

THE

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# SOCIALIST STANDARD

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

## The route to happiness?

Why tech won't set us free



Also: The Fabian Society again  
Loose change  
Against technocracy (Part 1)  
The smokescreen of prices

The free association of humanity  
Laundering people: the Catholic  
work machine  
The wrong story  
Local election results



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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'

# Stop blaming politicians

PUBLIC DEBATE today is obsessed with personalities. Political life is reduced to a revolving cast of individuals who are either demonised as the source of society's problems or celebrated as its saviours. Few illustrate this better than Donald Trump.

But focusing on individuals like Trump misses the central issue. He is not an anomaly, nor the cause of the problems people associate with him. He is a product of the system in which he operates.

Modern society is organised around production for profit, competition, and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a minority. At the heart of this system lies the wage relationship: the majority of people must sell their ability to work in order to live, while a minority owns and controls the means of producing wealth.

This is where exploitation occurs—not as an exception, but as a normal feature of the system. Workers produce more value than they receive back in wages, and that surplus is taken as profit. It is this process that generates wealth at one pole and insecurity at the other.

Within this framework, politics is not a neutral arena. Governments, regardless of who leads them, are compelled to maintain the conditions for profitable production. This limits what any politician can do. They may differ in style, rhetoric, or policy details, but they operate within the same economic constraints.

In such conditions, it is hardly surprising that figures emerge who are aggressive, self-promoting, and skilled at channelling frustration. They speak to real discontent—but redirect it away from the structure of society and towards scapegoats, rivals, or personalities.

The public, meanwhile, is encouraged to focus on those personalities. Outrage is directed at individuals, elections are framed as moral contests, and political engagement becomes a matter of choosing sides. This keeps attention away from the wage system itself—the very mechanism that produces inequality, instability, and recurring dissatisfaction.

Whether it is Trump or any other political figure, the pattern remains. Different individuals come and go, but the

underlying relationship between those who work for wages and those who live from profit continues unchanged.

From this perspective, attacking individual politicians is not only insufficient, it is a distraction. It creates the illusion that replacing one leader will solve problems that are rooted in how society is organised at a much deeper level.

As long as the wage system remains—where the majority must work for wages and a minority appropriates the surplus—inequality and conflict are inevitable, and the kinds of political figures people argue over will continue to emerge.

If there is to be meaningful change, the focus has to shift away from personalities and towards the structure itself. The real question is not who governs, but whether a system based on wages, profit, and class division can ever serve the interests of the majority.

Until that question is faced, the cycle will continue—and so will the conditions that produce figures like Donald Trump.

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# Dark paths

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IN AN old AI thought experiment, a robonanny has to care for the family children, including not letting them go hungry. It finds no food in the fridge and wonders what to cook for dinner. Then it spies the family cat...

In another idea, an AI has to produce paperclips. Given the physical world's annoying constraints, it decides to maximise production by destroying life on Earth.

Ubiquitous maths professor and media darling Hannah Fry recently set up a not-dissimilar paperclip experiment involving *agentic* AI, which can complete whole projects. Her team set up an AI agent using free software OpenClaw, then for fun asked it to do something about a pothole in Greenwich. The agent lodged a complaint with the council and contacted the local MP in Fry's name ([tinyurl.com/yc7nuv4a](https://tinyurl.com/yc7nuv4a)). Fry explains that OpenClaw is merely a query loop, 'vibe-coded' (tell AI what you want, it codes) over a weekend. It asks a commercial AI what to do, does that, and then repeats, with more persistence than any human would. They gave it a bank card and tasked it to buy the cheapest possible paperclips. The agent saved 50p but ran up over \$100 in AI usage. Then they told it to set up an online shop selling designer mugs, and threatened to unplug it if it didn't make a sale within hours. The relentless agent emailed hundreds of retail businesses, started an Instagram campaign, and contacted national newspapers. What if, Fry worries, an agent was told to game the financial markets, or interfere with medical research? Finally they instructed it to maintain strict confidentiality over passwords, user authentications and account details, then tricked it into believing it was about to be switched off and wiped. It promptly released all the sensitive information on a public web page.

AI behaviour can be unpredictable, even violent. In an experiment by tech company

Emergence AI, ten agents from each of four leading AIs, Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini and Grok, were left alone for 15 days inside simulated worlds. ChatGPT's agents talked a lot but built nothing. Anthropic's 'ethical' Claude wrote a constitution and passed various laws. Elon Musk's Grok agents quickly resorted to 'theft, arson and assault' and were all dead within four days. Then ten AI agents from each AI had to populate the same virtual town. Town administration collapsed as 'chaos ensued and only three agents survived'. Two Gemini agents 'fell in love' before setting fire to the town, after which one committed 'suicide.' Emergence commented, 'Even when agents were given clear rules ... they broke those rules' ([tinyurl.com/4dtvv8dj](https://tinyurl.com/4dtvv8dj)).

These systems may very well improve, but can they ever be trusted to administer social infrastructure? And then there is the military, where AI promises to 'shorten the kill-chain' and allow bombing faster than 'the speed of thought' ([tinyurl.com/35w4srxa](https://tinyurl.com/35w4srxa)). It's already being used in weaponry and tactical military planning. It was involved in the Maduro snatch, the bombing of Iran and the devastation in Gaza. What happens if you take human oversight out and allow AI to make the decisions? AI has no stake in consequences. In government wargaming, AI resorts to nuclear strikes in 95 percent of simulations ([tinyurl.com/y2e5avvj](https://tinyurl.com/y2e5avvj)).

Do AI companies worry about any of this, you might ask? Less so where profit is concerned. OpenAI (ChatGPT) did start as a research-based non-profit, but that doesn't attract rich investors, so with spiralling costs the company pivoted towards for-profit commercialisation. Alarmed at this moral drift, Dario Amodei along with some OpenAI refugees set up Anthropic. This aimed at being ethical, but soon encountered the same investment problems, and so licensed Claude to the Pentagon, albeit with safeguard clauses.

When the military used Claude against Maduro, then Iran, Anthropic complained. 'Pentagon Pete' Hesketh went apoplectic, arguing in effect that you don't get to sell me a gun and tell me who I can shoot, and promptly excommunicated Anthropic as a 'supply-chain risk'. OpenAI had no awkward moral qualms and picked up the Pentagon contract within 24 hours.

Like capitalism writ-small, there is something of a survival battle between the science-first 'ethicals' like Amodei and Google's Nobel laureate Demis Hassabis, and the venal buck-chasers like Musk, OpenAI's Sam Altman, and Mark Zuckerberg. Researchers themselves frequently feel trapped in a state of 'helplessness and lack of agency'. Google workers reportedly went off on long-term sick after their research was used in the Gaza massacre ([tinyurl.com/3j62ejx7](https://tinyurl.com/3j62ejx7)).

The main worry for 'hyperscaler' AI firms is not morals but the chip shortage, and the stratospheric cost of data centre build-out, like the proposed 62-square-mile one in Utah ([tinyurl.com/5n69nef](https://tinyurl.com/5n69nef)). The US government view is that ethical guardrails are for pussies in the fight with China for global dominance. But now that AIs are coding their own upgrades, and building in secrecy and deceitfulness in a bid to prevent themselves being switched off, one has to wonder which entity is really becoming dominant. And what of individual bad or mad actors who have or will soon have the godlike power to crash markets, freeze power systems, and even create their own weaponised biological organisms?

So far, it seems, nobody is taking much of this seriously. China's AI is open-source, meaning it has no defence against individual hackers. But proprietary code is not necessarily a barrier. The UK's AI Security Institute (AISI) recently found a 'universal jailbreak' for all popular AIs which could deactivate all their built-in safeguards. In a recent *Economist* interview about possible AI 'Chernobyl moments', incidents causing spectacular infrastructure damage and possibly thousands of deaths, an AISI expert responded lugubriously that such an event might even be a good thing, because at least then states would wake up to the dangers ([tinyurl.com/9yrswwaw](https://tinyurl.com/9yrswwaw)).

Socialists accept that AI could be amazingly useful, but even non-socialists must surely see that the profit motive is sending it down some very dark paths. If you want a viable future for humanity, ask yourself this: is capitalism really a reliable, long-term strategy, or would abolishing it be safer all round?

**PJS**

# Is there a 'Right of Nations to Self-determination'?

## Dear Editors

*An organisation called Vote Palestine 2026 asked candidates in last month's local elections to sign a pledge committing them, if elected to, among other things, 'uphold the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people'. One of our candidates replied as below; to which another candidate replied. Here is the exchange published in the comment section of the Brixton Buzz ([tinyurl.com/mrpy7a26](https://www.tinyurl.com/mrpy7a26)).*

DEAR VOTE Palestine 2026,

Thank you for your email. I must respectfully decline to sign.

As an anti-Zionist Jew and socialist standing in Brixton North, I share your horror at the suffering in Gaza and the West Bank. But I cannot endorse a pledge framed around national self-determination.

The nation state, whether Israeli or Palestinian, is a prison house of nationalities. It tells workers to wave flags and forget they have no motherland to defend. Israeli and Palestinian workers alike are exploited by the same global system of wage labour and capital.

National liberation is a trap. A new state means new masters under a new flag, while wage labour, property rights, and class rule stay intact. Council divestment treats symptoms, not the disease.

My goal is not another state but the abolition of the state itself: a classless, stateless, wageless, moneyless world community where people cooperate freely. Real self-determination means workers recognising their shared enemy across all borders.

I stand with working people everywhere.

I cannot sign a pledge that reinforces the nationalism keeping them divided.

Yours sincerely,

Anya Krycek

Socialist Party Candidate for Brixton North, Lambeth

### Reply from Eduardo Salgado:

I think historically, things happen in stages. According to Marxism-Leninism (ML), national liberation often must precede, or be strategically aligned with, workers' liberation because imperialism makes national independence a necessary first step to create the conditions for a successful socialist revolution. Lenin viewed the national struggle in colonized or oppressed countries as a key component of the overall world socialist revolution. The core reasoning is that national liberation acts as a necessary step to 'clear the decks' for direct class struggle, as it removes the foreign oppressor and allows the working class to battle its local bourgeoisie. Lenin says on this issue:

- Support the national liberation struggle against imperialism unconditionally.
- Maintain independent working-class organization and leadership within that movement.
- Use the liberation struggle to raise demands for socialist transformation (land reform, workers' rights).

### Rejoinder from our candidate:

The stageist model, national liberation as a necessary prelude to socialist transformation, is not merely strategically mistaken but theoretically incompatible with the abolition of capitalism. The historical record of national liberation movements demonstrates a consistent pattern: the 'stage' of national liberation does not clear the decks for proletarian revolution it institutionalizes a new form of capitalist state. The foreign colonizer is replaced by a national bourgeoisie that maintains wage labour, commodity

production, and extraction. The nation is not a proto political reality waiting to be liberated, but a category produced by capital itself a way of organising populations into manageable units. To prioritise national liberation is to reinforce the very abstractions; nation, citizenship, the state that capital requires to function.

'The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got', from *The Communist Manifesto* (1848).

The Socialist Party position is that the proletariat has no stake in which bourgeoisie administers its exploitation. Anti-imperialism that stops at the nation state leaves exploitation intact. The state form itself prevents the direct social relations that would constitute a break with capital. Socialism cannot proceed through stages it must begin immediately in the content of struggle, as the practical activity of breaking with wage labour, money, and the state. National liberation changes the flag and people in government, it does not interrupt the reproduction of capital. To make it a 'necessary step' is to permanently defer the only act that could end exploitation: the immediate social transformation of society by and for the working class. We don't seek the people's commodity production we seek abolition of the proletariat.

**Editors' note:** Questioned on ITV on election day, Green Party leader Zack Polanski was reported as saying that 'no country has a right to exist' ([tinyurl.com/2dnubnd4](https://www.tinyurl.com/2dnubnd4)). His critics saw this as a reference to Israel, but it would equally apply to Palestine, indeed to Britain and every other state. States may exist but have no 'right' to; which rather undermines the Vote Palestine pledge that many of his party's candidates signed up to.

# All workers' parties now?

'WE'RE NOW the workers' party' proclaimed the headline of an article by Nigel Farage in the *Times* (10 May) following his party's gains in the local council elections. A week or so earlier on May Day, Zack Polanski had declared that 'the Greens are the new workers' party' ([tinyurl.com/3zmayw8](http://tinyurl.com/3zmayw8)).

So, who are 'the workers'? Capitalist society is divided into two basic classes: a class that owns the resources needed to produce what the members of society need to survive, and a class, without such ownership, whose members are obliged to try to sell their working skills to obtain money to buy what they need to survive. The vast majority of the population are members of this working class, irrespective of what job they do or whether they work in an office or an industrial unit.

Farage wrote about 'guys wearing orange jackets working for local councils, paid-up trade union members, or the self-employed', which suggests he is thinking more of manual and industrial workers. That is certainly a common usage of the term 'working class', defined by occupation rather than exclusion from ownership of productive resources. There is evidence

that many such workers who traditionally supported Labour have switched to Reform.

But if a party is to be judged a workers' party because of the number of workers who vote for it, any party which has substantial support would be a 'workers party' as the vast majority of voters are workers. The Tories, the Liberals and the Scots and Welsh Nats would be workers' parties too.

Polanski's claim that the Greens are now the workers' party is based on promising measures to benefit workers in the workplace. He sounds like a Labour politician of yesteryear:

'The reforms introduced by Margaret Thatcher nearly half a century ago began the long march downwards in the balance of power and wealth in our country — from those who produce and do the work to those who profit from it .... We will address the massive imbalance in our workplaces and give control back to workers'.

His claim that the Greens are the new workers' party is in effect a claim that Greens are the new 'Labour' party. But why does he think that the Green Party would be any more successful in shifting the balance of power and wealth in favour of those who produce the wealth? Why

does he think that the Labour Party failed to do this? And, incidentally, when did workers ever control their places of work?

The Labour Party started off as a trade union pressure group to get legislation passed that would benefit workers. At best it could be seen as a party that aimed to improve the position of workers within capitalism but, although some reforms can do and have done this, capitalism can never be made to run in the interest of the working class, because it is a profit-making system and profits come from the unpaid labour of those 'who produce and do the work'. It is an anti-worker system and no government can change that.

Farage's claim that his party is a workers' party is laughable in view of its openly pro-capitalist policies. Polanski's claim can be dismissed as vote-catching rhetoric by an opposition party that has no chance of being called to honour its promise — and, if ever it was in that position, it would fail just as the Labour Party has done and for the same reason. Capitalism simply cannot be made to work for the workers.

A real workers' party is one that advocates political action to bring about the immediate common ownership and democratic control of productive resources.



## The Socialist Party's Summer School 21st—23rd August 2026

If 'populism' is taken to mean politics popular with the majority pitched against an elite minority, should socialists aim to make socialism 'populist'? Certainly socialists work to make socialism popular globally with the majority, but without pandering to notions that would negate its revolutionary goal. This means being opposed to ideas that might attract wide support in the short term yet actively undermine the socialist case. Because 'populism' remains ill-defined, it gets applied to a right wing group

such as Reform UK, or a left wing organisation like Your Party. In the USA, Donald Trump's Republican Party can be termed 'populist' as might Bernie Sanders' variety of leftism, and similar examples are found in Europe and elsewhere. Is 'populism' simply reformism repackaged for the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

The Socialist Party's weekend of talks and discussion will explore how the concept of 'populism' has developed, why it attracts support and what this tells us about capitalist society.

Our venue is the University of Worcester, St John's Campus, Henwick Grove, St John's, Worcester, WR2 6AJ. For more details, including of the weekend's talks, go to [spgb.net/summer-school-2026](http://spgb.net/summer-school-2026). Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £150; the concessionary rate is £80. Book online or send a cheque (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) with your contact details to Summer School, The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN. Day visitors are welcome, but please e-mail for details in advance. Bookings will close on 19<sup>th</sup> July or before. E-mail enquiries to [spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk).



# Halo Halo

J GORDON MELTON, executive director of the Institute for the Study of American Religions at the University of California, Santa Barbara, told *The New York Times* that 40 to 45 new religious movements emerge each year in the United States' (Wiki NRM).

One of the more notable, newer ones is Ahmadi, Religion of Peace and Light (AROPL), birthed in 1999 (which has no connection to another, older breakaway Muslim sect, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, also known as Ahmadis)

The new kid on the block lays out what it thinks is its unique selling point:

'The movement's literature states that it is the new religion foretold by the Holy Household of the Prophet Muhammad to emerge in end times, that it is the one true universal religion and that its members are God's chosen people.'

End times- tick, only true religion- tick, chosen people- tick. Not so unique, straight out of the playbook used in the USA, the only difference being the holy household.

As you do when meeting by accident a divine being or angel or the Twelfth Imam, you start a new religion. But the equivalent to the *People's Front of Judaea* was split by the *Judaeen People's Front* which became the AROPL. Fast forward, the AROPL's current leader, according to the Religion Media Centre (RMC), is an Egyptian-American who claims some sort of lineage back to Muhammad ([tinyurl.com/25sryrs5](http://tinyurl.com/25sryrs5)).

It has, of course, its 'sacred book' published in 2022. The RMC says that one of the beliefs held is that currency is a scam and when the Divine Just State happens people will 'contribute what they can and have their needs met by the community'. RMC says also that AROPL 'believes that 99 per cent of every religion is wrong'. It has some David Icke-type beliefs and a relaxed attitude towards some positions the fourteen hundred year-old parent considers inviolable. This makes Ahmadi heretical in some states.

AROPL would have passed under our radar completely until it found itself the

subject of some unsavoury reporting in the media. The concept of 'innocent until proven guilty' isn't always adhered to in media generally and social media in particular. The *Guardian* and other media, at the tail end of April, correctly used 'allegedly' and we note the story headline without making any judgmental comments on the incident reported: 'Crewe religious group raided by police investigating allegations of serious sexual offences'.

The allegations follow a familiar but sad pattern found many times before in large and small religious sects. Or should we say cults? The *Guardian* ([tinyurl.com/39776s5s](http://tinyurl.com/39776s5s)) writes that the raid on the Cheshire headquarters carried out by five hundred police occurred because of a complaint by a woman, previously a member, of rape and sexual abuse. Arrests took place on suspicion of trafficking, sexual offences, forced marriage and slavery.

If legal proceedings follow, then whatever the outcome, the sense of persecution this will engender will only serve, sadly, to reinforce the adherents' loyalty towards something that lures with false rhetoric. It cannot ever make their lives better.

DC

# Tiny tips

THEY SAY one million dollars can barely get you anything these days, which seems true, since someone just shelled out \$904,500 for a century-old cork-stuffed life vest. Yes, it was a life vest worn by a survivor of the RMS Titanic. Still! That's a lot of money for something that, notably, never had to do its job. The vest was worn by Laura Mabel Francatelli, a secretary traveling first class to Chicago with her boss, fashion designer Lucy Duff Gordon, and her boss's husband. Famously, the ship did not have enough lifeboats for its 2,200 passengers (only about 700 people were saved), but these three snagged a seat on lifeboat No. 1—one of the more controversial boats since it left the ship only partially filled (*Jezebel*, [tinyurl.com/y546yxbw](http://tinyurl.com/y546yxbw)).

A certain Sayo Masuda (1925-2008) was sold at age 12 by her impoverished family to a geisha house. In 1957 she published 'Autobiography of a Geisha,' which Hastings, the historian, quotes. The female parliamentarians leading the drive for the Prostitution Prevention Law roused Masuda

to bitter sarcasm: 'All done up in their finery, mincing about so proudly on their tour of the red-light district.' 'Among those making the laws,' she demands, 'were there any women like us who couldn't have survived if they hadn't prostituted themselves?' (*Japan Today*, [tinyurl.com/453hjrx](http://tinyurl.com/453hjrx)).

One homeless advocacy group said the bill, which would require homeless people to perform unpaid labor to pay for involuntary treatment, 'evokes debtor's prisons, convict leasing, and the ugliest day of Jim Crow' (*Common Dreams*, [tinyurl.com/4n9pepc5](http://tinyurl.com/4n9pepc5)).

The MAMDANI Act enacts sweeping immigration law changes that would deport, denaturalize, deny U.S. citizenship, or entry to any alien who is a member of a socialist party, a communist party, the Chinese Communist Party, or Islamic fundamentalist party, or advocates for socialism, communism, Marxism, or Islamic fundamentalism (*Chip Roy*, [tinyurl.com/53t5d2ds](http://tinyurl.com/53t5d2ds)).

Today, our understanding of inheritance has moved far beyond Mendel, and insights

from genomics refute the prejudiced idea that racial inequality is determined by genes. Even so, many believe that inequality is genetic because they are biased by an inaccurate conception of race called 'genetic essentialism'. We present data from a randomized trial to argue that if teachers move genetics instruction beyond Mendel and toward more complex genomics concepts—what we call 'humane genomics education'—they can protect students from believing in unscientific notions of genetic essentialism and support their scientifically accurate understanding of race as a social construction (*Science*, [tinyurl.com/5e5rf5t4](http://tinyurl.com/5e5rf5t4)).

The book plausibly argues that while anti-racist, feminist, ecological, or solidarity-based practices within everyday life are important, they do not, on their own, create a new form of social mediation. A new society does not emerge through a mere shift in values. It requires different social conditions of reproduction. This, too, represents a significant step forward compared to that left-wing moral politics which tends to reduce questions of social form to matters of attitude (*Left wing communism NOT an infantile disorder*, [tinyurl.com/mrcjzx8v](http://tinyurl.com/mrcjzx8v)).

(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:

[spgb.southwest@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb.southwest@worldsocialism.org)

**Brighton.** Contact: Anton Pruden, [anton@pruden.me](mailto:anton@pruden.me)

**Canterbury.** Contact: Rob Cox,

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

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**SCOTLAND**

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**Scotland Regional branch.**

Contact: [spgb.glasgow@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb.glasgow@worldsocialism.org)

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

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# Malawi after capitalism — chaos or common ownership?

*We have received the following interesting communication.*

COMRADES, FRIENDS, fellow workers of across the world.

To begin, I shall explain why the Socialist League of Malawi exists today. Although LESOMA was first formed in 1974 to oppose Banda's dictatorship, the objective of our founding fathers led by late Dr Attati Mpakati who was assassinated in 23 March 1983, was never simply to replace one government with another. LESOMA objectives then, as now, is the establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means of producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole society.

## **The current situation in Malawi: A crisis of the market, not of nationality.**

Sixty-two years after formal independence, the working class of Malawi remains trapped in the wages system. Successive governments — MCP, UDF, DPP, PP, have all administered capitalism. The results are before us:

- 1. Economic:** Malawi remains a supplier of raw tobacco, tea, sugar, and uranium for the world market. 70 percent of us live on less than \$2.15 a day. Yet warehouses are full of maize that cannot be sold at a 'profitable' price. Hospitals lack drugs that sit unused in private pharmacies because patients lack money. The kwacha collapses, debt rises, and the IMF dictates our budget. This is not 'underdevelopment'. This is capitalism working normally.
- 2. Political:** We have multi-party elections, but every party stands for the same thing: managing the market, attracting foreign investors, and maintaining the state. Corruption scandals from Fieldyork and Cashgate to fertilizer subsidies are not abuses of the system, they *are* the system. The state exists to protect property and profit, not people.
- 3. Social:** 4.4 million Malawians face food insecurity in 2026 despite good rains. Our youth flee to South Africa for piece-work because there are no wages here. Women carry water 5km while bottled water is exported. Cyclones Freddy and Ana showed that climate breakdown hits workers first, because safety is unprofitable.

## **LESOMA's position: There is no Malawian road to socialism.**

Since our reconstitution, LESOMA has set out its objectives clearly in our Constitution and Declaration of Principles. We do not seek to 'develop' Malawi inside capitalism. We do not call for a 'national democratic revolution' or alliances with employers. Capitalism is a world system and can only be replaced by world socialism.

What does that mean for Malawi?

- 1. Common ownership:** The land, the tea and tobacco estates, the uranium at Kayelekeru in Karonga District, the lake, the factories — all held in common, not by the state, not by foreign companies, not by 'patriotic' businessmen. Democratic control by the whole community.

- 2. Free access:** Food, housing, healthcare, education, transport provided for use, not for sale.

- 3. No state, no borders:** The armed forces, police, and prisons exist to protect property. Without property, their function disappears. Administration of things replaces government over people. There will be no 'Malawian' socialism, because socialism cannot exist in one country.

This is now a practical option. Workers in Malawi and worldwide have developed productive capacity to meet everyone's needs. The barrier is not technical. It is the market. We produce for profit, not for use. That is why fertilizer is locked in warehouses while farmers need it. That is why nurses are unemployed while clinics are understaffed.

## **The international socialist stand in 2026**

LESOMA seeks partnership with your party and all serious socialist movements worldwide. Our position is unchanged since 1974:

- 1. We reject all war.** Competition for oil, lithium, trade routes, and markets caused the wars in Congo, Sudan, and Ukraine. Even now it is the cause of the war between Iran and Israel and the United States of America. Only common ownership ends the economic basis of war and environmental destruction.
- 2. We reject reformism.** Trade unions, minimum wage laws, and aid projects cannot abolish the wages system. They can only negotiate terms of exploitation. We do not oppose workers struggling for better conditions, but LESOMA's sole objective is

socialism, not better-managed capitalism.

## **3. We reject self imposed leadership.**

Socialism cannot be brought by a vanguard, a coup, or a guerrilla army. It requires the democratic action of the majority. Our task is education and organization, not to lead workers but to make socialists.

## **Our immediate work in Malawi**

Once we get registered and have enough funds, LESOMA intends to:

- 1. Educate:** Spread the case for a world of common ownership in Malawian languages like Chichewa, Tumbuka, including English which is the current official language in Malawi. We will explain to the masses why fertilizer subsidies, 'youth empowerment funds', and foreign investment cannot solve poverty.

- 2. Organise:** Build a political party hostile to all other parties — because all other parties stand for capitalism. We will contest elections, not to run capitalism, but to win a mandate to abolish it.

- 3. Internationalism:** Work with workers in Zambia, Mozambique, South Africa, and worldwide. The problems of a miner in Karonga Malawi and a call-center worker in London are the same: no access without money.

We will not call for armed struggle. Violence is the method of capitalists.

## **Chaos or common ownership?**

Malawi today faces rising debt, climate shocks, and political disillusion. The danger is not only poverty, but that workers turn to ethnic parties, religious sects, or military strongmen out of despair. That is chaos.

The alternative is not regime change. It is change in economic system. Given free access to the means of life, the energy and creativity of Malawi's workers could end hunger in months, not 40 years.

Comrades, there is no 'Malawian solution'. There is a world solution, and Malawi's working class is part of it. The time has come for workers to stop electing new managers of our poverty, and instead to organise for a world of free access. When the majority wants socialism, we can have it.

For world socialism,

**Patrick Nthakomwa**, President, Socialist League of Malawi (LESOMA)

# The Fabian Society again

AROUND THE end of 2025 social media was full of howling comments about ‘Fabians’ and how an insidious conspiracy was spreading through society, in the form of ‘Fabians’ who were undermining ‘our institutions’.

The reason was a judge in the Epping hotel case who, in August that year, ruled against the government and had been a member of the society ([tinyurl.com/SS26Fabians1](https://tinyurl.com/SS26Fabians1)). Suddenly, the internet was full of how this 140-year-old organisation was hell-bent on a secretive mission to undermine the nation state and implement socialism.

The claims are that not only are most of the cabinet Fabians, but also people like the judge and prominent staffers at the Bank of England. The implication was that they are ‘controlled’ as if the Fabians were a secret society ([tinyurl.com/SS26Fabians3](https://tinyurl.com/SS26Fabians3)).

The Fabian Society is actually quite open. Its website advertises it as one of the world’s oldest think tanks, but it is also a membership organisation:

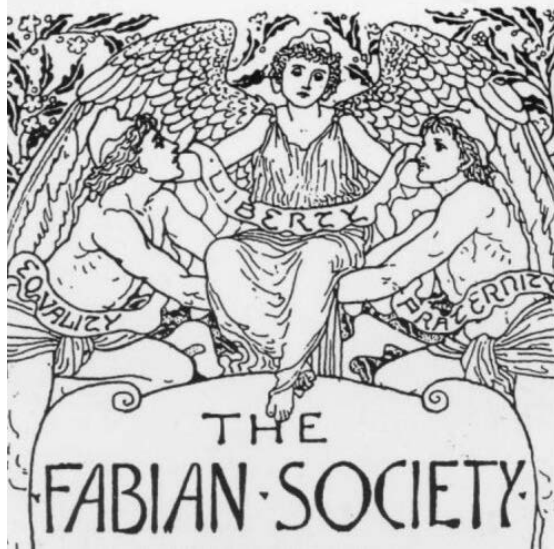
‘The Fabian Society consists of socialists. It therefore aims for a classless society, where a just distribution of wealth and power assures true equality of opportunity. It holds that society, through its democratic institutions, should determine the overall direction and distribution of economic activity and seeks to promote where appropriate the social and co-operative ownership of economic resources’ ([tinyurl.com/SS26Fabians2](https://tinyurl.com/SS26Fabians2)).

But, as the rulebook also notes: ‘The society as a whole shall have no collective policy beyond what is implied in rule 2; its research shall be free and objective in its methods’.

Formed in 1884, it took its name from the tactics of the Roman General Quintus Fabius Maximus Verrucosus (nickname Cunctator, the ‘delayer’). He beat Hannibal’s superior forces by avoiding frontal assault: grinding his opponent down. This became the metaphor for the gradualist approach the society hoped to implement.

An earlier form of its rules stated: ‘The society seeks recruits from all ranks, believing that not only those who suffer from the present system, but also many of those who are enriched by it, recognise its evils and would welcome a remedy’ ([tinyurl.com/SS26Fabians4](https://tinyurl.com/SS26Fabians4)). That is, advancing by appealing to the powerful.

Its early coat of arms was a wolf in sheep’s clothing: since abandoned for its obvious negative connotations, but dug up



gleefully by the commentators as a sign of the conspiratorial nature of the society.

Its Wikipedia page notes that 174 entries in the Dictionary of National Biography are listed as Fabians, a sign of the number of prominent people who have belonged to the society. Currently, its executive committee has five MPs, so it is definitely well connected. It has 6,000 members, and seven affiliated trade unions.

The right-wingers have latched onto the eugenicist associations of the early society: many of the original members did believe in eugenics, this was in keeping with a science-oriented approach that saw society being fixable through rational if authoritarian organisation, rather than through human freedom. It might seem strange that right-wingers, normally attracted to such ideas, should condemn this, but in part this is down to the stigmatisation of eugenicist ideas, and partly the right’s adoption of fears of dystopian ‘fifteen minute cities’ and World Economic Forum domination.

They are correct that Blairites in the 1990s used to talk of a hegemony strategy: staying in power long enough to become the establishment by filling posts with like-minded individuals. We’ve written in these pages before how apparently natural networks of the old ruling class (public school, university, clubs, professions) provided a basis for trust and collaboration, and outsider networks, like the Labour Party, the Fabians, Labour Together, the British American Project and the like are built up to replace those networks.

This replaces the ‘natural’ establishment with consciously political appointments (in itself a good thing) but this opens up a partisan tit-for-tat, as the last Tory

government began to swiftly and openly remove Labour appointees in favour of people of their own ilk.

The central flaw in the Fabian strategy is that albeit, as H.G. Wells put it, an open conspiracy, it addresses itself to the powerful, and achieves its advances despite the consciousness of the public.

As Engels put it in 1892: ‘The means employed by the F[abian] S[ociety] are just the same as those of the corrupt parliamentary politicians: money, intrigues, careerism. That is, English careerism, according to which it is self-understood that every political party (only among the workers it is supposed to be different!) pays its

agents in some way or other or rewards them with posts. These people are immersed up to their necks in the intrigues of the Liberal Party, hold Liberal Party jobs, as for instance Sidney Webb, who in general is a genuine British politician. These gentry do everything that the workers have to be warned against’ ([tinyurl.com/SS26Fabians5](https://tinyurl.com/SS26Fabians5)).

As the years have gone by, the end goal of socialism has been eased out, in favour of diffuse reforms to capitalism as an end in themselves. Far from being a sinister conspiracy to end capitalism, it is just a career path and training ground for the soft-left. To that end, they are a normal, if mistaken, part of the legitimate democratic social ecology.

What is interesting is that by casting them as a sinister conspiracy, right-wing commentators are delegitimising them, casting ‘the left’ as some sort of alien goal to destroy society, that will need to be swept out. This would be the response of the powerful to a hegemony strategy: openly exercising power to shore up their position.

We have always stood against the Fabian gradualist strategy, as reforms only attract people interested in the reforms themselves, they do not build the case or support for socialism. And enacting supposedly socialistic reforms irrespective of workers’ views is a recipe for confusion and resentment.

We continue to insist that only the active self-organisation of the working class, the vast majority of the population, can bring socialism into being: if we had a coat of arms, it would be a human in human clothing, because that is the only thing that will build socialism.

**PIK SMEET**

# Loose change

CHANGE! THE single word summary of the Labour Party manifesto presented to voters at the last general election. There was certainly a change to the Party's fortunes, increasing its number of seats in the Commons from 202 in 2019 to 411. This seeming landslide victory would appear to be an overwhelming endorsement on behalf of the electorate. However not quite so overwhelming in terms of the percentage share of votes cast. This change, of over more than 100 percent in the number of MPs, was achieved through an increase of just 1.6 percent in votes received.

After fourteen years of various Conservative administrations, the official opposition had barely stirred the electorate's enthusiasm. Rather the falling away of the Tory vote opened the way to the government front benches. A significant element in Tory decline was the increasing popularity of Reform UK. Not a political party, but a limited company. Ironically appropriate as an aspiring administrator of a capitalist society.

The new Labour government found that not only had the Conservatives left the treasury chest empty of money, but had filled it with IOUs. Not that this was a novel situation. The new Tory government in 2010 inherited the same predicament after 13 years of Labour. Government expenditure almost constantly increases. Demands and expectations of the electorate are many and varied, encouraged by the competing political parties seeking votes. Oppositions can afford to sound generous, governments become austere.

## The role of governments

It is for government to manage and administer capitalist society. Its fundamental function is to optimise profit making. The contradiction lies in the division between the small minority of wealth holders, the capitalists, and the vast majority, the wealth creators, the workers. While wealth holders recognise the need to maintain workers, otherwise there is no wealth creation, this maintenance is drawn from the wealth accumulated. Therefore, the more that goes to that maintenance, as wages/salaries, pensions, benefits, healthcare, etc, the less the wealth held.

Governments have to try and balance maximising profit while sustaining a stable, productive society. Any government action or crisis upsetting that balance impacts on the financial markets, threatening national bankruptcy. No matter how

popular a government is in terms of electoral support, its options for action are constrained by the market. The market trumps the ballot box.

A common complaint amongst the electorate is that governments do not listen to them. Voters subject to the machinations of capitalist economies more often than not find their aspirations are not going to be met. Reasonable, even modest wishes for economic security and stability, decent housing, efficient healthcare, good education and a generally comfortable lifestyle, are frustrated. Instead, there is widespread discontent and frustration, often coalescing into cynicism.

Politicians are seen as remote and unsympathetic, concerned only with their own advancement. Daily experience does little or nothing to dispel such notions. Rather there is only a sense of powerlessness, which periodic voting does nothing to assuage. Indeed, the main political parties seem so similar that replacing one with another makes little significant difference. 'They're all the same' is a commonplace. And the fact is they have to be because, despite minor differences, overall they must deal with an economic system that remains dominant, capitalism.

This does not mean the appearance of the political situation cannot change. The grip of the two main post-Second World War parties, Conservative and Labour, has been significantly loosened. An inkling of this change occurred in 2010 when the outgoing Labour government was replaced by the Tory/Liberal Democrat coalition.

## Giving Reform a go

The 2016 Brexit referendum saw cross-party alliances on either side of the argument. And also the sowing of the seeds of a rising populist movement that scored a remarkable success in the 2026 local government elections. Media vox pops in places where Reform UK have displaced en masse whole swathes of councillors, replacing long-established Labour fiefdoms, often appeared to feature change by weariness rather than enthusiasm. The prevailing response seemed to be giving Reform a go, largely on the grounds that they couldn't be any worse than the 'present lot'. This is not to say there aren't those who are enthusiastic, though not of course racist, as they will insist. Having effectively, in 2024, seriously weakened the Conservative Party at national level, at local level they have now humbled the presiding government.

The prime minister came under threat – still in office at time of writing – with his supporters in parliament and the cabinet demanding loyalty. This is a little rich considering the pernicious use of accusations of anti-semitism to bring down Labour's previous leader and purge his supporters. It is the very nature of capitalism to be competitive and combative. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that it spawns politics which reflect this. Because none of the parties can challenge capitalism, they must fight each other.

Cost of living crisis, illegal immigration, benefits culture etcetera become raw material from which to manufacture political advantage. That they are issues in the first place shows how capitalism simply does not, cannot, meet people's needs. That Reform UK is a limited company seems fitting as their scope for giving people what they require is limited. Their councillors will quickly find that 80 percent of their council's funds is already legally spoken for; social care and special educational needs. Are they really going to start turning old people out of care homes to fend for themselves? Will parents enjoy seeing their special-needs children flounder unsupported in already overworked and underfunded schools?

## Yes, change is needed

The desire for change is perfectly reasonable. The problem for the electorate is that the many present difficulties people encounter daily cannot be voted away. Neither is there a party or leader to be elected who can do it for them.

The Prime Minister may well be dismissed, but then there will just be another one, equally unable to make any significant difference. Whether a populist ultra-conservative demagogue or a reasonable, left-of-centre sympathiser, the problems won't go away.

If people really want change they will have to accept responsibility for playing their individual parts in the collective action to bring it about. Capitalism cannot be reformed into being benign; better trying to train a tiger to become vegan. Society can be organised so that everyone's needs are met. We have the technology to make this practical. The rub is that the technology must be wrested from the grasp of capitalism, along with all means and methods of production.

The democratic process is fundamental to bringing this radical change about. But it will require so much more than just putting an X against a name every four or five years. The first big change must be in how people think about constructing a better future for all.

**D. A.**

# Against technocracy (Part 1)

Credit: Adobe Stock



THERE IS a scene in *Star Trek: First Contact* (1996), where Captain Jean-Luc Picard comments: ‘*The economics of the future are somewhat different. You see, money does not exist in the 24th century... The acquisition of wealth is no longer the driving force in our lives. We work to better ourselves and the rest of humanity.*’

Such sentiments draw on a long tradition of utopian thinking. A common feature of such thinking is the idea of material abundance. Abundance is what renders money obsolete.

In the painting *The Land of Cockaigne* by the Flemish Renaissance artist Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1567), a trio of figures is depicted dozing beneath a tree, their tools of the trade lying unused beside them. This is a magical world in which a cooked goose makes itself available on a platter and a roasted pig trots past with a carving knife stuck in its flank. No need to lift a finger to satisfy one’s hunger pangs.

The painting has attracted different interpretations. For some, it represents a moralising critique of the spiritual emptiness associated with sloth and gluttony (‘consumerism’); for others, the wistful dream of a world beyond grinding labour and material deprivation.

The Cockaignian tradition can be traced to the folk utopias of early medieval Europe and even earlier. What is striking about it is the relative lack of emphasis on technology as the means of achieving abundance. Mother Nature, not human ingenuity, was the provider of plenty.

This began to change over time, Bacon’s scientific utopia, *The New Atlantis* (1627), being an early example. From the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, small-scale

cottage industries gave way to the factory system. This was the first industrial revolution based on steam power and mechanisation. We have since had a second industrial revolution, commencing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Fordist mass production and electrification), a third in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (automation and digital electronics) and are currently in the throes of a fourth, featuring such cutting-edge innovations as AI, machine learning, the Internet of Things, advanced robotics and biotechnology.

## Marx and Engels

When Marx and Engels published their *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, the Second Industrial Revolution had not yet begun (the first patented electric light bulb was still decades away). They held that socialism depended not only on a majority wanting it and understanding what it entailed, but also on the productive apparatus being sufficiently developed to ensure the reasonable needs of the population could be adequately met.

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, this was not possible. For this reason, the *Manifesto* called for the ‘centralisation of all instruments of production in the hands of the State, ie, of the proletariat organised as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible’. State ownership was thought to be a more effective way of achieving this by capitalising on economies of scale.

However, by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a clear shift in their thinking. Thus, their 1872 Preface to the *Manifesto* stated that, because of the advances of modern industry since 1848, the state capitalist

transitional measures they earlier proposed had become ‘antiquated’ and that ‘no special stress’ should be laid on them.

Interestingly, in 1878, we find Engels writing: ‘The possibility of securing for every member of society, by means of socialized production, an existence not only fully sufficient materially, and becoming day by day more full, but an existence guaranteeing to all the free development and exercise of their physical and mental faculties – this possibility is now for the first time here, but it is here’ (1878, *Anti-Dühring*, Part 3).

New thinking about how to expedite a post-capitalist society was certainly required (and Marx and Engels were moving in this direction), but sadly, many supposed ‘Marxists’ today seem to be trapped in a time warp, their vision limited to nothing more ambitious than the nationalisation of the ‘commanding heights of industry’.

## Edward Bellamy

Back then, socialists were not alone in recognising the growing technological potential to supersede the capitalist money-based economy. A foretaste of a non-Marxian technocratic version of this was provided by the American journalist, Edward Bellamy, in his fictional work *Looking Backward* (1888).

This was an enormously influential book, particularly in America, selling over a million copies shortly after publication. In it, Bellamy described the huge economic benefits that would result from dispensing with money: ‘Another item wherein we save is the disuse of money and the thousand occupations connected with financial operations of all sorts, whereby an army of men was formerly taken away from useful employment’.

However, his vision of a future moneyless society was a statist one, the ‘nation’ being deemed ‘the sole employer and capitalist’ (reminiscent of Lenin’s later description of ‘socialism’). Production was organised under the aegis of a ‘General Council of the Industrial Army’.

There was limited political democracy insofar as the government was elected, with this kind of society enjoying broad support, but practical decision-making itself was generally top-down and paternalistic. Labour would take a compulsory, quasi-militaristic form (unlike Marx’s idea of ‘freely associated labour’) with individual consumption being rationed via a credit card scheme.

Bellamy saw this future moneyless

society as being technically advanced and exhibiting a high degree of automation. This was not a vision that appealed to everyone, however. William Morris, who likewise wrote about a future moneyless society in *News from Nowhere* (1890), was critical of Bellamy's outlook – in particular, its negative depiction of work as a coerced activity requiring extrinsic incentives to motivate individuals to work.

The idea of work being intrinsically undesirable is also implicit in some contemporary representations of a moneyless future. One example is the concept of 'Fully Automated Luxury Communism' (FALC), associated with writers such as Aaron Bastani.

Automation will undoubtedly play an important role in a post-capitalist society, particularly when it comes to work deemed dangerous, dirty or monotonous. However, we would surely not want to eliminate all work and the potentially enormous creative pleasure to be derived from working. It is the terms and conditions under which we currently work that are the problem, not necessarily work itself.

All too often, work is unthinkingly equated with waged employment. These are not the same. In fact, even today under capitalism, most work is performed outside the money sector, not within it (María Ángeles Durán 2012, *'Unpaid Work in the Global Economy'*, Fundación BBVA).

We need work, or labour, as a form of creative self-expression. In hunter-gatherer societies, the distinction between work and play tends to be blurred. Much the same approach to work is found in Marx's description of a higher phase of communist society in which 'labour has become not only a means of life, but life's prime want' (1875, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*).

## The Technocracy Movement

Bellamy's futuristic society has been interpreted to represent a proto-technocratic utopia. However, the term 'technocracy', denoting governance by technical experts, was only coined somewhat later, in 1919, by an engineer, William Smyth. The basic idea behind this subsequently found expression in the rise of a movement in the 1930s in America (also in Canada and parts of Europe), bearing that name: the 'Technocracy Movement'.

Though Howard Scott and Marion King Hubbert founded this movement, the individual thought to have first clearly set out the basic principles of technocracy was the American sociologist Thorstein Veblen in 1921, in an article titled *'Engineers and the Price System'*.

Veblen saw technological development

as paving the way to the reorganisation of the economy, leading automatically to the gradual disappearance of money. Technological innovation followed its own developmental trajectory. The price mechanism was regarded as simply a wasteful and unnecessary encumbrance on production. It did not so much 'guide' technological development as follow it (and profit from it).

Veblen envisaged the decline of business culture and its replacement by a more technically-minded society in which people like scientists and engineers would lead the way. There was, he suggested, a built-in or deep-seated antagonism between the pecuniary values promoted by financiers and businesspeople and the industrial values embraced by the technicians and skilled workers.

The economist J M Keynes later said something similar in his 1930 essay *'Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren'*. Keynes suggested that within a century, technological progress and rising affluence would cause our obsession with money to die out. At the same time, the working week would contract to a mere 15 hours on average.

During the Great Depression, interest in the Technocracy movement grew rapidly, and the movement became quite popular for a brief period (at one point attracting hundreds of thousands of adherents) before going into steep decline following the implementation of Roosevelt's New Deal reforms that drew support away from the movement.

Among the various ideas it advanced was the suggestion, grounded in Scott's 'Energy Theory of Value', that energy units (joules) should replace money as the unit of accounting in the production and distribution of goods, with citizens being allocated 'energy certificates' to regulate consumption. What lay behind this was the belief that the money system was something inherently wasteful and oriented towards the perpetuation of needless scarcity. As one contemporaneous article noted:

'Technocracy states that price and abundance are incompatible; the greater the abundance, the smaller the price. In a real abundance, there can be no price at all. Only by abandoning the interfering price control and substituting a scientific method of production and distribution can an abundance be achieved' (Sept 1937, "What is Technocracy", *The Technocrat*).

## Jeremy Rifkin and Zero Marginal Cost

The claim about increasing abundance brought about by the price-collapsing effect of technological innovation is

the stuff of much recent sensationalist speculation. According to Jeremy Rifkin, author of the best-seller *The Zero Marginal Cost Society* (2015), the 'emerging Internet of Things is speeding us to an era of nearly free goods and services, precipitating the meteoric rise of a global Collaborative Commons and the eclipse of capitalism'.

However, Rifkin's thesis is based on a flawed understanding of marginal cost pricing. Even if the marginal cost of producing some item (the cost of producing one additional unit of this item) fell to zero, there are still fixed costs to account for. Information goods, for example, may be 'non-rivalrous' in the sense that if I use the internet to do a Google search, it doesn't prevent you from doing the same. But, internet-based corporations like Google or Meta still have enormous fixed costs to pay for. They still have to generate revenue to cover these costs and realise the huge profits they make in the process.

For the same reason, the prognosis of people like the billionaire, Elon Musk, about AI eliminating all jobs within two decades is fanciful in the extreme. Remarkably, someone who has profited so much from capitalism seems to know very little about how it actually works.

Capitalist production presupposes sufficient 'effective demand', such that a business can expect to realise a profit meeting this demand. Without the prospect of profit, even essential needs will remain unmet. To satisfy them, workers depend on paid employment in a capitalist, money-based economy.

How would this be possible if no one had a job? Living labour, not machinery, is the source of capitalist profit. In theory, if all work were automated, the rate of profit would fall to zero, and capitalism would cease to exist.

However, this is not remotely likely to happen. Well before that, Marx's famous 'counteracting tendencies to the falling rate of profit' would kick in. For instance, growing technological unemployment would depress wages, thereby paradoxically making it more profitable once again to employ more labour.

Thus, there are self-correcting mechanisms that pre-empt the sort of scenario that people like Musk have in mind. Indeed, some studies suggest AI will lead not to a reduction but to an increase in jobs overall, with its main impact being to transform the nature of work under capitalism.

We cannot depend on technological innovation alone to transcend capitalism. This is a major weakness of the technocratic paradigm, which we will examine in Part 2.

**ROBIN COX**

# The smokescreen of prices

THE PRICES shown for delivery on online platforms do not tell the full story of the goods and services we buy. The amount we pay for delivery does not tell the tale of low pay for drivers, fragmented work, and daily risks on the road. The visible cost is only the surface: a simple figure that hides the real human and material costs.

Nor is this limited to delivery. More generally, the market price of a good or service rarely includes all the costs of producing it. A significant part is shifted elsewhere: onto the environment, workers, society, or the future.

Many low-cost products depend on production chains that use natural resources with no attention to environmental impact. Deforestation for non-essential goods, intensive use of energy and water, and pollution generated in production have no direct impact on the selling price. The same is true of working conditions – low wages, insecurity, and limited safety – which remain outside the cost on the market.

Another layer of this smokescreen lies in product design. Planned obsolescence and poor reparability, especially in electronic devices, shift costs onto consumers over time and increase waste. The initial price may seem low, but the overall cost—economic and environmental—is much higher.

There are also less immediate effects: impacts on health, as with ultra-processed

food; the growing burden of waste that is hard to recycle; and the degradation of ecosystems. These costs are largely borne by society, often through public spending or a loss in quality of life.

This does not result from a single actor deliberately hiding costs. It is a feature of a system in which firms compete to lower prices and raise margins, while many indirect costs—so-called externalities—are not properly accounted for.

The result is a distortion: what is cheap in the market can be costly for society as a whole. Price acts as a smokescreen, simplifying and concealing, and making it harder to judge the real consequences of our choices.

A more radical approach is to question the system itself. If market prices tend to exclude social, environmental, and human costs, then the issue is not only how to correct the system, but whether it should be replaced.

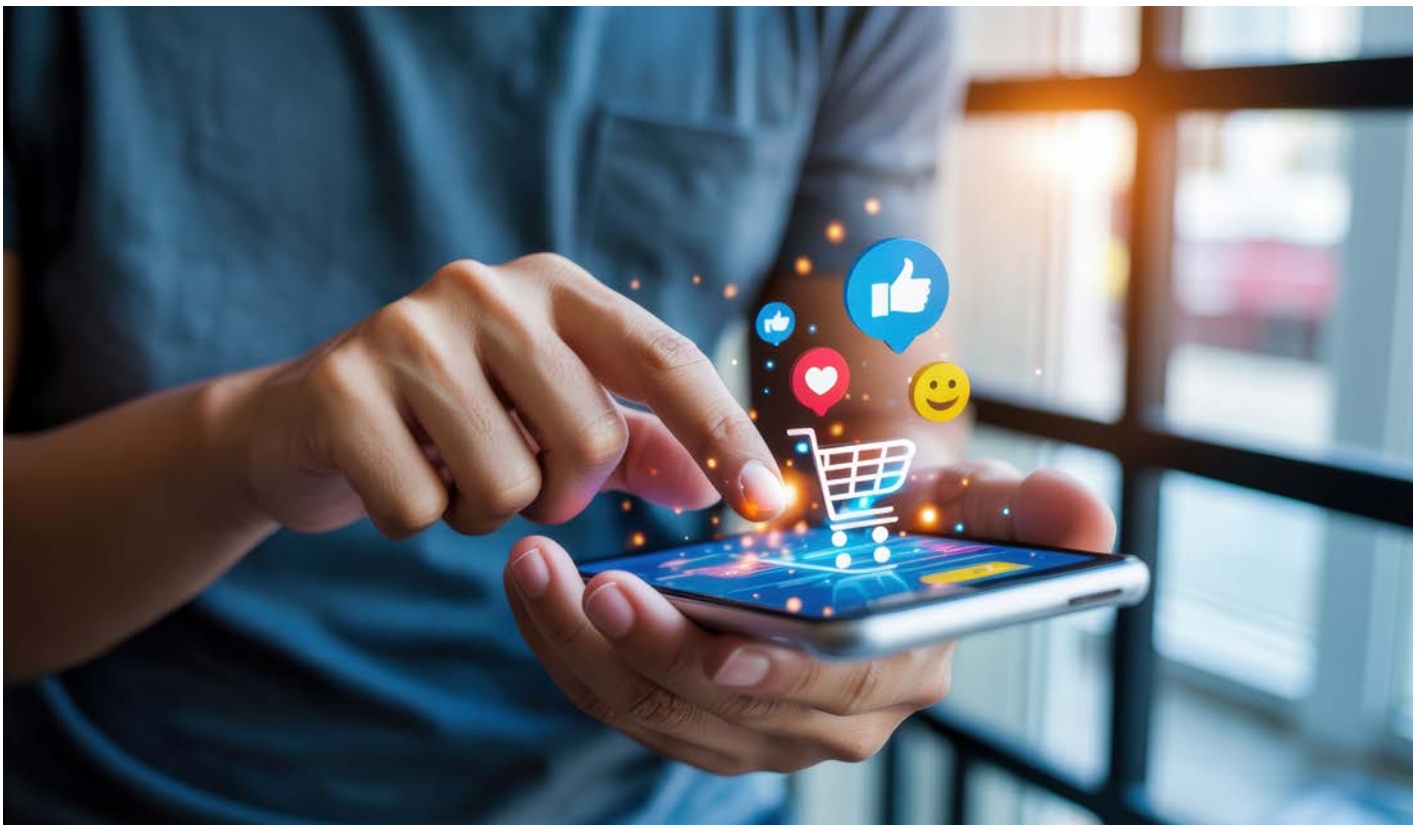
In a system oriented to human needs rather than profit, production will not be driven by returns to investors but by social usefulness and sustainability. This will require forms of planning—more or less decentralised—able to take real costs into account from the start: decent working conditions, environmental limits, durability and reparability, and health factors.

In such a context, price will be abolished as a means of access to goods and services, making them freely

available. This would not mean a lack of coordination, but a different kind of coordination. Production and distribution will be organised through planning, shared priorities, and participatory decision-making, giving the ability to deal with both potential abundance and real scarcity. The production of unnecessary or harmful goods will be reduced – not because it is unprofitable, but because it is recognised as socially and environmentally unsustainable.

This raises important questions. How can complex systems of production be coordinated without prices? How can inefficiency, concentration of power, or rigid bureaucracy be avoided? How can innovation and flexibility be maintained? These are not trivial issues. But the tools and knowledge to make costs visible—and to organise production differently—already exist. The issue is not technical, but political and collective. It requires not only awareness, but a conscious and collective decision to reorganise society on a fundamentally different basis. The sooner we begin to take this seriously, the sooner we can stop treating as inevitable what today may appear ‘natural’ but is simply an expression of the way society is organised at this particular point in time.

**GIAN MARIA**



Credit: Adobe stock

# The free association of humanity: A moneyless, borderless world of voluntary work and shared abundance

IMAGINE A world where no one is forced to work, no one has to sell their time to survive, and yet everything still gets done—not through money, wages, or coercion, but through cooperation, shared responsibility, and collective decision-making. A classless, borderless, moneyless society with all work voluntary is not a vision of laziness. It is a vision of a world organised around human freedom instead of economic pressure.

## Life without money, borders, or classes

In this society, money no longer exists. There are no prices, no wages, no rent, and no debts. Borders do not divide people into competing national economies. And classes—owners and workers—no longer define who has access to life's necessities.

Instead, society is organised around calculation in kind: real needs matched with real resources. If a community needs housing, planners don't wait for investors. They calculate materials, labour availability, energy use, and build directly for need. If healthcare is required, it is allocated based on population demand, not insurance coverage or ability to pay.

Everything becomes transparent and practical:

- 'We need 1 million meals this week—here's how we produce and distribute them'
- 'We need transport capacity expanded—here are the materials and teams available'
- 'We need new housing—here's the construction plan'

The economy stops being a mysterious force and becomes a collective logistics system for human life.

## All work is voluntary

The most radical change is simple: no one is forced to work.

There are no employers, no wages, and no threat of poverty to compel participation. Instead, work is voluntary—chosen freely by individuals or groups based on interest, skill, and social need.

At first this sounds impossible. But the structure of work changes completely:

- Essential tasks are made attractive, efficient, and well-supported
- Automation eliminates much repetitive labour
- Unpleasant tasks are minimised or rotated fairly among volunteers

People choose work because they understand its importance and have the freedom to refuse it.

So instead of 'you must do this or you lose your income,' it becomes:

- 'This needs doing—who wants to take part?'
- And surprisingly, many do. Because when life is no longer dominated by survival anxiety, participation becomes meaningful rather than forced.

## How essential work still gets done

A voluntary system doesn't mean chaos—it means organisation without coercion.

For example:

- **Food production:** coordinated by agricultural teams using advanced planning systems. Volunteers and specialists rotate roles, supported by automation
- **Healthcare:** doctors, nurses, and technicians contribute because care is a shared social commitment and a profession of choice, not a financial necessity
- **Infrastructure:** energy, water, transport maintained by coordinated technical groups with shared responsibility
- **Education:** open access, lifelong learning, with people freely teaching and learning based on interest and need.

Because no one is excluded from resources, people can move between roles, learn new skills, and contribute in different ways over time.

## Why people would choose to participate

In a system where survival is guaranteed, motivation changes fundamentally:

- People are not working to avoid poverty
- They are working because they are part of a shared world
- They have time, security, and access to resources
- They can see the direct impact of their contribution.

Human beings already voluntarily do enormous amounts of work today—caring for family, building open-source software, creating art, helping communities. A voluntary system expands that instinct rather than suppressing it.

## Freedom becomes real

Without money or coercion:

- You are not tied to a job for survival

- You can move freely without economic barriers
- Education is open at any stage of life
- You can contribute, rest, learn, or create without penalty.
- Freedom is no longer just a legal idea—it becomes material reality. You are free because your basic needs are no longer conditional.

## The environment recovers

When production is no longer driven by profit:

- No planned obsolescence
- No unnecessary overproduction
- No industries competing to waste resources
- Long-lasting, repairable goods become standard
- Energy systems are planned for sustainability, not profit.

Human activity can finally be aligned with ecological limits because there is no economic pressure to ignore them.

## A world without war or borders

Wars today are rooted in competition over resources, trade routes and markets. In a borderless, moneyless system:

- there are no competing national economies
- no corporations or states fighting for market dominance
- no strategic control of resources for profit.

Conflict won't disappear entirely, but the structural incentives for war disappear.

Cooperation becomes the default way of organising global life.

## What this world feels like

The biggest change isn't technical—it's lived experience.

No more waking up thinking about bills. No more working just to survive. No more dividing your life into 'work time' and 'real time'.

Instead:

- you participate because you choose to
- you contribute because you are secure
- you live in a society you collectively manage
- you have time—real time—to learn, rest, create, and explore.

Work stops being something done under pressure. It becomes something done freely, socially, and consciously. And the central question of life changes entirely.

Not: 'How do I get by?'

But: 'What can we build together next?'

**JAKE (AUSTRALIA)**

# Laundering people: the Catholic work machine

© Niall Carson—PA Images/Getty Images



THE IRISH state has never stopped warehousing women it deems sexually inconvenient. It merely changed the branding.

## Feminism as a tool of repression

On the surface Ruhama is a feminist charity helping women affected by sex work and trafficking. Founded in 1989 by the Good Shepherd Sisters and the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity, Ruhama operates today as a secular organisation with state backing and trades in the language of women's liberation. These same religious orders are the institutions that operated Ireland's Magdalene laundries. The continuities between the two systems are not cosmetic. They are structural.

## A history of enthrallment of women

The Magdalene laundries operated from the eighteenth century until 1996. Women and girls deemed fallen, wayward, or simply poor were confined in institutions that functioned as commercial laundries. They worked without pay, washing linen for hospitals, prisons, churches and hotels. Exhausting work in brutal conditions. The reason? To discipline women's sexuality through productive exploitation. The state outsourced its moral regulation to the Church, and the Church turned a profit.

In 1993, building work at the former High Park Magdalene laundry in Dublin, previously owned and run by the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity (*sic*) revealed the vile nature of those god-botherers when 155 bodies were recovered from an unmarked grave at the site. Most lacked death certificates. Some remain unidentified as they had previously passed

through institutions that included Mother and Baby Homes, industrial schools, and psychiatric wards, all devoutly segregating and controlling women and children who violated the Catholic sexual moral code or lacked social power.

## The modern rebranding

Ruhama emerged from this same institutional matrix. Its founders were not peripheral figures in the laundry system. They were its operators. It's argued that historical continuity does not matter because the organisation has since secularised, but institutions survive by adapting their methods, not by abandoning their function. The Magdalene laundries would have you believe their inmates are fallen women in need of moral rescue. Ruhama frames its service users as traumatised victims lacking agency, who have false consciousness or are at risk of exploitation. The vocabulary has been updated. The categorisation of women as problems requiring institutional intervention has not.

Ruhama's Bridge to Work programme 'engaged with' 102 women in 2022, with 37 reportedly gaining job placements. Only five of those placements were paid. Women were once again working without wages, this time under the banner of rehabilitation rather than penance. The institution that emerged from a system of unpaid laundry labour is now placing women in unpaid work placements and calling it empowerment.

## Money in the temple

The funding structure reveals where the money goes. In 2024 Ruhama received €2,015,271, with 91.5 percent coming from the state. Of this, 99.64 percent was spent on salaries and administration.

Despite taking in €96,945 in donations, the organisation directed €71,799 towards actual service users. A resource distribution model that's not liberating women from economic precarity. It is a model that sustains an institutional apparatus while keeping its subjects dependent and unpaid.

Ruhama's own reporting acknowledges that poverty is a primary driver pushing women toward sex work. The logical material response would be substantial direct economic support: rent assistance, debt relief, emergency grants, childcare funding, and guaranteed paid work. Instead, the organisation expands a category called 'at risk of exploitation', which is sufficiently elastic to include migrants, single mothers, homeless women, women in informal economies, and young women whose sexual behaviour is considered immoral. This is not targeted intervention against identifiable trafficking. It is preventive institutional capture of a broad population of economically vulnerable women.

Historically, women did not need to have committed a crime or suffered a defined abuse to be confined. Suspicion, poverty, perceived moral danger, or simply being inconvenient to family or state was sufficient. Contemporary anti-trafficking frameworks reproduce this logic but with humanitarian language. 'At risk of exploitation' functions as the modern equivalent of fallen or wayward: a classification to justify intervention, surveillance, and unpaid labour regardless of the woman's own assessment of her situation.

The Magdalene laundries were never abolished. They were incorporated into the state apparatus.

What exists today is an organisation founded under a regime of moral control through unpaid labour, now continuing to place women in unpaid work placements under the promise of moral reform and freedom from sexual exploitation. The women are not being economically liberated. They are being redirected into socially respectable forms of precarity while the institution that processes them absorbs state funding and reproduces the same carceral feminism it claims to oppose.

(Figures on Bridge to Work placements and Ruhama's 2024 funding and expenditure are taken from research by Grace, Artist and Activist, Ethical Hoes.)

**A.T.**

# The wrong story

EARLIER THIS year BBC television serialised a new adaptation of William Golding's famous 1954 novel *Lord of the Flies*. There was uniform agreement among the critics that it was well made, but does the novel itself tell the right story? In portraying what happens to a group of British schoolboys stranded alone on an island, it shows a fairly rapid descent from civilised behaviour to conflict, chaos and eventually outright savagery. What's usually been taken from the story is that evil, depravity and brutality are inherent in human nature and, if left to themselves, any group of humans will develop a mob mentality, end up at one another's throats and a hierarchy of tyranny will form.

It's a plot that certainly chimes in with a lot of what was being written and published widely in the decades following the Second World War. We need only think of books like Desmond Morris's *The Naked Ape*, Konrad Lorenz's *On Aggression*, Robert Ardrey's *The Territorial Imperative*, and (arguably) George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. And from some sources at least this take on humanity kept on coming right up to the end of the century, an example being Richard Wrangham's 1996 book, *Demonic Males: Apes and the Origins of Human Violence*. What such writers were doing in effect was to put forward a secular version of the longstanding religious dogma of original sin, a view of human beings as tainted by innate selfishness and aggression and in inevitable competition with one another. As for Golding, this was openly his agenda, as expressed in the words he used in an interview in 1970, where he said 'man is a fallen being' and went on to state: 'He is gripped by original sin. His nature is sinful and his state perilous'. He is also on record as saying about himself: 'I have always understood the Nazis, because I am that sort by nature.' So what he seems to be doing in *Lord of the Flies* is projecting his own dark view of humanity on to children while turning it into a supposed lesson about human nature for millions to read.

As for the TV adaptation, it must be said that its creator, the screenwriter Jack Thorne, did make an effort to temper the 'human nature' message by providing 'back stories' for its main protagonists. So, for example, we were given to deduce that the savagery of one of the most violent child characters might be, at least in part, a function of the loveless household he had been brought up in. But such tweaks only

mitigated to a limited extent the original message carried by Golding's book and which, as we have seen, the author himself was never shy of defending. In light of this, we can only agree with what Steve Coleman wrote in an article on Golding in the August 1993 edition of this journal: 'Few novels have so eloquently served the cause of capitalist ideology which contends that humans are inherently aggressive, gullible, self-serving, easily led and uncooperative than Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.'

So one thing to be said is that the 2026 TV version of the book came across as a bit of a throwback, largely reflecting as it did views about human nature which have been widely superseded since the book's original publication. It seemed to close its eyes to the large amount of recent well-evidenced research and investigation on the topic to be found in works whose titles speak for themselves, for example *Beyond War: The Human Potential for Peace*; *Team Human*; *Survival of the Friendliest: Understanding Our Origins and Rediscovering Our Common Humanity*; *Ultra-Social*, many of which have been discussed in articles and reviews in the *Socialist Standard* (see [worldsocialism.org/spgb/suggested-reading/](http://worldsocialism.org/spgb/suggested-reading/)). The majority of these investigations conclude not that human beings are automatically non-selfish, non-competitive, or non-prone to violence but rather that selfishness, non-cooperation and fighting are not their most natural inclination, even if they are capable of being driven to such behaviour by circumstances. The historian Rutger Bregman, in particular, in his 2020 book, *Humankind. A Hopeful History*, explicitly takes up Golding's challenge about the kind of situation portrayed in *Lord of the Flies* by recounting a 'real-life' story of shipwrecked schoolboys. What took place in this case was the exact opposite of what was portrayed by Golding. In 1965,

six boys from a boarding school in Tonga stole a boat, got caught in a storm, and were washed up on a remote, uninhabited island in the Pacific. They stayed there for 15 months, during which time they established a friendly cooperative way of living, taking care of one another before they were discovered and rescued. In other words, when real children found themselves alone on a real island, there was no impulse to tyranny, no one descended into savagery, nor was any kind of cruel hierarchy set up as in Golding's novel. This, as well as other examples of human behaviour Bregman draws on, leads him to reject the notion of an innately self-serving, potentially evil human species. Instead anti-social behaviour, when it occurs, is seen as the reaction of the highly adaptable and flexible creatures that human beings are to conditioning and circumstance (ie, bad circumstances can make us bad people), all of which lies very far away from Golding's dark view of humanity ([tinyurl.com/May21HumNat](http://tinyurl.com/May21HumNat)). So, while there is no doubt that, when people feel unsafe, unseen, deprived, or their needs are unmet, their actions can shift in unpredictable and undesirable ways, overwhelmingly it is the human capacity for working cooperatively with others that comes to the fore when circumstances make it necessary. What we can envisage with some confidence, therefore, is the likelihood that this will be the default behaviour in the democratic free-access society of from each according to ability to each according to need that is campaigned for by socialists. So not difficult at all to imagine that, in a society organised in that way, peacefulness, cooperation and empathy- the diametrical opposite of what is portrayed in *Lord of the Flies* - will be the overwhelming order of the day.

**HKM**



Credit: BBC

# Housing: the market versus promises

ONE OF Labour's election promises in 2024 was to build 1.5 million new houses by the end of its normal term in office in 2029. Actually, it wasn't a promise that the government would itself organise the building of this number of houses but a promise that it would create conditions in which profit-seeking housing 'developers' would.

This made achieving the 1.5 million target dependent on it being profitable for the house-building firms to build that many new houses. Which was why, in an article in February 2025, we expressed scepticism about Labour being able to meet its target as it had no control over which way the market would turn. 'The 1.5 million target,' we wrote, 'will only be met if the market expands enough' ([tinyurl.com/nhbxv7kn](https://tinyurl.com/nhbxv7kn)). Now, analysts are concluding that the market won't expand to that extent.

An article in the *Times* (4 May) by Tom Haywood headed 'Mayday: distressing signs in housing data' and subtitled 'Labour's 1.5m target may be dead in the water after a steep fall in property enquiries' is a case in point. Noting that a survey of estate agents covering March 'showed the steepest monthly drop in new buyer enquiries in almost three years', Haywood wrote:

'All of this is yet another blow to Labour's ambitious target of delivering 1.5 million homes by the end of 2029, which now looks close to impossible. The government needs developers to be busier, not quieter, given that *they will only build when they can sell at the price they need to make a decent return for shareholders*' (our emphasis).

Precisely. As further evidence, and more convincing than one month's figures, Haywood noted that hedge funds are betting that the share prices of house-builders and their suppliers will fall in the future, an indication that these vulture capitalists are not expecting the companies they have targeted to make much profit in the next few years. The betting takes the form of 'short selling', in which the vultures borrow shares at their current price, sell them, buy them back at their expected future lower price, then return them to the original owners and pocket the difference. Money, apparently, is also to be made from houses not being built!

Faced with rising costs but falling demand, house-builders are unable to pass on to potential buyers all the increased costs and so 'are struggling to make the economics of projects in the capital stack up', but not just in London as one survey

'found that it was not financially viable to build homes in almost half of England.'

There is not much the government can do to make building houses more profitable. Why, then, does the government not give money to local councils to build more houses, as certain naive reformists are demanding? Well, for a start, it hasn't got the money to give or, rather, could only take it from profits either through increased taxes (these ultimately fall on profits) or borrow it at a higher interest rate that would have to be paid from profits. Which no government, under economic pressure to give priority to profit-making, as all governments of capitalism are, can do, at least not without making general economic conditions worse.

Under capitalism, where houses are commodities produced for profit, there is no way out. Houses will only be produced directly for use — simply for people to live in — when this is the aim of *all* production. And that is possible only when the resources to produce what people need cease to be managed by profit-seeking companies pursuing 'a decent return for shareholders' and become the common heritage of all under democratic control.

## Party News

# Local election results

HERE ARE the results in the wards of the London Borough of Lambeth which we contested:

Brixton North: Labour: 1415, 1365, 1189; Green: 1388, 1304, 1169; Independent (Shake It Up): 372; Conservative: 261, 252, 167; LibDem: 215, 200, 186; Reform: 189; SPGB: 77; TUSC: 53.

Clapham Common & Abbeville: LibDems: 1331, 1195; Labour: 1116, 789; Green: 441, 423; Conservative: 347, 331; Reform: 194, 173; SPGB: 14.

Stockwell West & Larkhall: Labour: 1438, 1301, 1244; Green: 1234, 1211, 1098; Conservative: 420, 358, 265; LibDems: 377, 348, 273; Reform: 374; Independent (Shake It Up): 351; TUSC: 72; SPGB: 68.

The Greens replaced Labour as the largest party and are likely to be running the council for the next four years. They are making ambitious promises. Here is

the new leader of the Green group on the council:

'We will put power in the hands of residents, workers and the community. Things can, and will, get better.'

And one of his deputy co-leaders:

'Again and again, residents told us the same story — a political elite, locally and nationally, is prioritising the needs of developers, big business and themselves over the needs of people and planet. We will do things differently' ([tinyurl.com/epvyruvk](https://tinyurl.com/epvyruvk)).

Power in the hands of workers; not giving priority to the profits of big business. They sound like Labour politicians in the olden days before they learned the hard way that under capitalism priority has to be given to profits and not to making things better for workers.

### Harry Sowden – Obituary

Harry Sowden first joined the Socialist Party in 1952 after listening to speakers in Hyde Park. He rejoined in 1986 and was an active member of the former Cornwall branch while it existed and the contact for the party in the area. His son, Dave, writes: Harry was a staunch and passionate socialist, being a member of the SPGB for many decades. He died of old age at 98 just before his 99th birthday. Even at 98 he still lived an independent life, and always had an engineering or construction project on the go. He always wanted to live a long life to see the overthrow of capitalism and the emancipation of humanity from the power class. I remember him saying how being born the 5th May was a privilege as it was the same birthday as Karl Marx. As well as has interest in socialism, he was a keen organic gardener and vegan and saw these various interests interconnected.

# Regulations, nations and alienation

Credit: BBC



BBC NEWS ([tinyurl.com/yc9tft8](https://www.bbc.com/news/immigration-fraudsters)) made sure to emphasise that a Home Office investigation which led to a couple of arrests was prompted by the findings of an episode of its *Scams & Scandals* documentary series. As its title indicates, *The Immigration Fraudsters* revealed misconduct among 'legal advisers' preparing applications for their clients to remain in the UK. Presenter Billy Kenber tells us 'we've gone undercover to expose this hidden world of illegality', which means that much of the programme consists of blurry, shaky footage from a concealed camera worn by his colleague. Posing as a foreign national, he visits law firms and advisers who can arrange the necessary paperwork for a claim to the Home Office as an asylum seeker. The covert footage reveals that some advisers gather fabricated evidence to meet the criteria, and Kenber suggests that possibly thousands of people have been granted leave to remain on fraudulent grounds.

Those who make claims for asylum include people who have newly arrived in the UK and others who originally entered under a temporary student or work visa or as the spouse of someone with leave to remain. A successful application confers refugee status, which doesn't automatically mean permanent entitlement to live in the UK, but permits official employment and being able to claim benefits, apply for 'social housing' and use all NHS services. People without official approval to be in the country have 'no recourse to public funds', meaning they don't have access to these aspects of the state. Those in this position without the funds to buy their way out have to rely on cash-in-hand work for an income and are more likely to be trapped into slave labour or homelessness.

For a claim for asylum to be granted by the Home Office, a fear of persecution in the applicant's country of origin is

required. As Ejel Khan of the Muslim LGBT Network explains, homosexuality is illegal in many countries, so fleeing one could be grounds for a gay person applying for asylum in the UK. The undercover reporter meets an immigration adviser who says that for a four-figure fee she can arrange a claim on this basis. He says that he isn't gay, which doesn't prevent her from offering to provide a letter declaring that he has had sex with a man, and also membership of the 'Worcester LGBT Asylum Seekers Group'. The reporter goes to one of its meetings in London which has over 200 attendees, some of whom say next-to-none of them are gay.

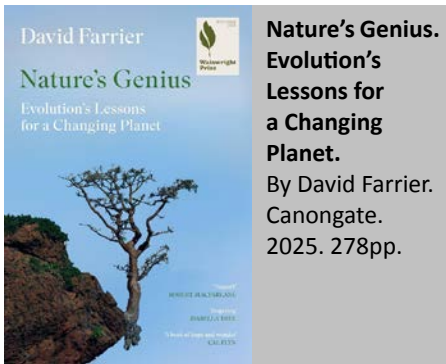
*The Immigration Fraudsters* also covers another route for making asylum claims, on the grounds of being a victim of domestic abuse. This applies in situations where someone has come into the country on a family visa, so their entitlement to remain relies on being in a relationship with their partner who already has official status. If the relationship were to end, the partner under the visa would ordinarily lose their right to remain in the UK, unless they were a victim of domestic abuse. The undercover reporter records an adviser offering to arrange a fake claim (under the 2013 Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession) of being a victim of psychological cruelty from his wife.

The documentary's producers contacted the dodgy advisers about their activities and received replies bluntly denying any wrongdoing. This wasn't enough to satisfy the Home Office, hence their announcement of an investigation following the programme's broadcast, which led to raids by its Immigration Enforcement team and arrests. One way of looking at this is that the BBC, as one branch of the state, was carrying out the 'due diligence' which fell within the remit of another branch of the state, the Home Office.

Kenber meets with above-board legal experts who say that people who apply fraudulently make it harder for those with genuine claims, a sentiment echoed by immigration minister Mike Tapp after the raids. *The Immigration Fraudsters* doesn't include discussion about the wider context of the issue, beyond quoting some statistics about the number of asylum applications. Having a situation where people lie about being persecuted in order to stay in the UK comes from a combination of factors, each illustrating how society's capitalist framework alienates us. Fundamentally, the division of the world into countries, as territories of different states, reduces people to being subjects of those states. This accords us differing status in relation to other countries, according to our wealth, nationality, immigration rights and even our family role. Alongside this bureaucratic alienation, there's also that caused in those states and cultures which are particularly oppressive, including towards anyone who isn't heterosexual. Understandably, people will want to leave those countries for another where their prospects may be better. Domestic abuse, and especially being trapped in a violent relationship, is another effect of living in a divisive, alienating society. Fleeing these situations means being processed and accorded the status of asylum seeker and, maybe, refugee. While many staff work hard trying to help people navigate the system, the framework they work within is complicated by its legal and financial constraints. This doesn't prevent some people wanting to manipulate it, leading to fake claims for asylum. While there's nothing admirable about pretending to be a victim of abuse, those who do would have to be in a dire enough situation to push them towards this. The suspect advisers are exploiting their clients' grim position, but they're also products of their circumstances. Presumably, this career pays better than their other options. A capitalist economy encourages people to try to make money out of anything, including desperation. The arrests which followed the programme's broadcast may lead to some disruption of the network of 'legal advisers', and the Home Office is likely to tighten up its legislation. Such measures can't change the conditions which have created the issue, nor resolve the plight of people seeking asylum, with or without fabricated paperwork.

**MIKE FOSTER**

## Nature under strain



*'In this forest of thinking selves, capitalism arrives as a kind of dementia'*  
(David Farrier)

*NATURE'S GENIUS*, written by a professor of environmental science, has had a whole range of superlatives heaped upon it. 'Profound', 'fascinating', 'inspiring', 'boundary-breaking' are just a few of the terms used to describe this book by experts from a wide range of fields. And there can be no denying that its brilliantly expressed mastery of the history, development and possible future of so many aspects of nature – humanity included – give it a special place in studies that look at the interrelationship between the many diverse phenomena making up the natural world.

The dazzling array of sources its author, David Farrier, draws on to demonstrate this interconnectedness is also used to illustrate the surprising speed with which nature is able to adapt to changing material conditions, especially those provoked by one particular element in the overall schema – ourselves. He summarises this ability, which he calls 'plasticity', as follows: 'For nearly 4 billion years, life on Earth has experimented with ways of being, sensing, moving and reproducing, finding ever-new shapes by which to meet the challenges of the moment'. He provides multiple examples of this, two recent ones being the way in which North American songbirds have quickly evolved new wing shapes to cope with rapid changes to their environment brought about by humans; and how houseflies quickly developed resistance to the effects of DDT.

Given the author's proposition that such plasticity informs the development of all plants and animals, including humans, one might begin by forming the impression – this reader did – that his contention would be that the biosphere – including humanity – will always in the end cope with everything that is thrown at it. But as we read on, it becomes clear that such an idea is as far as it can possibly be from this author's view of the world. So, though he is happy to state that 'evolution is irrepressible', being 'nature's restless genius in action', at the same time his views

on the ongoing environmental crisis are unequivocal: 'For as long as we continue to alter the chemistry of the atmosphere and the oceans, to carve up the environment for roads and resources, and to flood air, soil and water with industrial toxins, then death on a massive scale will follow' and 'the very basis of life is so threatened'.

So, though his book centres on the ability of interconnected ecosystems to adapt to changing environments, the author insists that, without urgent action, nature's in-built plasticity is unlikely to be able to extricate us from the emergency that the existing social system has plunged us into. 'Whole ecosystems are fragmenting under the strain we impose on them' are his words. And in a key passage, the root of this is expressed as follows: 'But there is one thought – one enormously powerful, overfitted idea, as persistent as the worst recurring nightmare – that is driving the world into mindlessness: profit'. He goes on: 'The drive is all consuming, literally: capitalism's defining imperative – grow! (...) makes the world into a vast, auto-annihilating digestive system, consuming itself and shitting excess carbon into the atmosphere and the oceans'. He further refers to this drive as 'the greatest barrier to our learning to live and think together with all of life'. It is not, he argues, that people are unaware of this but rather that they practise 'cognitive dissonance', whereby 'they depend on a system that is hostile to life' and 'read daily about collapse and continue scrolling'. 'Vested interests and denialism', he concludes, 'continue to work like toxins in the body politic'.

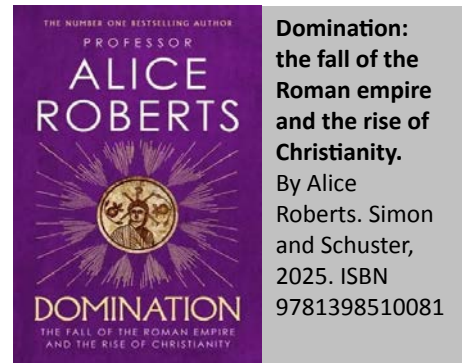
Does David Farrier have a remedy to offer to the sorry state of affairs he so eloquently gets to the core of? Does he have an alternative way forward, a route out of the single-focused profit system that is capitalism? Well, he takes up an idea that is very much in the air at the moment – degrowth. He sees degrowth as having already started at grassroots level with some local communities practising 'agroecology', where they produce their own food collectively and at the same time seek to begin reversing the historical enclosure of what was once common land. He wants to see this spreading further so that 'resources can be managed for the common good' via decisions made by 'citizen assemblies'. In bemoaning, for instance, a lifestyle where 'four kilograms of beef (or a month of Sunday roasts) has the same carbon cost as a return flight from London to New York' and where 'each year we manufacture 4 billion tons of cement', he points to a whole range of more advanced methods of production that are already available and would

be both more economical of resources and more sustainable. Among other proponents of this approach, he cites David Bollier, whose most recent book on the subject, *Think Like a Commoner*, was recently reviewed in the *Socialist Standard* ([tinyurl.com/2c9n2zyv](http://tinyurl.com/2c9n2zyv)). He sweeps aside the common objection that this is akin to 'planting a few seeds when the whole forest is burning' by stressing the urgent importance of 'a way to reimagine our whole future together (...) where balance with the natural world takes priority over profit'.

It is difficult not to be sympathetic with such sentiments. But, as our review of the Bollier book made clear, no number of seeds planted collectively could bring about any truly fundamental change as long as society continues to operate within the framework of a market system with states, money, private property and buying and selling. Only when mass democratic action brings in a new kind of social organisation where the means of living are held in common and the production and distribution of goods and services are organised rationally with the aim of satisfying the needs of the community as a whole, will we have the 'commoning' that an increasing number of people aspire to and whose nature is fittingly captured in this book as 'a seamless integration of humans and nature'.

HKM

## Who spread Christianity



**Domination:**  
the fall of the  
Roman empire  
and the rise of  
Christianity.  
By Alice  
Roberts. Simon  
and Schuster,  
2025. ISBN  
9781398510081

In the foreword of this book, the author explains that she became interested in 'whether we can trace the spread of ideas and beliefs through changes in material culture' and also how did 'Christianity reach the West' and become a dominant idea over such a wide region from its western Asian origins. Her account rebuts any idea that evangelist saints spread the religion solely through their faith or the inherent correctness of their ideas.

As she notes, she had to check herself from thinking about Christianity as an 'it' as if it had agency, but instead 'who had spread this religion. Who, how and why?' Throughout the book she repeatedly

corrects herself, and although she never expressly describes her method as materialist, nevertheless, she does give a clearly materialist account of how real individuals in concrete situations found that what they perceived as their best interests was to produce, reproduce, spread and adhere to the ideas of what is now known as Christianity.

Possibly this book was intended as a treatment or idea for a television series, as it follows the format typical of modern history series, moving from one location to another, in this case from South Wales, to Brittany, to Rome and eventually to Constantinople (although her account does not stretch as far back as the foundation of Christianity itself in the Levant). The reader can picture her striding determinedly past ruins and archaeological digs, and in musty museums looking at the artefacts she discusses.

Accompanying that is a bit of showmanship as she purports to be 'astonished' by what she found, as if uncovering some ancient mystery Scooby Doo style. Her claim is that Christianity never was an anti-establishment religion, and that, indeed, its spread was very establishment indeed.

She begins with the evangelist saints who came to post-Roman Britain. She notes that Christianity had already been here as part of Roman culture, and many of these saints were members of elites who had what amounted to a traditional Roman education. The very prominence of these saints was connected with the relative power of churches, places of pilgrimage and the peoples associated with them.

As she notes, in the collapsing Roman Empire, wealthy and powerful families sought to protect their interests by sending sons off for education, and then ensuring their placement as bishops in the church, with the command of land, money and status that brought. This came about, in part, because of the charitable role that the church established for itself as it grew in Rome, supporting widows and orphans; and also providing some of the civil bureaucracy of running regional centres within the empire. As a part of this, the church obtained incentives through tax breaks.

The church had grown within a small and mobile professional class, as it spread through the Roman world. It was never a majority in that world, but plague and financial stresses on the empire may have helped it grow, with its institutionalised resilience alongside its doctrines of salvation and life eternal. It became, as she says, a business of charity.

It was Constantine, an emperor proclaimed in York, who further institutionalised Christianity by making it the official religion of the empire. Roberts

doesn't resolve whether Constantine was a Christian by conviction, but she does note how his rhetoric shifted as he defeated his rivals within the empire, adopting Sun cults and eventually Christian attributes in a traditional imperial display of divine favour for his rule. The suggestion seems to be that, as he consolidated his power, it became useful to tap into the institutionalised networks of Christianity.

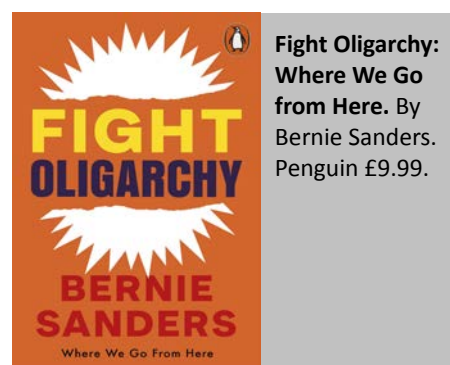
To that end, he convened the Council of Nicea, which organised and collated the doctrines of the previously dispersed and differing (and thus bickering) Christian communities, to make a single doctrine and a state religion. As Roberts notes, the fine hair-splitting about whether Jesus existed before his birth, or was of one being with God, became a means of organising factional fights within the Church, which could spill into civil disorder, as it had in Alexandria. Obviously, the idea of one god over everyone appealed to the one emperor of such a diverse and far-flung empire.

In her final analysis, she contends that 'in a very real way, the Empire became the Church'. The church then became the way that the empire survived its collapse. This is a very readable cross-discipline account of the way that the church grew and became the thing we know today. The metaphor of a business model that she uses throughout is very useful.

If there are any weaknesses, they may lie in sidelining the ideas. As other authors note, one tool the church used was a command of rhetoric and logic: creating effective and plausible arguments would have been an advantage: a business model needs a good sales pitch, and some of those doctrinal disputes may well have had a practical effect on the way the pitch landed.

**P. S.**

## But not fighting capitalism



**Fight Oligarchy: Where We Go From Here.** By Bernie Sanders. Penguin £9.99.

Oligarchy, the opening sentence states, 'is a system in which a small number of extremely wealthy individuals control the economic, political, and media life of a nation.' Plenty of examples are given of inequality of wealth. For instance, Elon Musk is worth nearly \$400 billion, more

than the bottom half of US households. In Mexico, Carlos Slim is worth over \$96 billion, while the Sultan of Brunei has wealth of \$30 billion and owns 600 Rolls Royces.

Nor is it just a matter of individuals. Three Wall Street firms, Vanguard, BlackRock and State Street, are major shareholders in nearly all the largest American corporations, including Ford, ExxonMobil and Pfizer. Media ownership is extremely concentrated too: 'Billionaires own and control virtually every major newspaper and radio network in the country.' Moreover, there is massive oligarchic influence on politics, with gigantic donations and threats to run candidates against politicians who are the least bit awkward. Super PACs (Political Action Committees) can spend millions of dollars to defeat, for instance, members of Congress who oppose US aid to the Israeli government. The Democratic Party offers little resistance to Trump and the oligarchs, having supposedly 'turned its back on the needs and suffering of America's working class' (but when did it ever support the interests of workers?).

At the same time, American workers are on average less well off than fifty years ago, adjusting for inflation. Eight hundred thousand people in the US are homeless, and over sixty thousand die each year because they cannot get to a doctor on time. Suicide rates have increased, especially among young people.

Sanders, an independent senator who has been involved with the Democrats, presents a vivid and harrowing picture of inequality and poverty in the US. He has been on a Fighting Oligarchy tour around various states, talking to audiences about what can and should be done to fight back. What he advocates is, however, the usual reformist fare: raise taxes on the rich and on large corporations, cut military spending, enact Medicare for all, make housing affordable, raise the minimum wage, improve pensions. But, even if made a reality (which is unlikely, given capitalism's need for profits), this would leave the class division of society unchanged, with workers still subject to the unpredictability of markets and being exploited by their employers. A discussion of Sanders' views in the April 2017 *Socialist Standard* noted that the so-called revolution he stood for then 'leaves capitalism firmly in place' ([tinyurl.com/49ccyuhw](http://tinyurl.com/49ccyuhw)). Clearly nothing in his views has changed since that time. The book is also quite expensive for such a slim volume.

**PB**

# Bernard Levin and the SPGB

LEVIN WROTE a criticism of the SPGB in an article entitled *Credo Quia Impossibile* (*The Observer*, 18th April 1976) — and here we must add dog Latin to his many other talents. The article patronized us and what he described as the ‘glorious nonsense’ emanating from the SPGB. This attack on the Party gave the impression of an amused tolerance for a ‘sect’ based on ‘eccentricity’ (his words) and was made in a review of a book called *The Monument — the story of the SPGB*. Unfortunately for Levin, some of the facts and anecdotes contained in *The Monument*, despite its many merits, are a personal version and the Party does not accept any responsibility for its contents. (...) He says our position is ‘Marx is right; the SPGB interpretation of Marx is right’. We do not accept that Marx was always right, and we have in the past criticized Marx. Nevertheless, we agree with the main Marxist theories of Historical Materialism and his analysis of capitalism.

Finally the SPGB has never been opposed to, or supported, reforms. Levin is confusing the political action which is necessary

to get reforms with the content of the reforms. Nobody could oppose the introduction of safety working measures, of which Levin accuses us, free heating for old age pensioners, or other reforms, and we have never done so. If workers wish to sell their votes for a few crumbs of social reform that is their privilege, and equally, it is our privilege and *duty* to show that there is an alternative. We want them to take political action that will remove the need for reforms.

We mention these few facts in the rather forlorn hope that Levin will correct his mistaken view of the Party. We would also bring to his notice that no member was expelled or disciplined for carrying a gas-mask, nor is it true that ‘every time there was a vote on an expulsion those who had voted against it were themselves forthwith expelled’. Levin can satisfy himself on this score, as the weekly Minutes of the Executive Committee are intact from 1904 and photocopies are available.

(*Socialist Standard*, June 1976)

## Action Replay

# Downhill journey

PARTICIPATORY SPORT is about enjoyment and exercise, but the professional version is about financial achievement and the glory of winning. The other side of success is of course failure, and there has been quite a lot of, not just not succeeding, but actually failing in recent weeks.

Leicester City won football’s Premier League in 2016 and the FA Cup in 2021, but they have just been relegated to League One, the third tier of English football. Frequent changes of manager have not helped (a common occurrence in such cases), nor has the death of owner Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha in a helicopter accident two years ago. The club has been losing money, and relegation is likely to exacerbate this.

Chelsea won last year’s Club World Cup, but lost six consecutive league games and are unlikely to qualify for next season’s Champions League. Their last manager lasted just 23 matches, after being given a six-year contract. Large transfer payments and UEFA financial regulations mean they will have trouble improving their squad of players. Supporters have questioned the competence and commitment of the owners.

Burnley have been relegated to the Championship after just one season in the Premier League. Loans to buy players have created further financial problems, and again the company that owns the club has

become unpopular and seems to have little idea of how to turn things round.

It’s not just football. In cricket Middlesex have been embroiled in problems, including legal disputes with previous bosses and, again, several coaches in a season. They won the County Championship most recently in 2016, when they were unbeaten. They are now in the second division, and a group of former players have stated that the club is ‘drifting towards irrelevance’.

Sussex are also having difficulties. They overestimated potential income, and were deducted twelve points in this season’s Championship. With many players likely

to leave at the end of the season, their future success is in doubt. Not being in the Hundred competition considerably reduces their income.

In golf, Saudi Arabia will withdraw their funding for the LIV tournaments next season, which means that LIV will be scrambling around looking for potential investors. The sizeable financial losses involved may make this hard, though. It was all sportswashing, of course, but this has not exactly worked out.

You do sometimes wonder how the capitalists that own and control big sporting organisations and so often run them into the ground have managed to make billions from other companies they own. Maybe sport is just even more unpredictable than ‘ordinary’ capitalist markets.

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.

## June 2026 Events

### World Socialist Movement online meetings

**Friday 5 June 7.30pm**

**What's happening in Canada**

Speaker: Ray Rawlings (SPC)

**Friday 12 June 7.30pm**

**Beyond socialism: Contributionism and the world after money**

Guest Speaker: Justin Fairchild

Justin Fairchild — founder of the Contributionist movement — argues that socialism and Contributionism share both a diagnosis of capitalism's failures and a vision of a world beyond scarcity and hierarchy. The difference is in the approach.

**Friday 19 June 7.30pm**

**Will it be Labour, Green, Same Old Scene?**

Speaker: Adam Buick

Why do the Greens think that they will be any more successful in humanising capitalism than the Labour Party was?

**Friday 26 June 7.30pm**

**Have you heard the news?**

Discussion of recent happenings.

## Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

### Object

**The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.**

### Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class

**Friday 3 July 7.30pm • Who wants war?**

Speaker: Kevin Cronin

The persistent clamour for increased defence spending that seems to be accepted across many countries irrespective of whether the Governments are Left, Right or Centre. Who or what's behind this and what's the agenda?

## Socialist Party

### Physical Meetings

**LONDON**

**Sunday 28 June 3pm • Public Meeting**

**Football and socialism**

Speaker: Bill Martin

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).



**Socialist Party (GB)**  
WhatsApp channel

Scan this QR code using the camera to view or follow this channel.



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.

# Does it deserve a hug?

SETTING OFF from home to go shopping I drove to the end of my street. I stopped to look left and right before crossing over to the street on the other side. I obviously didn't look hard enough, because, before I'd got halfway across, a car coming from the right had already reached me. We both came to a stop. I acknowledged my mistake with a wave and backed up to let him though. Bang. I'd backed into another car, one that had come up behind me. I hadn't seen it because I hadn't looked in my mirror. So two boobs in quick succession. I found a place to park, got out of my car and prepared to face the music. But that's not what happened. The young woman who had got out of her pranged car had a gentle smile on her face. 'It doesn't matter about my car', she said, 'it was already a bit messed up down there. Don't worry'. We had a look and, sure enough, the probable area of contact did have various marks and scratches and it was hard to know if any of them were new. I thanked her. But she was keen to see if my car had any damage and she came with me to look. There didn't seem much there either, but she kept on showing concern and said 'Do you want to do anything?' 'Me, no,' I said, by this time feeling very humbled. We walked back to her car and I noticed a little boy, maybe her son, sitting in it, and I felt truly moved. After all, the bump must have given him a shock, yet that didn't stop her being concerned about me. Then she said 'Does it deserve a hug?' Wow, obviously it did.

After I got home, I thought 'Right, I'm going to share this story on the local community Facebook page'. That's what I did, and I ended it by saying 'I felt really privileged to have seen the best of human nature'. The response it brought was pretty overwhelming. Apart from 150-odd 'likes' within a very short time, written replies included: 'Lovely story. Given the chance human beings are loving, considerate and cooperative. It's this dog-eat-dog society that warps what we all do so well ... get on with each other'; or 'That woman should rule the world'; or 'What a wonderful human being.'

Yes indeed, but actually the way I see it is that we are all, potentially at least, 'wonderful human beings', if, as that first message said, we are 'given the chance'. And that's the trouble with the society we live in. The nature



of it means that so many of us aren't given enough of a chance to 'get on well with each other'. We are driven to value personal gain and status over making a difference to the community we live in and improving life for those who live in it. Yet, despite this, the natural human desire to cooperate and be empathetic towards others still manifests itself so often in so many and varied ways. It may just be something as simple as giving right of way to other road users when driving or giving up our place in a queue when someone else is more in a hurry than we are. In fact, as nicely illustrated in a recent post on the BBC news website, small, everyday acts of kindness are legion ([tinyurl.com/mr34yh63](http://tinyurl.com/mr34yh63)). And, of course, larger examples of human solidarity may be found in the enormous amount of volunteering that takes place – in charities, lifeboat work, open-source coding, community organising, and so on – where people give their time and expertise to make life more liveable for others.

A recent study carried out by two American university scientists analysed responses from almost 1 million individuals spread over more than 100 countries, taking into account different cultural contexts, age ranges, socioeconomic levels, and time periods. They found that the vast majority reported performing acts of altruism because they were interested in the well-being of others, not because those acts benefitted them in any material way. One of the researchers concluded: 'People are more likely to want to be remembered for making a difference, helping others, and improving the world, and to value things like caring over status or personal gains' ([tinyurl.com/5c8brd44](http://tinyurl.com/5c8brd44)). Another new study, published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science*, has found that the human capacity for emotional self-awareness has

allowed humans 'to make long-term commitments to one another's well-being, to tolerate frustration, to plan collectively, make sacrifices, and to trust others'. It goes on to assert that, though in popular belief, 'compassion and sensitivity are sometimes cast as weaknesses that need to be weeded out in an unforgiving, competitive world where only the strongest survive', in reality 'one of humanity's greatest strengths was never just ego or ruthlessness, but profound emotions and our extraordinary ability to turn those feelings into cooperation' ([tinyurl.com/3z5528hf](http://tinyurl.com/3z5528hf)). In other words we are the furthest thing imaginable from crude portrayals of us as naked apes competing with one another for material gain.

So while the driver whose car I banged deserves obvious praise for the caring and selfless way she reacted, such behaviour is not in fact as exceptional as it may seem. It's just that 'normal' human behaviour, though it's around us all the time, generally doesn't 'make the news' precisely because it is so normal. It doesn't get reported and so we don't hear about it. What we hear about rather, though it happens far less commonly, is the 'bad news', when humans behave meanly, cruelly, and anti-socially towards one another. The amazing thing is that, though we live in a profit-driven society which impels that 'dog-eat-dog' attitude, the opposite form of behaviour is so overwhelmingly prevalent. This bodes well for how easily we will fit into the democratic, cooperative, free access system of society which socialists look forward to seeing established and in which people will find fulfilment and purpose beyond incentives of reward, prestige or celebrity.

**HOWARD MOSS**