed US\$ 33.9 trillion in new wealth which is enough to end annual poverty 22 times over (**Scoop Independent News**, [tinyurl.com/wnuvz977](https://www.tinyurl.com/wnuvz977)).

In some cases, health professionals perform FGM [Female Genital Mutilation] secretly in exchange for payment, turning the practice into a commercial enterprise (**People Daily**, [tinyurl.com/y6r87av4](https://www.tinyurl.com/y6r87av4)).

The island is currently facing its worst economic crisis since the 1959 revolution. Long and daily power cuts, scarce internet connection, food and medicine shortages, and high prices are the realities of present-day Cuba. Some staple items like beans are nowhere to be found; rice production has declined and much is now imported. Sugar, too, has become an import in Cuba, which, until recently, was the leading sugar exporter in the world. People cannot make ends meet with their meager incomes — a

doctor's monthly salary is approximately \$50. Even by conservative World Bank estimates, 72 percent of all Cubans live below the poverty line. Beggars seem to be everywhere, with the African community descendant from slavery being the most economically victimized (**Consortium News**, [tinyurl.com/yz79ehpd](https://www.tinyurl.com/yz79ehpd)).

The entire political and intellectual machinery of the French ruling class is now moving in this direction. That includes the miserable little left, led by the Socialist Party, who bark at us from morning to night. They don't realize that they're participating in a broader establishment strategy: acting as the left-wing auxiliary of the right. They live in a dreamworld, wanting France to be like Germany, with a grand coalition of the centre: Social Democrats who are indistinguishable from liberals, Greens who are always clamouring for war. These people are doing the work of dividing us every day while pretending to be for unity (**Portside**, [tinyurl.com/bdhu5j3y](https://www.tinyurl.com/bdhu5j3y)).

One recent survey discovered that 70 percent of Americans are the most financially stressed that they have ever been in their entire lives. That figure alone tells us that we have a major economic crisis on our hands. The cost of living has been rising much faster than paychecks have been, and most of the country is just barely scraping by from month to month. Anyone that attempts to deny this is simply not living in reality (**Zero Hedge**, [tinyurl.com/278fbh2h](https://www.tinyurl.com/278fbh2h)).

Donald Trump styled himself as a populist, 'anti-establishment' president. But look at what he has actually done in office, and you see he's a status-quo politician with nothing to offer working Americans (**Jacobin**, [tinyurl.com/2un8bscn](https://www.tinyurl.com/2un8bscn)).

Will voters finally stop both blaming politicians for their troubles and depending on them to end them? Will voters—and non-voters—transform themselves into people who act for themselves, in their own interests, instead of allowing others to act for them? That would be what social change looks like. The survival of the human race may well depend upon it (**The Brooklyn Rail**, [tinyurl.com/2fbznuja](https://www.tinyurl.com/2fbznuja)).

*(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](mailto:spgb@worldsocialism.org)

**MIDLANDS**

**West Midlands regional branch.** Meets last Sat. 3pm (check before attending). Contact: Stephen Shapton. 07309090205. Email: [stephenshapton@yahoo.co.uk](mailto: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](mailto:spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org).

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

**Bolton.** Contact: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589.

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

**Doncaster.** Contact: Fredi Edwards, [fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk)

**Yorkshire Regional branch.**

Contact: Fredi Edwards, Tel 07746 230 953 or email [fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk](mailto: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](mailto:spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org) or 07971 715569.

**South West regional branch.** Meets 3rd Sat. 2pm on Zoom. For invite email: [spgbsw@gmail.com](mailto:spgbsw@gmail.com)  
**Brighton.** Contact: Anton Pruden, [anton@pruden.me](mailto:anton@pruden.me)  
**Canterbury.** Contact: Rob Cox, [spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org)  
**Luton.** Contact: Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP.

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

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

**Essex.** Contact: Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billericay, CM12 0EX. [patdeutz@gmail.com](mailto:patdeutz@gmail.com).

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# Standing by your trained killers

IN 2020, the Inspector General of the Australian Defence Force published its long-awaited findings on the behaviour of the nation's special forces in Afghanistan between 2005 and 2016. It became widely known as the Brereton Report, after Major General Paul Brereton, the investigation's lead ([tinyurl.com/spgbBRE2](https://tinyurl.com/spgbBRE2)).

Its findings were simple: Australian special forces had committed murder in Afghanistan. Thirty-nine cases were identified. The report found evidence of collusion to cover the atrocities up. Troops carried 'throw down weapons' to plant on their victims, to claim they were actually insurgents and the slaying was within the terms of engagement. New recruits were 'blooded,' ordered by their officer to kill prisoners to get their first kill. The report identified 25 individuals responsible, and stated that no-one above the rank of sergeant was involved or had knowledge of these atrocities.

So far, only one man has even been charged with murder, and is still awaiting trial. The Office of The Special Investigator, set up by the Australian Government, has noted the difficulty in reliably investigating the incidents, especially with the Taliban in power ([tinyurl.com/spgbBRE4](https://tinyurl.com/spgbBRE4)).

It is likely that only political obsessives in Australia, let alone around the world, will have even heard of the very serious findings of the report. It is unlikely that the culture of the Australian forces evolved on its own.

The British government, for its part, sprang into action and passed The Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Act 2021, which created a 'presumption that it is to be exceptional for a prosecutor to determine that a Service person or veteran should be prosecuted for alleged offences on operations outside the UK [...] These measures do not apply to allegations of sexual offences, torture, crimes against humanity, genocide, and war crimes'. (Although the law as originally drafted would have included them- [tinyurl.com/spgbBRE3](https://tinyurl.com/spgbBRE3)).

The BBC has been picking up stories of abuses by British forces. The 2022 *Panorama* programme, 'SAS Death Squads Exposed: A British War Crime?' observed that: 'British special forces killed hundreds of people on night raids in Afghanistan', and asked, 'but were some of the shootings executions?' More recently, the episode 'Special Forces: I Saw War Crimes' (May 2025) relayed stories from service personnel: 'Killing of detainees "became routine", the veteran said. "They'd search someone, handcuff them, then shoot



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them", before cutting off the plastic handcuffs used to restrain people and "planting a pistol" by the body, he said'.

And: 'The testimony, as well as new video evidence obtained by the BBC from SAS operations in Iraq in 2006, also supports previous reporting by *Panorama* that SAS squadrons kept count of their kills to compete with one another.'

The story sounds almost exactly the same as the Australian one ([tinyurl.com/spgbBRE1](https://tinyurl.com/spgbBRE1)). The BBC has, inevitably, received pushback for this reporting from the usual 'support the troops' types, usually of the 'so what, war is hell' variety, or 'who are we to judge the actions of soldiers under pressure'. But the main response has been crickets. There has been no full bore coverage or outrage on the front pages of the national press. The stories have been simply left to sink down into the archives to be quietly forgotten.

This is the propaganda tool of 'worthy versus unworthy victims': the crimes of the British state will receive less attention than the crimes of official enemies. A genuinely democratic press interested in holding authorities to account for the citizenry would operate on the opposite principle.

This is hardly new. In her book *Legacy of violence* Caroline Elkins explores what she calls 'legalized lawlessness' which involves 'legalizing, bureaucratizing and legitimating of exceptional state-directed violence when ordinary laws proved insufficient for maintaining order and control.'

One example she gives is of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar in India in 1919. The event saw Brigadier General Dyer order his troops to open fire on a crowd, killing around 400 and wounding around three times as many. Despite the outrage around the world, Dyer stood by his actions, as producing a salutary terror to prevent an uprising.

His only punishment was dismissal (though the press and well-wishers raised a substantial sum of money for him). In a

debate in the House of Commons on the incident, Winston Churchill depicted it as 'a monstrous event, an event which stands in singular and sinister isolation', that is, as an exceptional one-off, out of character with the spirit of the British army.

The House of Commons passed a resolution of censure of Dyer, but the House of Lords passed a motion condemning the lower house's resolution.

In that debate, Elkins quotes one noble peer, Viscount Finlay stating: 'One of the mainstays of our Empire has been the feeling that every officer, whose duty it was to take action in times of difficulty, might rely, so long as he acted honestly and in the discharge of his duty, upon his superiors standing by him'.

Looking at Elkins' narrative, this is a recurring theme: violent excesses by imperial forces are met with official investigation and sanction, only for the perpetrator to be let off after a vociferous public campaign. The most recent example of this being Sergeant Blackman, who was convicted of murder in Afghanistan.

After a strenuous campaign, the charge was downgraded to manslaughter, and he was released after serving four years in prison. Appeal judges accepted he had a stress-related mental illness leading to diminished responsibility.

The British state has opened a public enquiry under Justice Haddon-Cave. This will likely be a full and conscientious enquiry that will shed some light on the operations of the British forces in Afghanistan. The most likely outcome will be that junior heads will roll (gently), and the report will join others on the shelf, forgotten except by historians

The interests served by the British state create a need for killers, and it is unsurprising when they cross the line. What is harder to understand is the minds of people who will determinedly keep violence and slaughter available as a policy option.

**PIK SMEET**

# Palestine: the failure of Jewish nationalism

WHAT'S HAPPENING in Gaza and Palestine today shows the failure of the Zionist project, conceived towards the end of the 19th century, to set up a separate state for Jews.

The Zionists preached that what Jews, including Jewish workers, should do is not simply integrate into the states in which they found themselves but agitate for a separate Jewish state — somewhere, anywhere. Uganda and Madagascar were considered at one point. In the end, on religious and ancient historical grounds, the Zionists decided that this should be Palestine, then a province of the Ottoman Empire.

Arguably, it was a crazy project from the start. To settle people from Europe in another part of the world, where the people and their rulers were unlikely to accept this, was a recipe for trouble. But at the time — the end of the 19th century — this would not have seemed so crazy, as it was common practice for European states in a position to do so — Britain, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Spain, Portugal and belatedly Italy and Germany — to settle Europeans in various other parts of the world, mainly Africa, on land traditionally occupied by locals.

The idea of a separate state, to be a safe home for Jews, seemed particularly attractive after the experience in WW2. Israel was to be that safe home. But it could never be. Israel was established as a recognised separate state in 1948 but was opposed by the local rulers who immediately went to war to try to prevent it but lost, resulting in hundreds of thousands of the local population being expelled from where they lived.

Ever since, Israel has sought 'secure frontiers'. After winning the Six-Day War in 1967, again initiated by the rulers of surrounding states, Israel annexed the Golan Heights from Syria and East Jerusalem from Jordan and occupied the rest of Palestine including Gaza and also Sinai. They later withdrew from Sinai but kept 'security control' of the rest, creating a sort of Greater Israel. Following the collapse of the Assad regime in Syria last December Israel has occupied more of that country.

The Hamas massacre of 7 October 2023 confirmed that Israel was not in fact a safe place for Jews. And Israel's response — not an eye for an eye, but 40 eyes for one eye and rising — has made things more insecure, through the growth of anti-semitism, for those Jews who choose not to settle in Israel (most Jews in fact).

So, in terms of providing a safe home for



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Jews, Zionism has been a complete failure. Jews living outside Israel (most of these are in the United States, as many in fact as are in Israel) are in a much safer position.

Israel may well reconquer Gaza but history suggests that in the long term its present government's policy of trying to hold down a hostile population larger than the number of Jews living there cannot succeed. It is bound to fail, just as apartheid did in South Africa.

What this shows is that socialists were correct in opposing from the start Zionism and its project. Socialism, not a separate Jewish state, was the solution to problems Jewish workers faced. In the meantime, Jewish workers should integrate into the workers movement in the state where they lived. Many did — more in fact than went to live in Israel — and took part not just in the workers' movement but also in politics generally. Some of the key figures involved in current discussions and decisions about the Gaza war chose this sensible path. For instance, Trump's special envoy Witkoff, the French President Macron, and Ukraine President Zelensky.

Most of the Leninist left enthusiastically support armed action to abolish the state of Israel. That would just be to continue the senseless cycle of massacres and counter-massacres that have gone on since the first Jews arrived from Europe. Today Israel is where 70 to 80 percent of the Jews living there were actually born. More than half have no family connection with Europe but rather with the Middle East and North Africa, so can hardly be called colonists. It is now just another state, which like all states needs to be captured by the working class to establish socialism and then abolished along with all states, not singled out for abolition under capitalism while all other states remain.

Most of those on the marches — and probably of those expressing support for the banned Palestine Action group — will basically just want an end to the

daily killing and destruction in Gaza and are understandably frustrated that nothing is being done about it. For them, 'free Palestine' will mean simply that the population there and in the West Bank should be free from the political oppression by the Israeli state that it undoubtedly is suffering. Naturally those oppressed want it to end and socialists obviously sympathise with this. But how to bring it to an end?

Most governments say they favour the setting up of a separate Palestine state alongside Israel. That would certainly end political oppression by the Israeli state for the new state's subjects but, a relief as that would be, it would not end capitalist exploitation; from that point of view, it would just be another capitalist state and a different ruling class.

In any event, a two-state solution doesn't seem practicable in present circumstances as, to work, it would require a change of attitude by the rulers — and indeed of most of the Jewish population — of Israel. That is not impossible, but the effort required to bring this about would be better employed in convincing all sections of the working class living in the historic territory of Palestine that they have a common interest in ending their exploitation by uniting to bring capitalism to an end. Even within capitalism they have an interest in there being political democracy, which includes the equal treatment of all the subjects of a state (and indeed of non-citizens living there too).

In the end, the only effective and lasting way out is going to be the 'no state' solution, the abolition of capitalism on a world scale and the establishment of a classless, stateless world community based on the common ownership and democratic control of the Earth's natural and industrial resources.

**ALB**

# Public and private

THE RECENT scandals involving the once public, and now privatised, utility businesses such as those of water, rail and gas/electric have once again reopened the age-old debate between those on the left who favour public ownership of the utilities (and much else) and those on the right who think that privatisation is the only answer to the continuing travails of these services. Perhaps it might be in order to take a deep breath and look at the historical, ideological and even psychological origins of these unlikely political allegiances.

Human beings have long loved dualities in the attempt to understand the world and private/public takes its place alongside capitalist/socialist, worker/capital, reform/revolution, democracy/autocracy among countless others within polemical discourse. It is only recently that I've encountered any objection to this intellectual tradition courtesy of a young relative of mine claiming that she is 'non-binary' in her sexuality. Having long thought that man/woman was never a satisfactory duality in the first place I was not surprised by this revelation but it does serve to show the lasting power of this ideological mechanism to both inform and provoke. I won't go into the historical origins of left and right ideological designations but their lasting allegiance to public or private capitalist economics respectively is surprising.

Nationalisation (state ownership) has a long history and we can be certain that the rich and powerful would not put their hands deep into their pockets to pay a tax that made this possible unless they could see some financial advantage. In 1858 the British state took over the East India Company to save it from the disastrous implications of the Indian Rebellion of the previous year which endangered British imperialism and the massive profits that it made for the parasite capitalist class.

In 1871 that well-known 'socialist' Otto von Bismarck embarked on massive state investment and control of many industries including railways, mining, agriculture, road building and, of course, the military. Needless to say that this was done, not to improve working conditions, but to accelerate German industrial development so that it might compete on the international stage both economically and militarily whilst simultaneously making unimaginable profits for his Junker supporters. Ironically Bismarck was also known as a 'state socialist' as well as a 'state capitalist' because of his introduction

of a 'welfare state' which was supposed to blunt the increasing popularity of socialism. To do this he consulted the traitor Ferdinand Lassalle who had come up with the crackpot theory that the bourgeois state was politically neutral and could be used by the proletariat to reform capitalism until socialism was achieved. To this day leftists still use this as a programme for socialism, conveniently forgetting that it was instigated by one of socialism's greatest enemies.

Because of these historical contradictions we have ended up with an unholy mess of Orwellian definitions of what socialism, capitalism, state capitalism, state socialism, democracy, public, private, etc. really mean. In the popular mind we can safely say that many believe socialism to be state ownership of industry and that capitalism represents 'private' ownership. The fact that sometimes the exact opposite is true represents the internal contradictions of capitalism and its subsequent ideological claims which, in our tabloid sound-bite media, is way too complex for their narrow political agendas. Remember that mainstream political parties are effectively PR organisations for the continuation of capitalism and have no interest in historical, economic or political truth. To celebrate the meaninglessness of it all we have two wonderful British examples: public schools are private schools and companies that go 'public' are secretive private enterprises with a veneer of public transparency.

The concepts of public and private predate, of course, the vicissitudes of contemporary political debate. The right to a 'private life' is a rather new social concept given that our species is intensely social and has lived communally for aeons. There have been many who have had to operate under secrecy for religious and ideological reasons but this is rather different since all those in power suffer from degrees of paranoia and

are always suspicious of privacy in others. Hypocritically these same people are always the first to claim the right to privacy and secrecy under the name of national security.

So what does privacy really mean? Is it the need to separate yourself from others due to the shame that accompanies sexual preference or corruption or criminal intent or is it a basic human need for occasional solitude so that the contemplation of the 'self' can occur? True introspection is rare so it's reasonable to suspect that the right to 'private property' and the bourgeois cult of individuality lie more at the heart of the contemporary concept of privacy. Your wealth is due to your own efforts and has nothing to do with the exploitation of the labour of others. This is the lie at the centre of the concept.

Privacy, with its modicum 'control', militates against the reality of interdependence, the recognition of which is our only hope as a species. Individuals and their families locked up in their mortgaged jerry-built houses with security cameras and an inbuilt fear of 'the other' are infinitely more insecure than those who live in communities of mutual aid and respect. Divide and rule is one of the strongest propaganda tools available to the tiny parasitic elite that rule us so don't be fooled that state ownership is public ownership because the state only exists to prevent those who create wealth from accessing it. Any state-owned business will be systematically underfunded to keep the taxes of the rich at a bare minimum with all of the subsequent industrial unrest that this inevitably causes.

We are sometimes told that 'socialist sects' should all join up in a mass coalition to have more power but it doesn't matter a jot how much power you have if you are ignorant of the origins of your ideologies and the true nature of capitalism whether it's in traditional bourgeois form or of the state capitalist incarnation – neither can, or will, improve your life.

**WEZ**



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# Just another day

‘YOU KNOW that’s bullshit, right?’ Kelly looked up from his coffee and gave me a hard stare across the kitchen table.

I closed my eyes. I wanted sympathy, not a political debate.

‘Actually, no. I don’t think that at all,’ I said. And damn! I sounded querulous.

Kelly and I had been mates from childhood, messing around together, and propping each other up through life’s inevitable traumas. He was funny and loyal and caring, always willing to lend a hand. He was the brother I never had. And yet, at times like this, I didn’t actually like him much. We had never been on the same page politically but in the last five years he’d become a convert to so-called “libertarianism”, and turned starry-eyed by the so-called magic of the market. Whenever he got political these days, he showed a callous streak, and it always came as a shock when I saw it. People have more defensive layers than there are geological strata in the Grand Canyon - layers cemented together by the anxiety of living in an unnecessarily insecure and unsociable world. It seemed to me that Kelly had grown to be at odds with his own nature.

I hadn’t intended to call on him that morning. After breakfast I’d headed into town on foot on a mission to replace my old, and now defunct, washing machine. Did I say, ‘old’? I’d bought it eight years ago and I wasn’t happy that it had died already. My previous machine had lasted me 35 years with barely a hitch.

It was a drizzly Saturday in February, the sort of day that makes you feel bleak inside. Passing the corner shop at the entrance to Kel’s road, I remembered that his wife, Margaret was up in Aberdeen for the week helping her sister care for an elderly father with dementia. Kel would probably be at home on his own. I turned aside and headed downhill towards his house. When he opened the door he was looking tired. We went through into the kitchen where he’d been working. He swept aside a pile of paperwork on the table and closed his laptop. We sat down.

‘Tax returns?’

He pulled a face.

We drank coffee, and talked of personal issues, of music and motorcycles and eventually of washing machines. I tried to avoid the topic, but you know how it is. It was like suffering a state of general inflammation. The topic emerged as a moan, the moan hardened into a rant, and I was soon well into it. The machine had

broken down at a bad time. Only a month earlier I’d forked out a lot of cash to replace my failed boiler. Now there was this.

When it broke down at first, I wasn’t too bothered. I called Frank. He came over later that afternoon wearing the same tool belt he’d had for decades. He pulled the machine out from under the counter, prodded inside for a bit, grunted and then gave me a sympathetic look.

‘It’s the...X’ He said,

‘What’s an X?’ I had no idea.

It turned out to be something small but vital. The crucial detail however was that it was sealed inside the drum. That meant the whole drum assembly would have to be replaced as a unit, and that was going to cost me an arm and a leg. It would be more economical just to replace the whole machine. I trusted Frank. He’d been doing jobs for me for decades. He leaned up against the counter with a cup of tea and launched into a well-rehearsed diatribe.

Thirty years ago, he told me, manufacturers of domestic appliances made available a full range of replacement parts through their own repair people and through independent businesses. These days, once a new model went on sale, replacement parts for the old one became rare as hen’s teeth. Not that it often made any difference. In washing machines, it was common practice, these days, to spot-weld the drums, sealing components inside them and making them inaccessible when they failed. Customers were forced to buy new machines while their existing ones were still largely in good working order. Frank looked me straight in the eyes and grimaced. I nodded. I’d heard a depressingly similar story from the Gas Safe engineer who had been unable to source parts for my boiler.

After I’d shown Frank out, I got online and checked out a number of consumer magazines and independent repair companies. I was soon scribbling away in a notebook. The average life of a washing machine these days is seven years. Seven! Apart from the expense to the customer this represented immense wastage of resources and employees’ labour when they could have been doing something more useful. ‘Criminal!’ Frank had called it. Independent maintenance companies were reporting components designed to break down after a certain number of washes (a remarkably small number in some cases).

Kel sat listening while I spilled all this out across the table. He looked increasingly

sceptical. This was going to result in an argument, but I was too far gone to stop.

‘Planned obsolescence is everywhere these days’ I said.

My words worked on him like some kind of dark magic.

‘C’mon, that’s left-wing bullshit,’ he said. He was trying hard to keep his tone moderate but there was a snarl in his voice.

We had hit a familiar impasse. Kel wore Free-Market Economic Theory like a cloak of invulnerability. I often wondered in these moments how our friendship survived. I gave him a crooked look.

‘It makes no sense,’ he said, spreading his hands. ‘Why would a business do that? Companies aren’t stupid. If something ends up being a piece of junk, who’s going to buy it again?’ He stopped and stared at me. ‘We’ve been through this before...’

‘Yes we have.’ I sighed. ‘There’s no point pretending it doesn’t happen when it plainly does. What about the Phoebus Cartel?’

‘Not that again! Socialists always trot that one out.’

‘And that kinda means it didn’t happen?’

‘It only lasted a few years.’

‘That’s not true!’

The doings of the Phoebus Cartel are well recorded and it’s an often quoted example of ‘planned obsolescence’. In 1925 light bulb manufacturers across America, Europe and Japan got together and agreed to make bulbs that lasted a maximum of 1,000 hours, despite their having lasted up to 2,500 hours before that time. The cartel was intended to last 30 years, but was forced to break up in 1939 at the onset of war. For a long time after the war, however, manufacturers continued independently to produce bulbs designed to fail after 1,000 hours. Even without the discipline of the cartel, they realised it was both individually and collectively in their interests (and very much against the interests of their customers) to carry on doing this. An individual company might win more customers by doubling the life of its bulbs, but they would sell only half the number they had before, not just to new customers but to their existing ones as well. And if one company did it, capitalism being a competitive system, other companies would be forced to follow suit. Kel’s idealised formula for how perfectly the market works in the customer’s interest failed to represent reality.

He scowled at me. ‘Washing machines don’t last as long these days because customers want cheaper products, so that’s

what they get. What do they expect?’

‘Well that’s true, but people have limited incomes,’ I said. ‘They have always wanted cheaper products. So why weren’t they being produced cheaper before? And besides, how does that explain the use of sealed units.’

Washing machines are cheaper today for a variety of reasons, all to do with the profit motive and market economics: technology has advanced and the costs of manufacture have fallen. The market for white goods has become hotly competitive in recent years, which is driving down prices. And many of the components used are now being outsourced to low-wage economies.

In Kel’s ideological world customers control the market. Companies, it is argued, only produce what customers want. It follows, in theory and in Kel’s mind, that if washing machines don’t last as long as they used to, then it must be the working-class consumer’s fault for demanding cheaper goods. What a surprise. It is extraordinary that no matter how free-market economics theorises a problem, by some magic it invariably turns out to be working people’s fault.

‘C’mon Kel. Major companies have even admitted introducing all kinds of ways to limit their product’s lifespan, or making them unrepairable. Apple and Samsung for instance.’

‘Apple and Samsung don’t make washing machines.’ He snapped.

I threw up my eyes. It was Kel now who was sounding querulous.

‘We’re not just talking about washing machines. Obsolescence is widespread. It’s a consequence of the capitalist market system. There have been lawsuits taken

out against companies in the EU for it. Against Epson, for instance. You’re clinging to a theory that justifies your belief in capitalism but doesn’t represent reality. Competition is built into the system, which means that if one company introduces a degree of planned obsolescence, they all have to.’ He said nothing, just pulled a face to show how stupid I was to believe anything so irrational.

There are multiple ways manufacturers have of manipulating consumer purchases. Back in the day Henry Ford figured out that by bringing out new models of cars regularly, he could stimulate public desires for novelty and get them to dump their old machines before they needed to. Mobile phone companies do the same today, producing new models every year, often with only minor improvements, or with a ‘new’ look which gets marketed as the latest must-have item. Newness is sexy. At the same time as new models appear, companies flood the market with adverts extolling their virtues, and people start to notice their existing phones are running unaccountably slow. Owning glitzy new things indicates status. It fills the emotional hole left inside us by the loss of community and closeness.

Kel stood up abruptly and left the room. I stared at the rain running down the windowpane and sighed. No matter how hard we tried to avoid these confrontations, they kept occurring. It was a couple of minutes before he came back. He stood in the doorway. His frown deepened for a moment, but then he exploded into laughter. I smiled and shook my head.

‘Sounds tough. Do you need some cash,’ he asked? ‘I’m not badly placed at the moment.’

I looked down at his tax returns. Even if true, I knew it was a half-truth at best. His work was seasonal. This was not his best time of year.

‘I’ll get by. I’ll need to economise for a while. No extras. Right now, though, I need to go and buy this bloody machine or else I shall start to stink.’ I got up, and we walked to the front door.

‘Give my love to Margaret’ I said when we reached the hallway. ‘When is she due back?’

He sighed. ‘Depends how long she’s needed. Her sister is pretty exhausted looking after their dad. He wandered out of the house by himself last week and got lost. They had to call the police.’

‘Ouch!’ I knew that situation from personal experience.

He shrugged and then nodded. ‘It is what it is! We cope.’

I said goodbye, pulled up my hood and walked down his path into a February drizzle. For a while my head was full of messy thoughts and feelings. Money, property, competition: they screwed up all our relations. Capital value dominated our lives. Kel, though, was a good friend, whatever differences we might have. That was something of real value to hold on to. I pulled myself back to the here and now. The road on either side was lined with a jumble of small businesses, pubs and tiny Victorian terraces built originally for railway workers. They looked shabby now. I skirted a few gathering puddles, dodged some pedestrians hurrying towards the station, and prepared myself mentally to do battle with sales staff eager for a sales commission.

**HUD**



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# Unchained: living without money



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IN RECENT times we have reported on and reviewed a variety of books and other publications which have made the case for a world without money and buying and selling ([worldsocialism.org/spgb/suggested-reading/](http://worldsocialism.org/spgb/suggested-reading/)). Some of these, such as *Description of the World of Tomorrow: A World Without Money or Barter or Exchange: a Civilisation of Free Access* by Jean-Francois Aupetitgendre and Marc Chinal and *Moneyless Society: the Next Economic Evolution* by Matthew Holten, are essentially 'non-political' in that they see the new society they advocate as evolving somehow 'naturally' through an extension of social developments they see as already taking place in the currently existing order. Others, like *Half-Earth Socialism: a Plan to Save the Future from Extinction, Climate Change and Pandemics* by Troy Vettese and Drew Pendergrass and *Beyond Money: A Post-Capitalist Strategy* by Anitra Nelson, see the change to a new moneyless, wageless, leaderless society of common ownership, democratic decision-making and free access as ultimately coming through revolutionary

(albeit peaceful) channels with a focus on the need for political action by the majority to bring about that revolution.

Now to add to the list we have *Unchained. Living Without Money* by Justin Fairchild (2025, 269pp), which makes much the same case – and in its own refreshing and plausibly argued way. It falls very much into that first 'non-political' category, picking up as it does on many aspects of existing society and activities by certain groups and individuals which it sees as leading towards a different kind of society – one based on a moneyless form of living. In this objective it aligns closely with what the Socialist Party has advocated over the last 120 years: a wholly democratic society of meaningful work which frees all humans from the threat of poverty and where the government of people is replaced by the administration of things. This book staunchly argues the need for a move from – in the author's own words – 'a system built on scarcity and competition to one grounded in cooperation, equity, and access'.

## Objections and roadmap

It also confronts very effectively indeed many of the typical objections to the possibility of this kind of society. Examples of this are the 'human nature' argument (i.e. aren't human beings selfish, competitive and aggressive by nature?), the 'dirty work' criticism (i.e. 'If there's no money, who will take out the trash? Clean the toilets? Work in sewage treatment plants?'), and the 'resources' challenge (i.e. would there be enough to go round?). The author answers all such objections in a convincing and well-reasoned way while providing evidence of the social conditioning that puts them in people's heads in the first place and showing how these arise from processes fundamental to the society we live in- capitalism. He points to the way in which 'capitalism centers money as the organizing force of life' and 'incentivizes cost-cutting over care, scale over sustainability, and individual gain over collective well-being'. At the same time he shows a compelling awareness of the difficulties of overcoming the existing mindset and of imagining a society without

money, given that ‘the use of money is so woven into daily life’ and ‘shapes nearly every decision we make—from what we eat to how we live to what we dream about’. Yet he is clearly optimistic about the possibility for change.

But how? How will humans go about organising an interconnected world system of living without the intermediary of money? How will they, as the author puts it, ‘distribute food, housing, tools, and medicine without the invisible hand of the market or the coercive power of profit?’ To attempt to answer this, he lays out what he calls ‘a roadmap’, or ‘a framework’, for the ‘journey to a moneyless society’. And certain elements of this we would fully accept, in particular the idea that public dialogue and consciousness-raising are necessary to ‘normalize the idea that economies can be organized around needs and contributions, not scarcity and profit’ and ‘to inspire people to question the assumption that money is natural or inevitable, and to help them imagine alternatives’. We would also agree that, without widespread acceptance of the idea of a society based on need not profit, such a society could not be established. No minority group could hope to lead the majority to such a society until that majority understand it and are active participants in its establishment.

## Governments and elections

But we would part company with the author in his idea that the necessary raising of consciousness can somehow be contributed to by governments. The previously mentioned ‘non-political’ nature of his vision means that he does not share (or has perhaps not considered) the Socialist Party’s view that the unchangeable role of any government in modern capitalist society is to defend and support the interests of the minority owning class – those who do not have the need to sell their energies to an employer for a wage or salary in order to survive. So we see as a non-starter his idea that governments can somehow be used to facilitate this process of ‘systematic transformation’ by granting, for example ‘universal access to housing, food and healthcare’, or bringing in ‘ownership laws that support open collaboration’.

Of course, there is one aspect of the current system of government that can be used to establish a marketless, free-access society – and that is the ballot box. Democratic political action by the majority class (i.e. wage and salary workers) can be the instrument for establishing the kind of society whose salient features are laid

out in this book. But this can only happen once this majority has the necessary consciousness and understanding of the society they wish to establish and take the necessary political power to do that. So, though, in these circumstances, a transition in people’s thinking and decision-making will have taken place, the new society will be brought in by a political revolution and not just a social ‘transition’ with capitalism being democratically voted out of existence. The point is that this new society cannot coexist with capitalism, not even, as the author has it, ‘in transition’, where, as he would like, ‘hybrid models—local currencies, time banks, free stores—can operate alongside capitalist economies’.

## ‘Contributionism’

Having marked this difference in perspective with the author, we can only welcome his overall vision and indeed his interesting attempts to draw a picture of a society in which ‘cooperation replaces competition, access replaces ownership, purpose replaces profit’. To this society he gives the name ‘contributionism’. He talks about education in it as being ‘holistic – teaching emotional regulation, empathy, and conflict resolution from an early age’, and as ‘no longer preparation for a career’ but ‘preparation for a life of meaning, contribution, and community’, teaching ‘people to care, to think, to connect, and to act, and nurturing ‘potential, curiosity, and joy’. As for economic organisation, he lays down, in broad terms, that ‘planning and transparency replace pricing’, but also offers much more detailed proposals, stating, for example, that ‘without markets, goods must be distributed differently’, with ‘direct resource allocation’. Some ‘working models’ he puts forward are ‘centralized or decentralized hubs where people access food, clothing, tools, or medical supplies based on need’, ‘digital or in-person boards where people list what they need and what they can offer with matching taking place automatically or through community coordination’, and ‘rotational use systems’ where ‘items like cars, equipment, or appliances are used on a rotating basis, tracked by open systems’. He stresses the potential of automation and AI in this process, whereby ‘resource use is tracked, shared, and constantly rebalanced to reflect actual needs, not artificial demand’. And sharing our own insistence on fully democratic organisation and decision-making, he goes on: ‘Decisions are made publicly. Everyone has a voice. Governance becomes a tool of the people’. And all this with ‘no cash, no boss—just shared trust and transparent systems.’

## Wide-ranging

He has thought-provoking insights into a range of other areas too. Examples of this are the forms that art, culture and creativity would take in his ‘contributionist’ society and how ‘crime and punishment’ would be approached (‘justice is no longer synonymous with punishment’ but ‘becomes restorative—focused on healing harm— and transformative—focused on changing the conditions that created it’, and ‘without a system of winners and losers, the desperation that drives theft, fraud, and exploitation fades’). He recognises of course that no human society can eliminate all disputes between groups or individuals (‘a moneyless society does not assume perfection’), but he has clearly reflected closely on how dispute resolution in the society he is arguing for might be managed and his views on conflict resolution are nothing if not instructive and broadly summed up in the insistence that such resolution should be ‘rooted in values of restoration and community’.

In a relatively short space, it is difficult to do full justice to the wide-ranging exposition of ideas that this book presents. However, to give some idea of both its depth and breadth, we would draw attention to examples both of the trenchant nature of the author’s overall take on capitalism and of his characterisation of some of the salient features of the ‘contributionism’ (we would call it ‘socialism’) which he advocates to replace it. So, it is worth quoting the following: ‘While capitalism has generated immense material wealth and technological progress, it also rewards exploitation and short-term thinking. It incentivizes cost-cutting over care, scale over sustainability, and individual gain over collective well-being’; ‘Without money, work becomes cooperative by necessity ... Instead of rigid hierarchies, decision-making is decentralized and democratic. Projects are launched based on needs, and people opt in where their interests and abilities align’; and ‘without profit pressure, decisions can center on resource stewardship, renewable energy, and ecological balance—not quarterly returns. Finally, as the author also writes: ‘A moneyless society doesn’t claim to be perfect. But it directly addresses the root issues [of] inequality, alienation, and environmental ruin.’

**HKM**

# Justice isn't for us



Credit: Adobe Stock

WE LOVE watching cop shows where the rugged dick wins. The bad guy gets caught, everyone breathes a sigh of relief, and law and order are secured for another day, again. The detective's a heavy drinking, chain-smoking, emotionally wrecked mess, but somehow they get the bad guy. Usually some rich, powerful bastard who almost gets away with it, but justice wins in the final act. We get to feel good. Satisfied.

But that's not how it works in real life. For the working class the justice system doesn't exist to deliver truth or fairness. It's a system, a system under capital, a system that serves capital. It protects property, not people. It punishes survival. It targets the working class, the dispossessed, the traumatised those who've already been hurt by other material conditions this system throws at them.

The real bad guys; wife-beaters, rapists, the corrupt bosses, the violent cops, they often walk free. Or they don't even get looked at.

The victims? They're ignored, re-traumatised through the courts, blamed, left to pick up the pieces with no support.

Let's have the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth: most 'crime' is shaped by class and trauma. People with Borderline Personality Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Complex PTSD ... people who've been through it, are

more likely to end up in front of a judge than behind a desk. And when the harm is personal – sexual assault, domestic abuse, assault, the eyes of the system glaze over. Victims are told to report online, just trust the police, wait for justice, hope the Crown Prosecution Service thinks its viable... but 'justice' almost never comes. And when the abuser is the police? Only then, when it's inescapably public, when it's PC Wayne Couzens, murderer and rapist, enabled by his position as a police constable, does the system act. It feels more like it's PR.

Scotland Yard recently declared violence against women and girls to be a national epidemic. Where was that energy before it became another Met. Police media scandal? Survivors have been shouting into the void for decades. Justice isn't something you find in a courtroom, not under this system.

Movements like MeToo (the campaign against sexual abuse) show the cracks — how deep the rot goes. But even they hit a wall. Restorative justice circles gain popularity, then vanish again or end up doing more harm than good because they are operated by the enthusiastic but unqualified. We need systemic change, but the structures we live under fight revolution in every way.

The system fails over and over: the murder of Stephen Lawrence and the Met's decades-long cover-up; the brutal

killing of Sarah Everard by a serving officer, known as 'The Rapist' among the force. Survivors of rape still face a system where only one percent of reported cases lead to charges. The Grenfell fire exposed how working-class lives are treated as disposable, wrapped in flammable cladding and sacrificed for profit. The Hillsborough disaster showed how the state lies to protect itself while victims' families are left to fight for truth alone. These aren't one-offs — they're symptoms of a system doing exactly what it was built to do: protect power, property, and profit.

So what does socialism offer? Not more punishment. Not longer sentences. Not more cops with better PR. Socialism means we stop asking a broken system to fix what it's built to ignore. It means no one has to live in the material conditions that cause crime in the first instance: poverty, trauma, insecurity, isolation. It's built so that people who've been harmed are actually cared for. And people who've done harm are made to take responsibility, not locked in a cage, but made to understand, repair, change.

'Justice' under capitalism tends to protect power and often reinforces it. We've seen enough to know the courts won't save us. But we also know that we're not powerless and can bring change. This starts when we stop pretending this system works and start building something better ourselves.

**A.T.**

# How Labour changed

ORIGINALLY FORMED in 1906 as a trade union pressure group in parliament, in 1918 the Labour Party adopted as its long-term aim a nationalised economy. This, together with a redistribution of wealth to create a less unequal society, was to be achieved gradually by measures taken by a succession of Labour governments.

This strategy — Labourism — failed, and how! Instead of Labour gradually changing capitalism, it was capitalism that gradually changed Labour. Learning from the experience of being in government, that the only way capitalism can run is as an economic system driven by profit-making and that this has to be given priority, Labour gradually evolved from an alleged labour party into an avowed capitalist party.

Here is how it happened.

1. **1906.** 29 trade unionist MPs elected with Liberal support constitute themselves as the parliamentary Labour Party.
2. **1918.** The party adopts a new constitution, Clause Four of which reads: 'To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production,

and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service'.

3. **1929.** An amendment added 'distribution and exchange', spelling out that nationalisation (state capitalism), not socialism, was what was envisaged. ([www.spokesmanbooks.com/Spokesman/PDF/109Webb.pdf](http://www.spokesmanbooks.com/Spokesman/PDF/109Webb.pdf))
4. **1935.** 'A Labour government, therefore, not only by the transference of industry from profit-making for the few to the service of the many, but also by taxation, will work to reduce the purchasing power of the wealthier classes, while by wage increases and by the provision of social services it will expand the purchasing power of the masses' (Clement Attlee, *Will and the Way to Socialism*, p. 42).
5. **1945.** General election manifesto: 'The Labour Party is a Socialist Party, and proud of it. Its ultimate purpose at home is the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain.'
6. **1956.** Labour intellectual Anthony Crosland published *The Future of Socialism* in which he argued that the aim of a more equal distribution of wealth did not require the nationalisation of industry.
7. **1959.** Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell proposes to abandon Clause Four but

this is turned down by the Labour Party conference.

8. **1974.** February general election manifesto: 'It is indeed our intention to (a) bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families'.
9. **1995.** New Clause Four adopted: 'A dynamic economy, serving the public interest, in which the enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition are joined with the forces of partnership and co-operation to produce the wealth the nation needs and the opportunity for all to work and prosper with a thriving private sector and high quality public services where those undertakings essential to the common good are either owned by the public or accountable to them'.
10. **2024.** 'Labour is the party of business' (Starmer) ([www.france24.com/en/live-news/20240201-labour-is-the-party-of-business-uk-s-starmer-tells-corporate-bigwigs](http://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20240201-labour-is-the-party-of-business-uk-s-starmer-tells-corporate-bigwigs)). 'Be in no doubt, we will campaign as a pro-business party — and we will govern as a pro-business party.' ([labour.org.uk/updates/press-releases/rachel-reeves-speech-at-labours-business-conference/](http://labour.org.uk/updates/press-releases/rachel-reeves-speech-at-labours-business-conference/))

## Revolution

REVOLUTION *n.* In the political sense, a word which inspires dread in those who even passively support the status quo in a society, *ie*, most people — the rich through fear of dispossession, the poor through fear of violence and instability.

In fact, in history, political revolutions have arguably *saved* the poor from violence more than they have subjected them to it. Such examples would be where revolution has shortened or ended war, by overthrowing the rulers making the war — as in the case of Russia in 1917, where the mass slaughter on the eastern front was brought to a halt by the action of the soldiers themselves and their fellow workers at home. *Disobedience* and *mutiny*, often signs of approaching revolution, have thus saved lives.

However, revolution in the popular imagination (mostly drawn from the violence and turbulence of the minority revolutions of France and Russia, which

freed the capitalist minority class from the restraints of feudal and semi-feudal monarchy) is not what socialists mean by the word revolution. Indeed, had these minority revolutions not been symptomatic of revolution in the economic basis of society, but merely political, socialists would not even call them revolutions at all.

Hence, whereas the French and the Russian, and the English, revolutions *were* revolutions, the so-called American Revolution was not, but merely a war for the independence of the colonial capitalists from the British capitalist state. It did not change the basis of colonial society, which remained capitalism. This is also true of national uprisings miscalled 'revolutions' which are simply the result of capitalist quarrels between national factions or between colonial and national factions for the control of capitalist loot.

All revolutions hitherto have been *minority class* revolutions, and hence marked by violence, as former classes of society have been expunged and others become ascendant. The revolutionary

minority in all cases have *made use of* the majority in order to seize power, but the majority has yet to make its revolution.

With only two classes remaining in society, the 1 percent capitalist class who exclusively own the means of production and the 99 percent working class who are thus compelled to work for them, the socialist revolution will be the revolution of the majority of humankind. Since this can only happen when the majority are conscious and desire it, violence will not be necessary, unlike the minority class revolutions of the past.

The means for peaceful majority revolution have long existed in parliamentary bourgeois democracies, namely the ballot.

This political act will be the formality that will liberate the transformation, already long since waiting in the wings, of the economic basis of society in the interest of all — hence, real *revolution*.

**A.W.**

## Lord Desai's retort

THE *Times's* obituary (4 August) of the economist Lord Desai who died at the end of July recounted the following anecdote: "Marx wasn't against home ownership. In fact he owned his own house," Desai insisted when challenged about his own two properties. What Marx was against, he added, was using property to exploit workers. "Marx had no objection to the ownership of consumer durables".

The person who challenged him was being silly as nobody can seriously think that the 'common ownership' and 'abolition of private property' that socialists such as Marx advocated meant the common ownership of personal possessions. As Desai pointed out, Marx was objecting to the ownership and use of productive resources to exploit workers by the owners appropriating as theirs a portion of what workers produced.

As the *Communist Manifesto* put it: 'The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property. (...) Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society; all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labour of others by means

of such appropriations'.

As a lecturer and author of a number of books on Marxian economics (even if he didn't really agree with them), Desai could also have referred his challenger to the passage at the end of the penultimate chapter of volume I of *Capital*: 'The capitalist mode of appropriation, the result of the capitalist mode of production, produces capitalist private property. This is the first negation of individual private property, as founded on the labour of the proprietor. But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation. It is the negation of negation. This does not re-establish private property for the producer, but gives him individual property based on the acquisition of the capitalist era: *ie*, on cooperation and the possession in common of the land and of the means of production'.

In other words, socialism (or communism, the same thing) means that everybody would be able to 'appropriate products of society' as their 'individual property' to use or consume. Everybody would be able to take from or make use of what society had produced, according to their individual needs.

Actually, 'property' is probably not the best word here. Individual 'possession' would be better. 'Property' is a legal

as well as a sociological concept and it can be doubted that a socialist society would need a formal system of regulation to protect what one person had taken from society for their use from being taken by somebody else. After all, why would somebody want to take someone else's food or clothes or mobile phone or whatever, when they could simply go and get it from a distribution centre or order over the internet? It is also possible to imagine that people wouldn't need to possess a whole range of consumer durables but could borrow them when needed from a local tool library.

Housing raises a different question, if only because people normally want to use the same living place for decades. Today, a house or flat, for those who own or who are buying one, is not simply a personal possession that they use but also a financial asset. Obviously that aspect, and so the sort of individual legal ownership we know today, would not exist in socialism. Everybody would be guaranteed an exclusive place to live in for as long as needed but we can imagine it being more like 'usufruct' as the agreed exclusive 'right to use and benefit from a property' without owning it.



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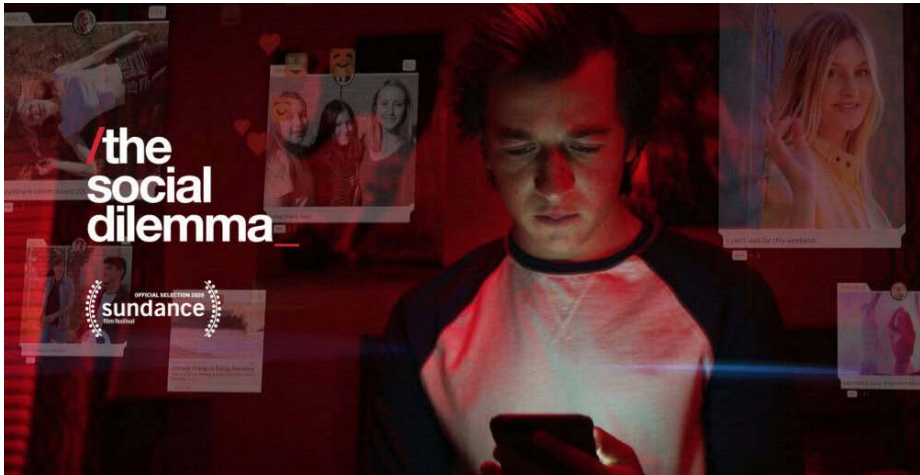
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The podcast has new episodes every Monday morning. All episodes, and platforms where people can subscribe, are listed here:

**www.worldsocialistradio.com**

# Heading Down Stream

Credit: Netflix



TWO REPORTS published around the start of August described troubles for the BBC, while also highlighting the trajectory television in general is following. The BBC itself didn't draw attention to figures which show that for the first time, BBC News has lost its place as the most-watched news channel in Britain. According to the official ratings collator Barb ([tinyurl.com/58cb7pkd](https://tinyurl.com/58cb7pkd)), GB News had a higher share of viewers across July than BBC News (with Sky News trailing not far behind). Although both only had just over 1 percent of the audience share, reaching this point is a symptom of the increased popularity of right-wing media overall. Switch over to GB News and there's likely to be content about immigration, 'wokeism' or ethnicity and crime, its tone not-so subtly reinforcing patriotism and nationalism, reflecting the uglier effects of alienation. The channel has more pundits and panel discussions than BBC News does, and because their banter seems more authentic than the comparatively staid tone of the BBC, the channel has more 'personality', even though the main trait is self-righteous smugness.

Another threat to Auntie Beeb comes from a different direction, as described in Ofcom's annual *Media Nations* report ([tinyurl.com/y52k9btb](https://tinyurl.com/y52k9btb)). Google-owned YouTube has become the second most-watched media service in the UK, behind the BBC and ahead of ITV. The video-sharing platform's popularity is not only due to its smorgasbord of vlogs and clips, but also because it has adopted formats from traditional TV: half its top-trending videos comprise long-form interviews and game shows. YouTube's success lies partly in how it morphs itself into whatever is most appealing to each of us. Its algorithms create what looks like a personalised channel, with often eerily

accurate recommendations based on what we've each previously viewed. One search for a Duran Duran video may also prompt suggestions of Spandau Ballet and lists of 80s fashion disasters. The data about our preferences gathered along the way is of use to advertisers in particular, to know the audiences at which to target their products. Much of YouTube's revenue comes from the adverts which interrupt its videos at annoyingly random points, which on old-fashioned commercial TV channels are at least inserted more predictably so we know when to put the kettle on. Paying for YouTube's Premium service avoids its adverts, but otherwise, once you've got online, YouTube is free to access. There's still a price, of course: 'if you're not paying for the product, you are the product', as said by technology ethicist Tristan Harris in the 2020 docudrama *The Social Dilemma*, referring to the wealth of data captured about people.

*The Social Dilemma* was broadcast on Netflix, which like other streaming channels such as Amazon Prime and Disney+ has a different business model, requiring viewers to pay for a subscription alongside some income from adverts. Advertising funds most of the traditionally broadcast channels, while the BBC has a subscription of sorts in its state-enforced licence fee, although its BBC Studios division is profit-driven. While the BBC tries to move with the times (such as with its iPlayer), its infrastructure, having been established long ago, is less adaptable to the modern climate compared with the newer channels more aligned to newer trends. Despite this, broadcast TV still makes up most of what people watch, at 56 percent overall according to the *Media Nations* report, although younger viewers tend to prefer streaming services. The trend is nearing a tipping point of streaming becoming dominant.

Perhaps the growth of streaming

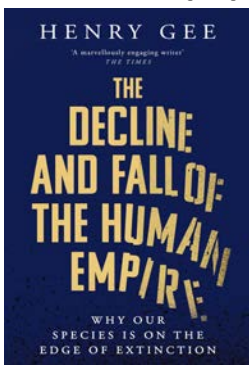
services helps explain why, despite encroaching on the BBC, GB News isn't profitable, having lost more than £105m since its launch in 2021 ([tinyurl.com/y9pjxc3x](https://tinyurl.com/y9pjxc3x)). Its revenue from advertising was reduced after campaigns by groups such as Stop Funding Hate prompted brands including Ikea and Specsavers to withdraw from using the channel to promote their wares. To try and increase income, membership and branded tat can be purchased from GB News' website, and presumably chasing the American dollar is motivating plans to launch a programme based in Washington DC. Its owners, Dubai-based investment firm Legatum and hedge fund tycoon Sir Paul Marshall, have propped the channel up with millions of pounds, which they would only do if GB News was aligned to their interests. While GB News may be a challenge to the BBC on one level, the bigger picture is that both are being overtaken.

The shift in viewing habits away from traditional broadcast media with a schedule you have to follow, and towards pick-and-choose streaming services is made possible by advances in technology, from cathode-ray tube all the way to YouTube. These developments aren't driven by what is best or most popular, though. Because tech and media companies are owned by the capitalist class (or, as with the BBC, by the state which represents them), they are run to further their privileged position. So, advancements in technology and media come through what is most profitable for capitalists. To some extent, profitability is connected to popularity, in that more viewers equals more market share. To attract and hold on to audiences, data is harvested and used to manipulate our choices through adverts and algorithms. So, at every step, what we watch is moulded by money.

The wide choice of channels available disguises how, ultimately, they are run in the interests of a tiny minority. The gradual decline of the BBC demonstrates that other models are becoming more promising for the capitalist class. Streaming channels commodify television in a different way, made more intrusive by how our preferences are turned into market research. There's room for a little optimism, though, in that there's something socialistic about streaming's potential for quick access to any programme, without the constraints and dictates of the capitalist system. And even now, platforms such as YouTube can be used by anyone to broadcast their views, including us: [tinyurl.com/3t8e7zek](https://tinyurl.com/3t8e7zek).

**MIKE FOSTER**

## Under-population?



**The Decline and Fall of the Human Empire.**  
By Henry Gee,  
Picador, 2025.  
279pp.

This book takes a long view of human history. Going back to the very dawn of hominid existence, it charts the rise of one species of human – our own – among many and looks ahead to where the current slowing down of population growth and the widely expected future decline in population may lead us. Extinction, in fact, is what the author thinks is our likely destination, since smaller populations will find it difficult to summon up sufficient expertise to manage the challenges of an inimical environment and shortage of core resources. The only long-term solution to avoid extinction, he argues – and he doesn't do it jokingly – is to branch out into space. He insists that, unless we are able to do this, the end for humanity will come within 10,000 years at the most.

As for the present and the less far-flung future, Gee, senior editor at *Nature* magazine and author of the prize-winning *A (Very) Short History of Life on Earth*, has what can be regarded as an enlightened take on many facets of social organisation, in which, as he puts it 'homo sapiens faces a series of political, social, biological and environmental crises unique in its evolutionary history'. For example, he kills stone dead the myths of current over-population and never-ending population rise and at the same time welcomes migrations of people seeking better lives elsewhere ('the natural state of humanity', as he puts it). This is not only for their own well-being but also because of the likely benefits for the places they migrate to, since 'technological advancement requires a substantial resource base in the form of human brains' and 'fewer brains mean technological stagnation'. He celebrates too 'the reproductive and educational empowerment of women' that has spread to significant parts of the world. Nor does he fail to point out that the way society has been organised for the past 10,000 years (ie settled agriculture, private property, states, rulers and ruled) constitutes a tiny time period in the 315,000-year history of modern humans, little more than 3 percent in fact. And before that settled agriculture period,

humans lived without leaders, states, private property and material inequality.

In addition to his view that 'humans are running out of genetic resilience' (ie, there won't be enough of us), another reason he looks at space migration as a future recourse for humanity is that, in his view, climate change will bring upsets such as flooding, storms and droughts that will become increasingly difficult to deal with and are likely to cause high levels of food insecurity. He points to some food insecurity existing already, but he sees it as having 'more to do with such human foibles as poor governance, corruption and warfare than crop failure per se'. This is undeniable, since, as multiple indicators show, there already exists enough potential food (and all the other necessities of life) to satisfy the current population, and probably a far larger one. If it does not seem like that, this is because, as this book glimpses but does not delve into, the world's money economy (and the rationing and conflict over resources that go with it) denies reasonable access to the means of living to a significant proportion of people. So if, as Gee has it, 'famine is riding down hard on us, faster than ever', this is not for lack of food or the means to produce and distribute it. It's to do with the economic system – capitalism (a word never mentioned in this book) - that currently rules the world and causes so many 'to starve at the banquet'. Unfortunately, this book's unspoken assumption is that we are stuck with the form of social organisation that causes this.

For all that, however, it remains a fascinating and immensely readable piece of work, wearing its expert and up-to-date knowledge lightly over a wide range of scientific fields. It is written with verve, brio and no little humour. Particularly fascinating to some will be its depiction of a possible space settlement in the far-flung future where a hollowed asteroid is the habitat of a city or cities transported from the earth's surface and ways have been found of creating artificial gravity – a project described by the author as 'not insuperable' with people by then having come to think of it as 'entirely natural'. Who knows?

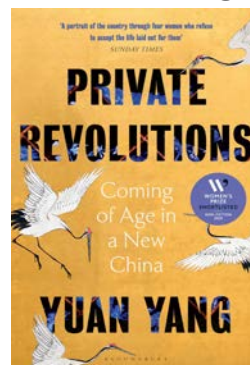
But what about the nearer future, ie, before the time comes when we, according to the author, will have to make a choice between reaching for space or becoming extinct? Well, despite his ultimate pessimism about life on earth, he does have some clear ideas about how he would like to see things pan out in the meantime. He suggests, for example, that the strain on the planet's biological diversity could be reduced by the use of hydroponic farming,

so cutting back on the need for farmland. He also recommends reducing 'meat on the hoof carnivory', since 'by eating plants directly, rather than eating animals that eat plants', humans would use 'less of the earth's natural bounty' and more people could be fed.

But could they? While it's true that the system we live under has allowed a far greater proportion of the planet's population to live more comfortably than at any time in the past 10,000 years, that system is, by its very nature, always going to give priority to profit-making over meeting people's needs. The author perceives quite rightly that homo sapiens has a knack 'for getting himself out of trouble', but surely this lies in the more 'united earth' that Henry Gee says he wishes for rather than in humanity seeking refuge in space. Yet a 'united earth' will only be truly possible once we reject the profit system that currently rules humanity and in its place establish a society of common ownership and cooperative organisation with free access for everyone to the 'earth's natural bounty'.

HKM

## Moving Around



**Private Revolutions: Coming of Age in a New China.**  
By Yuan Yang.  
Bloomsbury  
£10.99.

The author was born in China but moved to the UK with her parents. She worked as a journalist for the *Financial Times* in London and Shanghai, and is now a Labour MP. Here she looks at the lives of four women born in China in the 1980s and 90s, their struggles with traditional ideas and the changes in Chinese society. In this review we will focus on the general points made, rather than discussing the individual cases.

One important issue is the hukou system, a household registration system related to a person's place of birth. This enables them to access local services, such as education and healthcare, but without a local hukou they can face real problems. They may have difficulty getting their children into a suitable middle school, but can try relying on 'friends of friends' to influence headteachers to relax the rules. This system is presumably intended as a way of controlling workers, especially, but not

only, those who move from the countryside to cities in search of work. Children are often sent to live with their grandparents and so gain access to a school that way.

The possibility of factory work did lead to many people migrating from rural areas, but the numbers often exceeded the jobs available and working hours could be very long. One factory was seen as improving conditions by capping overtime to 9pm and guaranteeing one day off a week. Many migrant workers preferred short-term contracts so they could avoid abusive bosses. But, partly because of Covid, the job market contracted, and by the middle of 2020 one-tenth of urban residents had lost their jobs. Yang says that southern China had industrialised and then de-industrialised within four decades.

The most common problems workers faced were 'too much overtime, unpaid wages, workplace injuries and being without a labour contract'. There were no effective trade unions, but there were community-based 'labour NGOs', providing legal assistance and so on. But such NGOs could find themselves evicted from their offices, and activists were sometimes arrested; some responded by going abroad to study.

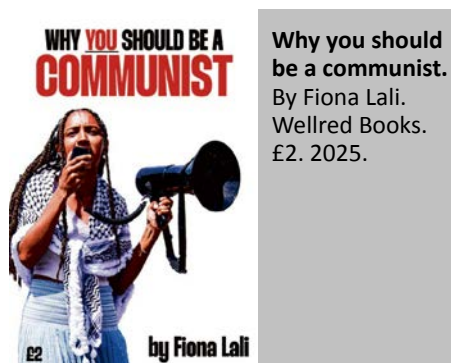
For a while, the online forum Utopia (sometimes seen as part of the Chinese 'New Left') supported the system under Mao Zedong, before the market reforms of Deng Xiaoping, a time when the welfare system was allegedly better. In 2018 fifty students who had supported workers in an electronics factory who wished to organise their own union were arrested: 'China's biggest student crackdown since Tiananmen Square'.

The book provides both general and particular views of what one document on social media in 2012 quoted here described as 'China's path towards globalised capitalism'.

Perhaps publishers these days find it hard to provide helpful things like a table of contents.

**PB**

## Trotskyism regurgitated



**Why you should be a communist.**  
By Fiona Lali.  
Wellred Books.  
£2. 2025.

Fiona Lali is a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party (ex-

Socialist Standard September 2025

Socialist Appeal, the section of the Militant Tendency that stayed in the Labour Party after most left in 1991 until they were themselves finally expelled in 2021). She stood as their candidate in last year's general election and has become their poster girl (literally as she appears on many of their posters). This pamphlet has been written as part of a recruitment drive by the RCP, at the moment the Trotskyist group that seems to have been the most successful in recruiting young people.

The pamphlet starts off with an attack on capitalism and is aimed at young people who realise that something is wrong with the world and want to do something about it. There is not much that can be objected to here. It's the second part — about what is to replace capitalism and how — that is open to criticism. It starts off with the absurd claim that 'the Russian Revolution of October 1917 — led by Lenin and Trotsky — was the greatest event in human history'. An important event in 20th century history perhaps, but in the whole of human history?

We are told that the regime it ushered in, while far from perfect (due to Stalin being in charge), was able, thanks to its 'nationalised planned economy', to industrialise the country and provide the workers with 'extremely low rents' that included 'energy and phone services' and retirement at age 55. The implication is that what happened in Russia in the last century is something to be emulated. But what the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917 led to was a form of state-run capitalism that left the workers

propertyless wage-workers, indeed forcibly changed the peasantry into these. It had nothing to do with communism or socialism. Lali is deceiving herself and misleading others in suggesting otherwise. It is not the path to go down.

She presents the Bolshevik seizure of power as the model for the future. In a section headed 'need for a revolutionary party', she tells us that 'what is required is a party of trained class fighters — cadres — who dedicate themselves to the study of the class, its history, and the theory needed to liberate us' and that:

'In the not too distant future, Britain will be convulsed by revolutionary upheavals. It is essential that we build a revolutionary party in advance of these titanic events. This is what we are doing. And we appeal to you to join us in this effort.'

Apparently, hundreds of young people, of which Lali is one herself, have responded to this appeal. It's the classic formula, successfully applied in the 1960s and 1970s by the founders of Trotskyist groups, to attract young people discontented with capitalism — promising them exciting times of 'revolutionary upheavals' and 'titanic events' in 'the not too distant future'.

There are good opportunities to advance the socialist cause at the moment but to make extravagant promises like these can only lead to disillusionment when they don't materialise. The only positive outcome would be that some will be able to sort the Marxist wheat, which they will have had to study, from the Leninist chaff.

**ALB**



# Doubletalk

An accomplished variation of the three-card trick was performed by Mr. Paul Foot — the International Socialist — in *The Times* of 14th August. After quoting the words of a dispirited shop steward at Norton Villiers Triumph where the Labour government has failed to provide further financial backing, Foot draws the following conclusion: “These are dreadful times for socialists who put their trust in Labour Governments.”

This is coy stuff of course, one of the very last places a Socialist would put his trust is in the Labour Party. But there is method in the madness. He attacks the government in its attempts to run capitalism at a time, as he puts it, of “unprecedented capitalist collapse” for the following reasons:

“Labour’s elected representatives become isolated from their power base, impotent to resist the demands of the system which they try to manage. They mouth the mumbo jumbo of capitalism.”

All unsparing language of course, but we fail to recollect when this “power base” ie, the Labour Party supporters, expected

or desired other than the continuance of capitalism. In thus discrediting the leaders specifically, the illusion could be created that they alone are deliberately perverting the desires of their supporters. He accuses the “helpless puppet” (the Labour Government) of recently being forced by economic conditions to “tear up two manifestos” but fails to note that each one of those manifestos was filled from cover to cover with “the mumbo jumbo of capitalism.”

Having pointed out that such an unlikely vehicle as the Labour Party has failed to introduce Socialism, he uses some loose logic to reject the whole parliamentary method

“The parliamentary road to socialism has turned into another blind alley. The revolutionary road is beginning to open up.”

The “revolutionary” road to Worker’s Control is what he refers to. However we recall that Foot’s paper, the *Socialist Worker* had little doubt on 16th February 1974 when advising before the oncoming election that “The working class has to respond with a massive anti-Tory vote. And that means a Labour vote . . .” exactly which “helpless puppet” they favoured.

*(Socialist Standard, September 1974)*

## Action Replay

# Steel, sand and Salford

PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL might seem to be a matter of massive transfer fees, millionaire players and even richer owners. But of course it isn’t always quite like that.

Sheffield Wednesday are an unfortunate example. They have not played in the top tier since 2000, and have had an up-and-down time since then. In 2015 the club was bought by a consortium headed by Dejphon Chansiri, a capitalist from Thailand whose family own the world’s largest producer of canned tuna. The intention was to invest in players and so gain promotion from the Championship to the Premier League, but things did not go as planned. Recently, players and other employees were not paid on time or in full, causing some players to leave. The Premier League provided support that allowed some players to be paid. Chansiri has said he is willing to sell the club, but wants £100m, widely seen as far too much. Supporters, who are becoming really concerned about Wednesday’s survival, displayed a flag with Chansiri depicted as Del Boy from *Only Fools and Horses*.

Lower down the pyramid, Morecambe FC have been suspended from the National League (the fifth level) after the owner failed to sell the club. The players could not train, the academy no longer functioned, and things looked very bleak. After a number of years in the Football

League (including some in League One), Morecambe were relegated from League Two at the end of last season. Jason Whittingham, the owner, has been under pressure to sell but could not find a buyer. Supporters fear for the club’s existence, and local businesses and community groups are worried too about the income and facilities that the club provides, as well as the entertainment. In the words of one supporter, ‘We might win, lose, or draw – the result doesn’t really matter. We’ve never let football get in the way of a good day out.’ At the time of writing, though, it appears that a sale has been agreed.

Nor are such problems confined to

football. Rugby league club Salford Red Devils have won just two of twenty-one games this season. They were forced to play a number of loan players against Hull FC and conceded 80 points, after a number of top players left and wages were paid late. The owners, who bought the club at the start of the season, have maintained that they are committed to the club, but supporters are again dubious and very worried.

Sport is about trophies and success and the enjoyment of following a team, but financial issues often intrude into the good times.

**PB**



Credit: Adobe Stock

# 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.

## September 2025 Events

### World Socialist Movement online meetings

**Friday 5 September 19.30 (GMT + 1)**

#### Corbyn's new party

What do we think about it?

**Friday 12 September 19.30 (GMT + 1)**

#### Capitalism's Big, Beautiful pyramid scheme and the price of freedom

Speaker: Richard Field

**Friday 19 September 19.30 (GMT + 1)**

#### Have you heard the news?

Discussion of recent events

**Friday 26 September 19.30 (GMT + 1)**

#### Optimistic and pessimistic fatalism

Speaker: Darren Poynton

## Socialist Party

### Physical Meetings

**Sunday 7 September • Burston strike school rally**

The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event.  
Church Green, Burston, near Diss, Norfolk.

**Saturday 13 September, 11.15 am on**

#### Wigan Diggers Festival

The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event  
Gerrard Winstanley Gardens, The Wiend, Wigan  
town centre, WN1 1PF

**Saturday 27 September 2pm**

#### Planet Earth v Capital

A look at the limits to degrowth and why the  
economics of capitalism prevent a rational approach  
to the environment.

Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester  
city centre

**Sunday 28 September 3pm**

#### Capitalism's Big, Beautiful pyramid scheme and the price of freedom

Speaker: Richard Field.

Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High St, London  
SW4 7UN.

#### CARDIFF

#### Street Stall Every Saturday 1pm-3pm

(weather permitting)

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

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## Declaration of Principles

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*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.

# You park, we charge

PARKING FINES have been in the news lately, especially those levied by private parking companies and technically called 'parking charges'. A large number of car parks are owned by or outsourced to these companies. They go by various names, for example Euro Car Parks, Excel Parking, Parking Eye, Total Parking Solutions, Britannia Parking, National Car Parks. The first you know you've been fined (or charged) by one of them is when you receive a letter in the post giving you details of what you've done wrong and instructing you to pay them an amount of money – usually £100 but £60 if you pay within 14 days. They make payment simple – by phone or online. You're also given the option of appealing the charge, but, as everyone who's ever tried that knows, appeals are rarely successful.

## Eternity

This came close to home for me recently, when a friend asked me if I could help her appeal against a charge for not parking her car entirely within the confines of a parking bay. It was unfair, she said, since her limited personal mobility meant she needed extra space on the driver's side to get out of the car and this caused her to park just over the line on the passenger side. And as she'd parked in the last bay of the row – the only one available – and the other side was just empty space, she was not occupying part of another bay or causing any other obstruction. It seemed cut and dried to me that the charge was unfair and unreasonable and that it would be overturned, especially given my friend's disability.

But that's not what happened. Her appeal was rejected by the parking company (Eternity Fire and Security), the reason being given that 'the vehicle was not parked correctly within the markings of a bay or space', meaning that 'the terms and conditions of the car park were not followed'. It was also stated that 'parking out of marked bays can cause obstruction, inconvenience and safety hazards to other users of the car park'. So no account whatever was being taken either of the fact that my friend was disabled (her car was displaying a blue badge) or of the fact that, since the bay in question was the last one in a row, she could not have been causing 'obstruction, inconvenience

or safety hazards'. She was invited, if not satisfied, to appeal further to what was called an Independent Appeals Service, POPLA (Parking on Private Land Appeals).

## POPLA

I advised her to do this. If POPLA was independent, surely it would see sense and reject Eternity's decision? But no. It came back with confirmation of the decision on the grounds that 'POPLA cannot allow an appeal based on mitigating circumstances'. I found this astonishing and my obvious question was on what basis could they ever allow an appeal? But it was sort of answered when I typed POPLA into the internet. I found its average score of 1.3 out of 5 on the Trustpilot site together with a profusion of negative comments. One of them said 'private parking companies are the scum of the earth', and another effectively summed things up by writing: 'Comes across as heavily weighted towards the operator rather than a proper appeals process. They rejected my appeal on the basis of claims provided by the operator'. That said it all, so I wasn't surprised when my friend received a further letter from POPLA telling her that she must pay without delay and it had now gone up from the original £60 to £100.

## DCLB

We both agreed that she shouldn't pay and wrote back to Eternity explaining again why and basically saying 'see you in court'. Their response was yet another demand for payment and, after a further reply from us, a 'Notice of Debt recovery' letter from DCBL (Debt Collection Bailiffs Ltd) arrived threatening court action. This, it was stated, could lead to consequences like 'further fees and costs' and 'prevention of future lending'. The amount demanded was now £170. Our further response was that we were sure that a court would see the reasonableness of our mitigation and throw out their case, probably with costs to us.

We couldn't be sure of this of course, but there had been a recent case in the news where a company who took someone to court claiming over £11,000 had their case thrown out and were ordered by a judge to pay over £10,000 themselves to a charity. I duly drew DCBL's attention this ([tinyurl.com/4uranrzz](http://tinyurl.com/4uranrzz)), but their only response was to send me a 'final reminder'. Another 'final reminder' has arrived since. We have



ignored both. Will they take us to court? Well, I obviously can't be sure they won't, but I sort of doubt it, especially in view of the recent publicity about such cases, the obvious weakness of trying to rely entirely on formal 'terms and conditions' without attempting to consider other relevant factors, and also the fact – which I also made sure was drawn to their attention – that, under the Equality Act 2010, 'reasonable adjustment has to be made for disabled people'. So watch this space.

## Money and profit

What to make of all this? Well, first of all, the very existence of a plethora of parking companies whose purpose is to make money for landowners or investors either by charging people to park their cars or fining them for not carrying out the operation correctly is a prime example of how the system we live in is ruled by money and profit and not by human need. Secondly the practice of issuing fines (or 'charges') and pursuing people for payment, of appeal processes, of debt collection and then maybe court hearings are among the many examples of the enormous waste of human energy and resources inherent in the system we live under. It is a prime example of how that system spawns vast amounts of socially unproductive activities resulting in complex bureaucracies that need servicing and in large numbers of people doing jobs that they themselves can take little satisfaction from rather than being able to exercise their talents and capabilities in cooperative and socially productive ways.

**HOWARD MOSS**