

THE

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SOCIALIST STANDARD

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

Pursuit of happiness?

250 years of murder dressed in myth



Also: The real state we're in: a response to the iPaper's jobs fair propaganda
 1776: Whose republic?
 American independence and its mythology

Against technocracy (Part 2)
 A word to the electors of Clapham Park



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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'

The same difference

SO ANDY Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, has won the Makerfield by-election and can now challenge Starmer for the leadership of the Labour Party. If he wins, he will become new Prime Minister. So what?

Marx famously pointed out that governments are 'a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie'. In Britain the Prime Minister is the chairperson of this committee which doesn't have to be composed of actual capitalists. In Marx's day most British Prime Ministers were not capitalists but landed aristocrats but this was acceptable as long as they managed things in the general interest of the capitalist class. In the course of the last century committee members and chairs came to be drawn from a pool of professional politicians who could come from any background. This, too, was acceptable and is the norm today.

All the governments there have been in Britain, whether Conservative or Labour or, earlier, Liberal, or a coalition of two

or all three of them, have managed the common affairs of the owning class in the interests of that class. The first duty of any government is to guarantee and enforce the ownership rights of capitalists over the means of production. The second has been to ensure that priority is given to the making and accumulation of profits. These — class ownership and production for profit — are the basis of capitalism and no government has ever challenged them.

Governments have a free hand on narrowly political matters such as the structure of the state machine or what is a crime but, when it comes to the economy, its power is limited by the nature of the capitalist economy as one that runs on profits. If, in its taxation or trade or tariff or employment policies, it goes against this, then sooner or later it will provoke an economic downturn and the risk of the resulting popular discontent leading to it being voted out of office and a rival set of politicians taking over. This is enough to keep governments in line with the general

capitalist interest. The Labour Party learned this the hard way while the Conservative and Liberals didn't need to be taught it. The Green Party has yet to learn it.

If the government has to respect and apply the economic laws of capitalism then it is not all that important who is the chairperson of the board of directors of UK Capitalism PLC. It is true that there can be a bad government from a capitalist point of view — one that doesn't competently manage the common affairs of the capitalist class — and an incompetent chairperson, such as the over-confident Truss or the bumbling Starmer, can contribute to this. But that's a problem for the capitalist class, not the workers.

Whether Starmer or Burnham is Prime Minister is not going to make the slightest difference to the workers' subordinate position in society nor solve the problems this brings them.

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Helicopters over Helvellyn

Credit: Adobe stock



THE WORLD sees its first paper trillionaire while food prices rocket and existential crises loom on all sides. Have you concluded that capitalism has become a parody of itself, with psychopathic zombies in charge? Yup, and you know what else? You need a break!

If you're a) reasonably fit and b) have the resources to get out into the countryside, the great outdoors might just save your sanity. It's not just nature's quiet grandeur, or the comforting knowledge that it will all still be there when today's cardboard Caligulas are long gone. If you look closely, you'll realise something important about people, even when there's nobody in sight.

You may notice a general absence of litter. There is a thing called 'broken window syndrome', in which visible signs of neglect, litter and vandalism tend to encourage more of the same (tinyurl.com/y2cjavyv). There is a flipside. 'No Littering' signs don't work half as well as there being no litter in the first place. The more pristine the environment, the more people try to keep it that way.

As you meander along your country paths and hilltop trails you will also notice how many have been flagged, stepped, safety-railed, bordered and gravelled. That's all done to help you, and protect the landscape too, by people you will never meet and never be able to thank. And here's the thing. They do it for nothing. No wages, no perks, no stakeholder shares or investment opportunities, no title deeds, no face-in-the-paper or picture-on-the-pub-wall. Mountain Rescue, those anonymous heroes of the high passes, rescue people from mountains. These volunteers rescue mountains from people.

For example, volunteers are currently repairing some of the high paths on Helvellyn, in the English Lake District, as part of a three-year project involving helicopters, hard work and hundreds of tonnes of stone (tinyurl.com/ymu89wpt).

This is necessary because the paths are worn down by up to 19 million visitors a year. Says one local Ranger: 'We are privileged to have such a great bunch of volunteers who are willing to head out into the hills in all weathers to clear blocked drains, build paths and engage with people all across the Lake District... We certainly couldn't monitor and maintain all 400 paths each year without this vital contribution' (tinyurl.com/3p6zsbvf).

You've heard that saying, 'no such thing as a free lunch'. It's a capitalist saying, which reflects a bitter capitalist mindset. In reality, 'ordinary' people are perfectly willing to give their cooperative labour for free if it adds something useful to the general commonwealth. Even when it's at considerable risk to themselves. Mountain Rescue volunteers jeopardise their own lives because dopey urban types are daft enough to go swanning up a peak without a map, wet weather gear or a compass. Lifeboat volunteers plough grimly through heavy swells to rescue party-boat people who didn't bother to check tides or a weather forecast. Socialists know all this very well. What we don't understand is why so many people don't know this. Instead they believe humans are vile and antisocial, therefore a post-capitalist cooperative society is impossible, and we deserve to be ruled by super-rich tyrants.

Another thing you might spot, on garden walls or gates, are eggs for sale, or jams or chutneys, with a little honesty box next to them. Sure, it's all a bit twee, and most jam makers aren't depending on the income. But now a whole cottage industry in baking has sprung up, with cake sheds 'packed with cookies, brownies, old-school sprinkle cakes or lemon drizzle... for which you are trusted to pay through an honesty box system'. So successful have cake sheds become that local killjoy councils are considering stepping in to insist on trading licences, public liability insurance

and health and safety certificates (tinyurl.com/y8c96rvs). With some bakers making £1,000 a week, trust has its limits. Those entrepreneurs have installed CCTV.

A recent sciencex.com article has this to say about trust: 'Social trust is shaped largely by personal experiences of navigating the world, as well as by how strongly people believe others are likely to act honestly or dishonestly in everyday life.' The article reports a recent Norwegian study of over 8,000 people which 'shows that we often overestimate others' dishonesty and that people are more honest than we think.' Perhaps more surprising is that when study subjects were told that they had identified dishonesty where none existed, many promptly adjusted their expectations accordingly. Mistrust, it seems, is not ingrained. If better evidence comes along, we can change our minds and become more trusting (tinyurl.com/bdhtd2dy).

Mistrust is the central and irreducible problem, not just in capitalism, but in any property society that relies on trade, even barter. Why? Because private ownership of property introduces a conflict of interests between buyer and seller. The seller has an incentive to rip off the buyer, so the buyer can never really trust the seller. The mistrust at the heart of the trade transaction then scales up to the whole society, rewards the biggest liars and con artists, and reinforces a mutual suspicion that affects and infects all human relations. It's the broken window syndrome again. Lies and dishonesty beget more lies and dishonesty. Democratic sharing and free lunches? Don't be so naive!

In a gift economy, which is socialism, there is no central conflict of interests. The donor gains no material advantage by making the gift, so has no incentive to lie about it. Likewise, the recipient has no reason to distrust the donor. The trust at the heart of the gift economy scales up to the whole society, and reinforces a mutual respect and confidence that pervades everything. Truth and honesty beget truth and honesty. Just like the unspoilt countryside, we will collectively strive to keep it that way.

Still, you don't have to go yomping up a mountain to see decent, selfless behaviour in action. It's all around you, every day, in spite of 'common sense' and received wisdom. It's why socialism will work.

PJS

Animal liberation and socialism

Dear Editors

AS A member of the organisation Socialism for Animal Liberation referenced in Howard Moss's article 'The Annual Vegan Fair' (*Socialist Standard*, May 2026), I would like to make the following response.

SAL was formed in the summer of last year with three very clear goals. The first being to campaign for an end to all forms of animal abuse. The second being to bring anti-capitalist ideas into the animal rights movement. The third being to bring animal liberationist arguments into the movements of the left. We also understood SAL to be an emerging coalition of individuals and groups and welcomed participation from all different revolutionary traditions, whether they be socialist, anarchist, communist or radical green.

Bearing this in mind, I was a bit surprised by some of Howard's comments.

For starters, Howard doesn't seem to think that SAL is as committed to socialist politics as we are to animal liberation and feels that the organization will end up concentrating on individual acts of animal abuse to the neglect of systemic change. To be blunt, I really don't know where this comes from since in all our literature and in all our presentations we make it crystal clear that it is only with socialism and socialism alone that we will end not just the exploitation of people by capital but also of animals and the natural world that we share the planet with. The modern-day animal rights movement, by contrast, often neglects the need for political change, focussing instead on personal outreach around veganism, on boycott, on direct action and on lobbying, all of which have their role but which ultimately cannot deliver animal liberation.

Howard makes the comment that SAL doesn't appear to have a clear understanding of socialism and then lists some of the indices of what constitutes a post capitalist society such as its being moneyless and leaderless. I'd personally consider many of these criteria to be more indicative of a communist society than of a socialist state but I'll agree to disagree with Howard on that one, as I do with anarchist comrades in SAL! If Howard means that not everyone would sign up to the SPGB definition then he's completely correct, SAL being a coalition of shared concerns

rather than a political party.

Some of Howard's remarks unfortunately read along the lines that everything will be ok come the revolution, something more than problematic on several counts. The history of women's relationship and socialist revolutions shows that if the left don't take on demands in the here and now they are highly unlikely to be realised in the future. Likewise, does the Socialist Party of Great Britain have a formal commitment to animal liberation? If it doesn't, and I'm fairly sure it doesn't, then why should we see the end of the meat and dairy industry, of vivisection and of all bloodsports come socialism? Securing animal liberation means transforming human society in its entirety, hence the reason why comrades of SAL in other countries have spent so much time developing a programme that is both revolutionary and transitional.

Ultimately with its emphasis on ending profit-based relationships, on social ownership and a planned economy, SAL remains convinced that it is only in the context of a socialist society that animals will achieve true liberation. However, whilst we see that socialism as laying the material basis for animal liberation, there is no inevitable relationship between the two unless we consciously choose to develop one.

Finally, I'm not sure I was present at the online meeting that Howard attended but, like all organisations, when we come together to discuss action, the nature of that meeting will be determined by who attends and by what the agenda is. One month, much of the discussion might centre on how best to support the recent Beagles campaign, understandably so. Another month, most of the meeting might concentrate on discussing the finer points of Marxist theory and how it does, and doesn't, fit into animal liberationist narratives. In other words, had Howard attended another meeting he might have come away with a totally different impression.

For the liberation of all,
Steven Andrew, Salford

Reply:

The article about Socialism for Animal Liberation (SAL) in the May *Socialist Standard* was largely sympathetic to that group's analysis of society and its

statement of intent. However, it did pick up on the contradiction between calling for complete 'system change' and at the same time seeming to focus on reforms to deal with particular problems within the current system. It made the point that focusing on single issues (animal abuse in this case) simply pushes real system change into the background. There is also the fact that any apparent progress via reforms can be – and often is – easily reversed by a mere change of government. A current example of this is the declaration by Nigel Farage that there is nothing wrong with fox-hunting and his suggestion that, if his Party came to power (something not entirely unlikely), the ban on it could be relaxed.

So while history has shown that single-issue campaigns and reforms can achieve a small degree of progress for both humans and animals, it is clear that they cannot lead to real revolutionary change. In other words, contrary to what our correspondent says, it is impossible to be both 'revolutionary and transitional' at the same time. The second of these simply precludes the first.

In addition, there is a manifest difference between what he means by socialism and what the Socialist Party means. While, like him, we work for a society without 'profit-based relationships', such a society could only come about through doing away with money, buying and selling and leaders and led, something he seems to reject – perhaps because he cannot imagine it. Nothing short of that could give us the 'post-capitalist' society he says he is looking for. Anything else would still be some form of capitalism – perhaps state capitalism – which would be unlikely to be a significant improvement for people (or for animals) on what we have now. Above all it would be a 'state' system, and, though he uses the term 'socialist state', that is in fact a contradiction in terms, since, if socialism is anything meaningful, it is a stateless and borderless society. Moreover, contrary to the distinction our correspondent wants to make between 'socialism' and 'communism', we're perfectly happy for such a society to be called either. Like Marx, we consider the two terms to be synonymous and both to mean a society of free access to all goods and services where both humans and animals will be most likely to live decent, comfortable and unexploited lives. –
Editors.

Human capital

ANNOUNCING PLANS to cut nearly 8,000 jobs by using AI instead, Bill Winters, the CEO of Standard Bank, told reporters: 'It's not cost-cutting. It's replacing in some cases lower-value human capital with the financial capital and the investment capital we're putting in' (tinyurl.com/jr3vttw6).

He seemed to have forgotten that he was not addressing a board meeting but the general public. The resulting outrage at him calling his employees 'lower-value human capital' forced him to apologise. But he was actually accurately describing a fact.

What a capitalist firm has to set aside to pay its workers is part of its capital. You could call it 'human' capital as opposed to the capital invested in plant, equipment, machines, materials and power. Or, expressed another way, it is the difference between 'living' labour and 'dead' labour, useful as it brings out that the other factors that capital is invested in have been produced by people working.

The terms Marx used to make this distinction were 'variable' capital and 'constant' capital, as set out in chapter 8 of Volume I of *Capital*: 'The means of production on the one hand, labour-power

on the other, are merely the different modes of existence which the value of the original capital assumed when from being money it was transformed into the various factors of the labour-process. That part of capital then, which is represented by the means of production, by the raw material, auxiliary material and the instruments of labour does not, in the process of production, undergo any quantitative alteration of value. I therefore call it the constant part of capital, or, more shortly, *constant capital*. On the other hand, that part of capital, represented by labour-power, does, in the process of production, undergo an alteration of value. It both reproduces the equivalent of its own value, and also produces an excess, a surplus-value, which may itself vary, may be more or less according to circumstances. This part of capital is continually being transformed from a constant into a variable magnitude. I therefore call it the variable part of capital, or, shortly, *variable capital*'.

So the money invested in buying the ability to work of employees is indeed a part of capital. Economically speaking, that's what workers are and that's what

they are treated as.

Winters claimed that it wasn't about cost-cutting. Of course it was. What would be the point of investing in AI if it wasn't cheaper than having the work done by humans? What he was probably trying to say was that the board had decided to use a larger proportion of its capital as non-human capital than as human capital and that some of the latter was of 'lower value' to his business because it was costing more and so reducing profits.

He would be really ignorant if he thought that human capital in general was of 'lower value' to a capitalist business than non-human capital. The source of profits is precisely the extra value over and above its own value that living labour produces, the amount by which such capital 'varies' compared to its original value. But perhaps he was misled because he is running a bank and banks don't actually produce anything but siphon off a part of the surplus value produced in industry.

The indignation of workers at being called 'human capital' brings out a key difference between the two types of capital. Humans can think and act and so can get together to end their economic status as a part of a capitalist business's capital — by ending the whole economic system where production is in the hands of money-investing, profit-seeking businesses.



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 21st 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. 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 19th July or before. E-mail enquiries to spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk.



Halo Halo

FROM ECCLESIASTES 1:9: ‘What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun’. A sentiment that we can find ourselves in agreement with. We are returning to a topic that appeared in *Halo Halo* eleven years ago, (tinyurl.com/2w8y5x9w), because the speculation engendered then has raised its alien head yet again.

Rumours regarding the involvement of the gods, read aliens, in human affairs and development have been swirling for many years but should convincing evidence ever surface then the fallout might prove too much to bear for many. Reluctant as we are to use nuclear devastation as a metaphor, the outcome from the consequences of the newest revelations might prove to be *la désolation* for those to whom ‘faith’ matters more than rationality.

The 2015 *Halo* had some interesting responses to the possibility of there being other sentient beings. ‘If there

was intelligent life (on another planet) I don’t see that as a contradiction with the Christian faith... If God created aliens somewhere out there, then the Vatican is in no position to say Jesus wasn’t for them too’... ‘aliens who seek baptism should receive it from the church, because any entity – no matter how many tentacles it has – has a soul’. ‘Alien life would be part of God’s creation’ and aliens would be ‘our brothers’.

Back in the 1960s a Swiss author published *Chariots of the Gods*. It has sold over thirty million copies. The book purported to show evidence that extraterrestrial beings once visited Earth and guided some embryonic civilisations. The thesis was, over time, carefully examined and the ‘evidence’ shown to have meanings different to the proposed hypothesis. Case not proven.

On 8 and 22 May 2026, the American military Pentagon gave out two lots of declassified files regarding UFOs (now

called Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena or UAP). *Quelle surprise mon blancmange*, the released files do not provide any definitive or conclusive evidence of life on Mars, of Alien Ubers, or of a Men in Black establishment. Such non-evidence from these files will not necessarily disappoint conspiracy theorists who will maintain that the ‘real’ evidence is still being withheld for a number of reasons and the government is doing what the government always does, hiding information for the benefit of a minority.

The solar system resides in the Milky Way which has an estimated total of possibly up to four hundred billion stars and planets. So about the same odds as winning the national lottery. Who wants to bet that there isn’t other evolved life out there? As has been noted in the past, if evolved life is at a higher level of consciousness than humankind then it would assiduously avoid this neighbourhood rather than moving into it.

Conclusion, the expected ‘nuclear devastation’ is no such thing and doesn’t even qualify as a damp squib. Guess we’ll have to wait until the visitors actually do jet in to see the level of the welcome.

DC

Tiny tips

GLOBAL REAL worker pay fell 12 percent while real CEO pay surged 54 percent between 2019 and 2025. At least four CEOs of major corporations each pocketed over \$100 million in pay and bonuses last year. Broadcom CEO Hock Tan led the pack at over \$205 million. Billionaires were paid \$2,500 per second in dividends in 2025. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Oxfam are calling for urgent action to rein in extreme wealth, including higher, fairer taxes on the richest and binding limits on CEO pay (**Common Dreams**, tinyurl.com/du4945tk).

In 2011, he spent 81 days detained in China for criticizing the government following the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, in which 90,000 people died. Ai Weiwei worked with hundreds of anonymous volunteers to identify and publish the names of more than 5,000 children who died under the rubble of poorly constructed schools, information that the government sought to censor (**El Pais**, tinyurl.com/2n64p7ft).

.... the Housing and Land Rights Network, have argued that the real numbers are significantly higher and estimate at 3 million...Shelters, where available, are frequently inadequate, overcrowded, unsanitary, unsafe for women, or located far from work opportunities. Instead of treating shelter as a right linked to dignity, many city administrations treat it as temporary charity. During mega-events such as the Commonwealth Games 2010 or the G20 Summit gatherings hosted in India, homeless people are often subjected to eviction drives in the name of beautification. Pavements are cleared, encampments removed, and poverty hidden so that cities may appear modern to visitors (**Countercurrents**, tinyurl.com/y9msf6cx).

The right to life in Kenya is often treated as if it begins at conception and ends at birth. As in much of the world, self-described ‘pro-lifers’ claim to defend life at all costs – yet too often stop short of defending the lives already being lived, and those cut short too early (**openDemocracy**, tinyurl.com/).

[com/5n8wdt4u](https://tinyurl.com/5n8wdt4u)).

...the central question of his book, which is built around a concept Marx called ‘disposable time’—the time left over after workers have completed the labor necessary to sustain themselves and their families. Marx traced this idea back to an obscure 1821 pamphlet he discovered in the British Museum, in which the author argued that a nation’s true wealth lies not in gold or goods but in free time: ‘Wealth is disposable time, and nothing more’ (**People’s World**, tinyurl.com/h887vhaa).

The communist revolution, if it arrives in the nick of time to prevent humankind’s suicide, is a seismic event that changes everything. It is difficult to imagine it but it will leave nothing untouched. People will change. In the heat of the struggle for survival, proletarians will come together and become the self-conscious collective worker, which he/she already was but didn’t know it. All human relationships (between producers, family members, men-women, young-old, teachers-students and more) change in the process. The entire way in which society reproduces itself changes. Work changes. It no longer means labor (**Internationalist Perspective**, tinyurl.com/2ec6muu8).

(These links are provided for information, Target sites 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

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

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Kent and Sussex regional branch. Usually meets 3rd Sun. 2pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ or online. Contact: spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org or 07971 715569.

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

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It's the Economy, Stupid!

SO SAID James Carville, a political strategist on Bill Clinton's successful campaign to win the American presidency in 1992. It was written up on a whiteboard in Clinton's Little Rock headquarters, as a reminder to campaign workers to remain focused on the recession then affecting voters.

A decade and a half earlier the Italian historian, Carlo M. Cipolla, wrote his essay, 'The Basic Laws of Human Stupidity'. His basic contention was that everyone always underestimates the number of stupid people there are.

Stupidity is generally defined as acting foolishly or carelessly, in an apparently stunned or blank manner, or being ridiculous to an extreme degree. It is important at this point to establish that Cipolla wasn't using stupidity as a synonym for idiocy or lack of intelligence. But rather it is a human feature of many, perhaps all, whatever an individual's mental acuity.

Everyone, if they are honest with themselves, will be able to identify personal examples of their own stupidity, indeed they are likely to be many and various. Usually, they do not result in anything too serious, more often nothing worse than inconvenience or embarrassment. Occasionally, though there is injury, or worse

At the Kremlin

Consider two presidents, one Russian, the other American and their current wars. If there is one huge lesson the Second World War should have taught Russia's present leader it's that a powerful military force can be thwarted by a determined population.

Stalingrad was thoroughly bombed, shelled and otherwise blasted for over five months. 90 percent of the city was taken by the aggressors with almost half a million military and 40,000 civilian casualties. Yet not only did it not surrender but became the instance from which the invaders suffered ultimate defeat. Four decades later the Russians became the insurgent force in Afghanistan only to suffer defeat and expulsion at the hands of a seemingly inferior military.

So what induces the present Kremlin incumbent to consider victory in Ukraine likely? Dreadful as they are, the missiles and drones launched against the cities are not anything like in effect as the razing of Stalingrad. If the intention was to thwart NATO, the consequence has been to strengthen its resolve and expand it. To



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have expected otherwise, in the face of previous experiences, appears to be an exemplar of stupidity, at an awful and avoidable cost.

In the White House

Meanwhile, in the White House, stupidity seems to be the order of the day. The Vietnam War is not so long ago its conduct and outcome can have been forgotten. B52 bombers that were to return Hanoi to the Stone Age proved far less effective than bicycles down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. America's own, more recent, experience in Afghanistan, with the eventual return to government of the Taliban should have highlighted how all too easy it is to become embroiled in bellicose misadventures.

The setting aside once more of historical experience has ensnared the Commander in Chief in a conflict he is having great difficulty in extricating himself from. Indeed, it could well lead to the regime in Tehran becoming stronger. Stupidity wrapped in stars and stripes.

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to identify any war the outcome of which was an unmitigated success for a winner. For any supposed winner there may be some short-term spoils, but any such resolution is subsequently unravelled by further conflict arising directly or indirectly from the root of capital.

Following leaders

The present system is driven by the accumulation of capital, which requires nation states to compete for resources, trade routes and markets, competition that all too often manifests as armed conflict. Governments of all types have to serve the interests of capital, the unfettered, as far as possible, pursuit of profit. It doesn't matter what governments or politicians promise their citizens – better welfare at home or conquests abroad – the imperative of profit will be the deciding factor.

There are of course those for whom war is not stupidity writ large, the arms manufacturers. A huge industry worldwide

it consumes massive amounts of scientific research time, resources and labour power, as well as the lives of multitudinous casualties military and civilian.

Consider how humanity worldwide would benefit if that effort was focused on meeting people's needs rather than profiting from their deaths. It must be stupidity to persevere with maintaining a system that cannot be anything other than careless of human need.

Any campaigning against the arms industry is opposed not only by shareholders who want their dividend from the profits, governments covetous of tax revenue and, also, the trade unions of those employed in the industry. Yet the best interests of all, even the shareholders, would be in establishing a cooperative worldwide society that wasn't riven by nationalism, wars, terrorism and all such manifestations of inhumanity.

However, for as long as people continue to lend their support, via the ballot box or other means, to political individuals or parties while expecting, or hoping for, better outcomes they are denying their own experiences. Rather than accepting the need to play an active part in determining a very different society, they continue to be passive recipients of whatever capitalism deigns to spare them. This is not congenital, but elective, which means it is eminently possible to choose otherwise.

One of the basic laws Cipolla formulated in his pamphlet was 'A stupid person is a person who causes losses to another person or a group of persons while himself deriving no gain or even possibly incurring losses'.

Consider the two leaders referred to above, along with leaders in general, in the light of Cipolla's law. How long is humanity to be subjected to leadership stupidity? How long is humanity going to continue the stupidity of following leaders?

James Carville was certainly no socialist, but he unintentionally acceded to socialist understanding. Because it is the economy, the worldwide economy that is ultimately the determining factor of the quality of life to be shared by all.

D. A.

The real state we're in: a response to the iPaper's jobs fair propaganda



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VICKY SPRATT'S glazing dispatch from the Youth Guarantee Jobs Fair at Boxpark Camden reads like a press release from the Department for Work and Pensions (*In Camden, I saw the antidote to Gen Z's endless job rejections* - tinyurl.com/3z2ze6tk). She describes a 'buzzing' event where recruiters from Arsenal Football Club to the NHS handed out chocolate bars and baseball caps to smiling young jobseekers. Secretary of State Pat McFadden who was also present waxes lyrical about 'welfare reform' that puts 'work and opportunity at its heart'. It is, by her account, 'the antidote to Gen Z's endless job rejections'.

I was there too. And I saw something very different.

I am not a young person. I am in my late 40s, a former events manager who

once worked across Europe (bringing revenue into the UK economy), until Brexit devastated the industry I loved. My case manager at the DWP, aware of my age and experience, sent me to this 'youth' jobs fair anyway. What I witnessed was not an antidote. It was a symptom.

The fiasco of the 'Fair'

Let us begin with the basics of event management, a profession I practised for years before this government destroyed my livelihood. A jobs fair is, at minimum, a professional event requiring adequate space, accessibility, and basic dignity for attendees. Boxpark Camden, a street food market, offered none of these.

The DWP, symptomatic of its 'The Thick Of It' style corporate culture, decided to go cheap and secure the food hall's

grubby, rickety beer hall tables and bench seating on the second and third levels. There was no space to move. If you used a wheelchair, crutches, or had any mobility impairment, you could not have navigated the space at all. Access was via narrow staircases only. There were no accessible toilets. The noise was overwhelming, a cacophony that made conversation, let alone professional networking, nearly impossible. The food vendors I met weren't very happy that their tables were occupied all day by companies (and consuming outside food) and the place packed with unemployed youth.

My case manager knows I have ASD and auditory processing difficulties so added a note on my file to say that a quiet space is required for my meetings. This environment was not merely unsuitable;

it was actively hostile. I travelled over an hour and a half on two buses to reach it, despite my job coach's insistence that the journey was shorter. DWP are notorious for this sort of support for disabled jobseekers: sending us to inaccessible, sensory-overloading spaces in the name of 'opportunity'. I suppose my job coach has quotas to meet lest he end up back in the electronic dole queue behind me.

For a former event manager, the incompetence was staggering. The UK events industry, worth £68.7 billion in 2024, has been battered by Brexit with 82 percent of industry respondents reporting that leaving the EU negatively affected their business, and 67 percent experiencing significant or minor losses.

The damage is documented and severe. A Stanford study estimates that by 2025, Brexit had reduced UK GDP by 6-8 percent, investment by 12-18 percent, and employment by 3-4 percent. The events sector saw losses of up to £1 million for individual companies. A major exhibition that drew 45,000 visitors annually moved from London to Barcelona. UK musicians have seen a 27 percent decline in small and medium-sized EU festival bookings, with 95 percent of affected artists experiencing decreased earnings.

The government's own policies have helped hollow out a sector that once employed people like me. And yet when the DWP needs to organise an event, this is the best it can manage: a chaotic scramble in a food court which they probably got for free on a mid-week day in Camden.

Vicky Spratt writes warmly of hospitality roles 'with training,' care work, and paid experience on offer at this ramshackle event. What she does not interrogate is the quality of these jobs.

I spoke to the recruiters. Many of the 'opportunities' were barely really jobs at all, just the dregs of the labour market. Dishwashing in basement hotel kitchens. Zero-hour contracts in care. Jobs with such high turnover that employers attend fairs like this not out of social responsibility, but to factory farm disenfranchised young people and process them through. The symptom of an economy that has failed to provide meaningful work.

This is the 'Youth Guarantee' in practice: an £823 million scheme that offers employers £3,000 per hire, incentivising them to cycle through the cheapest possible labour rather than invest in genuine skills development. McFadden praises Marks & Spencer for creating 1,000 'training roles.' He does not say what those roles pay, how long they last, or whether they lead anywhere. The structure of the scheme itself, paying employers to take on the long-term unemployed, creates a

perverse incentive to treat young workers as subsidised, disposable inputs rather than human beings with futures.

Pat McFadden continues his spiel that 'the narrative that says young people are shirkers and snowflakes ... is wrong'. This is clever positioning. Rejecting the most overtly cruel rhetoric, he presents himself as the compassionate reformer and saviour. Actual policy direction reveals the same old coercion dressed in snake oil language.

McFadden describes hiring incentives and work experience placements as 'welfare reform.' He says the 'best way into welfare reform' is to 'put work and opportunity at its heart'. This is not reform. This is the ideological enforcement of wage labour as the only legitimate form of existence.

But the Labour Party and the unions that founded it have always been occupied in trying to solve wages problems within capitalism, never questioning capitalism itself. The result? The problems multiply and become more complex and the armies of 'solvers' become larger and larger. There is not the slightest prospect that these people will solve the problems, because it is the very nature of wage-labour itself that causes the problems in the first place.

McFadden's reform talks of cliff edges where people lose housing benefit if they enter work but his solution is not to question why housing should be contingent on employment at all. He speaks of 'talking to people and working out how the government can help them to change their lives' but the only change on offer is insertion into the labour market, on capital's terms, at wages that do not cover the cost of living.

The right exam question, as McFadden puts it, is not how to assess what benefits people are entitled to. It is whether a system that forces millions to sell their labour power to survive while a tiny minority accumulates wealth from their subsequent labour is worth preserving at all.

Abolition of work

The young people Spratt interviews are not 'snowflakes'. They are victims of a system that demands their labour while offering them precarity in return. Amina, the law graduate relying on Universal Credit who told the *iPaper* that 'nobody replies' to her applications, is not failing the labour market. The labour market is failing her. Brendan, who calls online applications a 'black hole,' is not lazy. He is alienated from a process that treats him as an input rather than a person.

The 'black hole' Brendan describes is not a glitch in the system. It is the system functioning as designed. Capitalism

requires a reserve army of the unemployed applying for dozens, hundreds of jobs, hearing nothing back, to keep wages low and workers desperate. The DWP's job fairs, with their chocolate bars and branded pens, are not an alternative to the black hole, they *are* it. To discipline the unemployed, making them visible, countable, and grateful for whatever scraps are offered

A genuine alternative would begin with the recognition that work as currently organised, serves capital not human need. What would society look like where housing, healthcare, education, or sustenance were not dependent on employment? Where the means of production were collectively owned and managed? Where the purpose of economic activity was the satisfaction of human needs rather than the accumulation of profit?

McFadden will never ask these questions. The Labour Party, committed to managing capitalism rather than transcending it, cannot ask them. But over a million young people classed as NEET, the highest figure since the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, are to be herded through food courts and told that their problem is a lack of 'opportunity'.

What Spratt won't ask

Spratt's article is not dishonest, but it is narrow. She does not ask why a jobs fair for young people was sending an experienced professional approaching her 40s to a youth event. She does not ask why the DWP chose a filthy Camden street food market over an accessible conference venue. She does not ask why the jobs on offer weren't skilled careers but, overwhelmingly, low-wage, high-turnover positions where you'll still be visiting food banks to survive. She does not ask why a law graduate is on Universal Credit after six months of silence from employers. She does not ask why the 'solution' to youth unemployment is always more work, never less capitalism.

Spratt does not ask Pat McFadden whether the welfare system he oversees is designed to support people or to discipline them. Whether 'work and opportunity at its heart' is a promise or a threat.

In the end, McFadden's 'welfare reform' is nothing more than an attempt to make wage-working seem more palatable, to dress coercion in the language of opportunity.

A.T.

1776: Whose republic?

‘The Republic of Washington will grow and grow, until it makes the whole world tremble’ - Marquis de Sade.

IN AMERICAN schools children are taught to call it the American Revolution. Was it? In Britain we were brought up to refer to it as the American War of Independence. But whose independence?

The man mostly urging the colonial owning classes to declare independence from the British crown was an Englishman: the political reformer Thomas Paine. Largely alone in his zeal for the independence of the American commercial class, he would be resisted by the much more timid George Washington and the latter’s clique of slave-owning mouthpieces for ‘liberty’, who were reluctant to go so far, until forced to by circumstances and the sheer ferocity of the British army.

The colonial gentry had launched the cry against imperial taxation and oppression in 1775 and Paine, for whom dissent, anywhere, was an irresistible magnet, became its most zealous spokesman. In his pamphlet aptly named *Common Sense* he showed the absurdity of the American colonies being ruled by a tiny island kingdom a gigantic ocean away. When the people of his own roots, the pacifist Quakers, warned the rebels of inviting carnage, Paine told them to mind their own business and not interfere in a ‘just’ war (where have we heard that before?).

Oppression is oppression, regardless of who the oppressor is, and Paine was

soon to learn this, with the ingratitude and disdain of his supposed colonial ‘comrades’ after they had at last yielded to his urgings that they replace the British rag on a pole with a republican one.

American farmers and ordinary people bore the brunt of British ferocity as the Quakers’ warning came true.

British ferocity, directly caused by the Washington revolt, did indeed provoke a hatred that benefited those riding it and carried them to victory and the overthrow of British rule. War continued, however, beyond 1782 (its official end), with the British navy attacking towns and shipping and in turn put to flight by an American known (ironically) as Captain Nelson, called a pirate by the British. As late as 1812 Britain launched an invasion of the new United States of thirteen colonies, and hostilities would carry on until into the American Civil War of the 1860s.

During the war the British state used the native American Great Lakes tribes against the colonists in the same way that earlier in the century the Jacobites (the political faction supporting the Stuart monarchy of James II) had done in Scotland. Robert Burns did not like the Jacobites, but he admired the tribal Highland people. As his song *Ye Jacobites By Name* suggests, they stirred up rebellion, seducing the Highlanders to their cause, then, when it failed, scarpered off to France, leaving the Highland people to suffer the vengeance of the British state.

The Jacobites did this twice in the 18th century, and the last time they scarpered, in 1746, it would result in the

destruction of the Highlanders who had followed them. The clearances would have been on the cards anyway at some point, because, like the native Americans and other native peoples around the world, the clans were an obstruction to the development of capitalism.

So who benefited? For all the talk of ‘liberty’, certainly not the United States’ four million African-American slaves, no matter how hoarsely and painfully Tom Paine and others implored. The poor farmers’ subsequent revolt, demanding relief from poverty, and stressing their having fought for the Congress, was ferociously crushed. The British during the war had helped secure the later fate of the native people too, using them against the colonists, teaching the natives about scalping, and ensuring the colonists’ eternal hatred for ‘Indians’.

As for Paine, his dedication to George Washington of *The Rights of Man* did not help him when arrested for ‘moderantism’ by the French Jacobins. Washington ignored his appeals to save him from the guillotine (for that he had to rely on others) while *The Age of Reason* – a rational dissection of the Bible – finally sealed his fate where the United States of America were concerned.

In short, 1776 marks yet another murderous squabble between capitalist factions. Revolution – the world revolution of those who actually do all the work in society – is yet to come, and when it does it will be truly democratic and thus will not require violence.

A.W.



Credit: Adobe stock

American independence and its mythology

AS THE 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia in 1776 is upon us, it seems like a good time for socialists to assess this momentous event. Marx, in contrast to his writing on the American Civil War, has little to say about the conflict other than that he saw it as progressive but unresolved until the North's victory over the South in 1865.

Although we have little interest in the international and internecine struggles between members of the bourgeoisie, what of the claim that these events on the east coast of North America constituted a revolution? If so what kind of revolution and was Marx correct as seeing the transition of 13 colonies into a nation-state as a progressive event in respect of the long-term aim of socialism? A cynic might suggest it was the capitalists of both states and their hatred of paying tax that generated the conflict between them. That the early USA was almost entirely dependent on slave labour for its wealth does make the shouts for liberty and justice rather hollow and hypocritical but then the international bourgeoisie have always been masters of myth creation and, as ever, it falls to Marxist socialists to try and separate myth from reality by stripping away the ideological overgrowth.

By 1763 the British had succeeded in expelling their French colonial rivals from North America but in doing so they had all but bankrupted their treasury. To maintain a series of forts to protect the victory was expensive and Parliament resolved to raise the revenue to pay for this by a series of taxes that regulated overseas trade on the 13 colonies. The colonists, on the other hand, thought that they had done their fair share of fighting to help the British defeat the French and saw no reason to pay for the honour. The climax to this came with the implementation of the hated 'stamp act' which was the first direct tax imposed by the British.

In 1763 the British had also forbidden any further expansion west because, for one thing, they feared the cost of going to war with the native Americans. However, the colonists saw the west as ripe for land speculation and they proceeded to create a 'general assembly' in the same year to oppose these British measures under the slogan: 'No taxation without representation'. In response London passed a series of 'quartering acts' that imposed British troop garrisons in many

of the leading towns with the added insult that the locals should provide them with food and shelter. Boston erupted and British ships were confiscated, whilst embargoes were placed on imports and exports to the 'old country'. This was an act of rebellion against the crown which resulted in an invasion of Boston in 1768. Boston became a hotbed of rebellion with constant tension and violent skirmishes which in 1770 climaxed with the infamous 'Boston Massacre' in which many colonists were killed. Riots followed including the famous 'Boston Tea Party' where British ships were looted and their cargoes destroyed. By now the Americans had begun to create armouries for what they regarded as an inevitable war. On discovering the location of one of these a British army marched on Concord to seize the armaments but were confronted along the way at Lexington by a colonial militia and the first battle of the war took place.

The war was to last until 1781 when the British surrendered at Yorktown to the Americans and their French and Spanish allies. The colonists had won their independence but what kind of state would they create and was it in any way 'revolutionary'? The propaganda against Britain had portrayed it as a feudal autocracy when, in fact, the King and his aristocrats (both old and newly created) had been capitalists for a good 100 years before the rise of merchant capitalism in the new world, and parliament was the final arbiter of policy.

The American economy was mainly based on the labour of chattel slavery and people like George Washington lived like ancient Roman patricians on massive slave estates. So in its formative years the republic saw very little change from the perspective of the black slaves and the poor white farmers. Britain was well into its 'industrial revolution' and was a much more progressive state than its new competitor. Most of the signatories of the 'Declaration of Independence' were slave owners who, apparently, saw no hypocrisy between the claims of liberty and justice for the white elite and the reality of life within for hundreds of thousands of enslaved inhabitants.

Thomas Jefferson began his political career opposing slavery but ended it as a racist bigot of the worst kind. In North America the conjunction of slavery and skin colour became enshrined in the American psyche and even after the 'emancipation' at the conclusion of the civil war many of the formerly enslaved

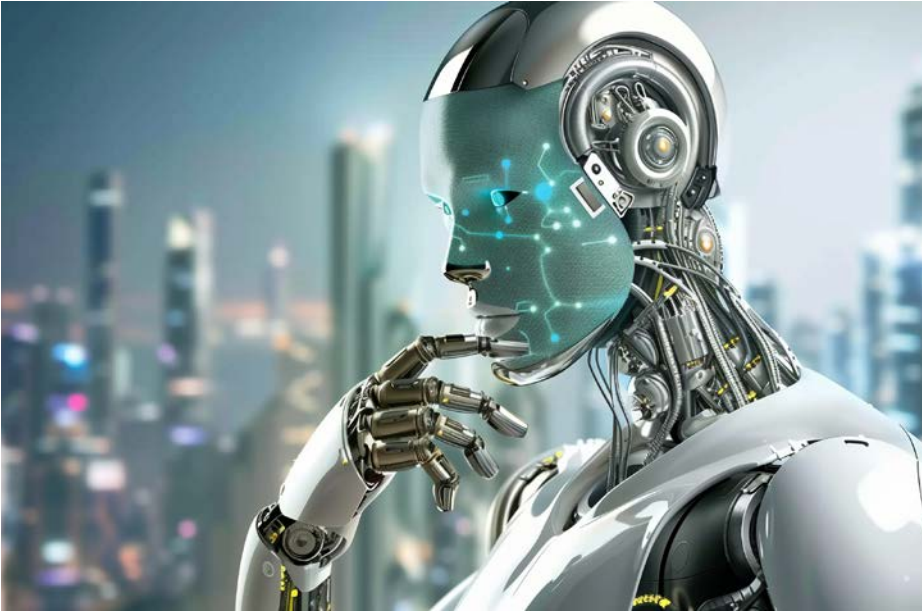
became 'share-croppers' - in effect, little better than medieval serfs. America had progressed from chattel slavery to feudal serfdom. This kind of racism was to fuel the genocide of the Native Americans and so preserve the racial and political violence embedded deep within the culture which survives to this day. Of course, socialists are not surprised at the depths of bourgeois hypocrisy but the American oligarchs seem to have taken it to another level claiming that they have no empire and that their state violence was always in 'defence of democracy'. Perhaps the origin of their state is one of the reasons for the US's continual political backwardness? If 1781 was revolutionary it was an extremely reactionary revolution more akin to the Third Reich and its genocidal and slave-economy policies than to the English and French revolutions.

Many historians regard the relationship between the founders' support of slavery and their call for liberty and justice as some kind of paradox; they shy away from the truth of the origin of their country being founded on a lie. It can be said that the absence of any mitigating counterforce to the free market capitalism embraced by the oligarchs made it possible for the northern states to invest millions of dollars into industrial technology and so become one of the most powerful economic powerhouses by the end of the nineteenth century - in that Marx was correct; but what he didn't foresee was that this extremely technologically advanced country would not also enjoy a commensurable rise in working-class political consciousness. Consumerism, religion and nationalism would prevent any important political evolution and has led to the kind of authoritarian 'king' figure that America now endures. The world longs for the end of the murderous American imperialism which seems, at last, to be within sight. Its birth in violence, racism and genocide and the malign shadow that has forever haunted America as a result might finally destroy it. No doubt it will be replaced, in the absence of socialist consciousness, by an equally rapacious capitalist global empire of some kind. 'Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' will have to wait until people realise just how to make what was and is now just a platitude into something meaningful and real.

WEZ

Against technocracy (Part 2)

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ACCORDING TO Jason Crawford: ‘The 19th century was dominated by a belief in the power of human reason and its ability to advance science and technology for the betterment of life. But after World War I and the Great Depression, it got harder to believe in the rationality of humanity or in the predictability and controllability of the world’ (tinyurl.com/2jjh8d6v).

As Crawford notes, in the 1920s, a ‘democratic realist’ school of thought emerged, exemplified by individuals like Walter Lippmann. The masses were viewed as fundamentally irrational and uninformed. Their role in public life should be limited, with fundamental decisions affecting the future of society being entrusted to a tiny, informed elite. Democracy should be redefined as ‘rule for the people but not by the people’.

The elitist assumptions behind such thinking found expression in the 1930s in such forms as Stalinism, the growth of fascism, and the rise of the Technocracy Movement itself.

During the early post-war boom, increasing living standards and low unemployment shaped the optimism conveyed in books like Galbraith’s *The Affluent Society* (1958). In his subsequent work, *The New Industrial State* (1967), sometimes called a ‘blueprint for technocracy,’ Galbraith argued that a corporate ‘technostructure’ of experts and managers had come to dominate businesses, eclipsing owners and shareholders – an argument anticipated by James Burnham’s *The Managerial Revolution* (1941).

In this ‘affluent society,’ Galbraith argued, the ‘technostructure’ should

shift its focus from just economic growth to broader social goals, including more public investment and reducing inequality. His position overlapped with elements of the pre-war Technocracy Movement, particularly its emphasis on scientific, centralised economic management.

However, there were also differences in that the latter opposed the capitalist market and money. The existence of money was deemed incompatible with abundance because of the way the price system worked.

Paradoxically, the growing prosperity that many workers experienced in the early post-war years provided the conditions out of which a broad counterculture movement emerged. This called into question the idea of top-down, expert-led coordination of society, as well as the basic direction in which technological development was heading. The hippies of the 1960s were perhaps the vivid example of this, representing a confluence of tendencies opposed to militarism, environmental destruction in the name of progress and the threat to individual freedom posed by an increasingly oppressive and intrusive technology.

As post-war prosperity faded and capitalism entered recession in the 1970s, these conditions that had sustained the counterculture weakened. The downturn exposed the limits of Keynesian demand management, whose reliance on deficit spending failed to overcome the built-in capitalist trade cycle of boom and slump. In response, Keynesianism gave way to a more market-oriented policy framework – monetarism – the cornerstone of the emerging neoliberal order.

The Technocracy Movement, having peaked in the 1930s, declined sharply thereafter. Some of its core ideas were simply absorbed into wartime economic planning, making the movement somewhat redundant. Later, in the context of the Cold War, its anti-market and central-planning orientation fell out of favour because of the perceived resemblance to Soviet state planning. At the same time, the technocratic approach to problem-solving was subjected to mounting criticism from a countercultural (and particularly environmentalist) perspective.

For technocracy as a concept to survive, it had to adapt. One interesting example of this was the Venus Project (TVP).

The Venus Project

TVP’s origins can be traced back to the 1970s, though it officially began life in 1995. Its founders were Jacque Fresco, a structural engineer, industrial designer and futurist author who had been involved in the Technocracy Movement in the 1930s, and Roxanne Meadows, an illustrator, designer and architect. They established a research centre at a place called Venus in Florida (hence the name) and published material promoting their ideas.

From a socialist standpoint, TVP unquestionably represented an advance over the old Technocracy Movement. Whereas the latter proposed a system of rationing in the form of ‘energy certificates,’ TVP advocated, instead, a ‘free access’ model for the distribution of goods and services. This required making the industrial and natural resources of the planet the common heritage of all humanity. All forms of sectional or private ownership (including state property) of the means of production would cease to exist.

Thus, a resource-based economy (RBE) would mean goods and services being freely available to individuals to take for themselves, with cybernetic feedback and automated resource management working to ensure adequate real-time availability.

Another breakthrough was TVP’s rejection of the concept of a single universal unit of accounting (money, labour-time or energy units). The need for this only arises in a system based on *quid pro quo* exchange, where you have to ensure that what is being exchanged is equivalent. This requires commensurability.

However, commensurability becomes irrelevant in a non-exchange, free-access model. Accounting, according to TVP, would be based on purely physical metrics,

dubbed ‘resource-based accounting.’ This resembles the socialist idea of calculation-in-kind, but the emphasis is more on resource flows and biophysical limits (an example of technocracy’s adaptation to environmental criticism).

However, there are also serious flaws in TVP’s outlook. One is its attitude towards democratic decision-making. Fresco’s approach differed from that of the top-down approach of the Technocracy Movement. He was wary of entrusting scientists with excessive power to make decisions affecting others. He preferred a decentralised system based on collaborative design and making extensive use of automated AI-optimised feedback systems.

In fact, the socialist principle of free access endorsed by TVP is precisely what would pre-empt the possibility of concentrated or asymmetrical power emerging in a post-capitalist society. It removes any leverage that any group or individual could exercise over any other, and thus, is the ultimate guarantor of any truly ‘free’ society.

However, to go further and assert, as TVP does on its own website, that ‘it is doubtful that, in the latter part of the twenty-first century, people will play any significant role in decision-making’ is absurd.

As individuals, we will continue to play a decisive role in the choices we make concerning what we consume and what we contribute. This is implicit in the old socialist slogan, ‘from each according to ability to each according to need.’ An algorithm in a computer programme may facilitate (even anticipate) our choices, but they will still be ours to make. Otherwise, we are looking at some anti-humanistic dystopia where the machines have taken over.

Importantly, there will also be joint decisions to be made that, by their very nature, (inevitably) impact multiple individuals who, accordingly, should have a say in making them. Joint decisions will need to be made at different spatial levels – local, regional and even global – examples of which are literally countless.

You cannot depend on a machine, however sophisticated, to make these decisions for you. This is because they involve human values and human interests. The sociological naiveté of the technological determinists, in that respect, is truly remarkable.

Fresco himself argued ‘Democracy is a con game. It’s a word invented to placate people to make them accept a given institution’ (2002). Democracy may well be a ‘con game’ in a plutocratic capitalist society, but that is definitely not because there is too much of it but rather, too little!

Another serious flaw in TVP’s approach is its repudiation of economic classes and

class struggle. On its website, it states, ‘In no way does The Venus Project advocate this approach to social change. In contrast, The Venus Project approaches social change as a process of guided evolution and a problem of engineering to produce a working alternative.’

This immediately prompts the question – if TVP advocates for the common ownership of the industrial and natural resources by humanity as the material basis of the moneyless post-capitalist world it desires, how is this to be realised without first removing the possibility for a tiny owning class to monopolise these resources at the expense of the rest of humanity? In short, how can you possibly avoid ‘class’? ‘Classlessness’ is implicit in the very way TVP frames its vision of a post-capitalist society, so achieving it, almost by definition, has to involve confronting this vexed question of class.

Broligarchy

Technology is not neutral; it is fundamentally conditioned by today’s class ownership and control of the means of production. This is becoming increasingly apparent in the light of recent developments.

There has been much talk recently about the rise of ‘techno-fascism,’ a dangerous new force, particularly visible in American politics, representing a ‘broligarchy’ of far-right tech billionaires bent on seizing power and reshaping the body politic to suit their interests and ideological inclinations, technology being the means by which they aspire to realise this elitist vision.

In truth, American politics has always been deeply plutocratic, with only the merest paper-thin claim to being a functioning ‘democracy,’ while being constantly subjected to the enormous power of lobby groups and political donations (bribes). Indeed, some argue that the Founding Fathers themselves framed the Constitution precisely this way to guarantee this outcome – ensuring that the interests of the rich and powerful would be perpetually protected.

However, recent developments, particularly since Donald Trump’s return to office in 2025, suggest a turn for the worse. It has prompted some to ask whether, given the inordinate influence now being exercised by people like Peter Thiel (aided and abetted by the far-right blogger, Curtis Yarvin), Elon Musk and others, this does indeed represent an attempt on the part of these tech billionaires to ‘seize power’ and dismantle what little there is of democracy in America.

Some commentators suggest that these people see themselves as some kind of *Übermensch*, superior to everyone else.

They resent any barrier in their path or any constraint that would rein in their wealth or power. An example is Thiel, a venture capitalist with a current (2025) personal worth of approximately \$22 billion:

‘In a 2009 Cato Unbound essay, Thiel wrote: “I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible.” That wasn’t just a provocation, it was a programmatic declaration that aligns him with authoritarians both abroad and at home — culminating in a second Trump administration that daily tests the limits of US constitutional democracy. Climate change, racial justice, and economic inequality all become “distractions” in this framework as they demand collective effort and overlapping interests’ (Christopher Marquis, *Jacobin*, 6 Oct 2025, tinyurl.com/4bm5zs74).

If nothing else, this should serve as a salutary reminder of the risk of relying too much on ‘techno-fixes’ that can sometimes have unintended, and even runaway, negative consequences. Of course, there should always be scope for technological innovation and progress. But innovation should be adapted to, and informed by, the needs and concerns of society in general, and that is simply not possible in a society based on minority class ownership of the means of production.

This is what fundamentally obstructs the implementation of a resource-based economy. Failure to acknowledge this in a bid to appear less ‘partisan’ condemns TVP to promoting an approach that can only depict a future that might be called a ‘nice idea’ but one incapable of being realised.

The Zeitgeist Movement

TVP gave rise to a spin-off called the Zeitgeist Movement (TZM), dubbed the ‘activist arm’ of TVP. It was founded in 2008 by Peter Joseph, a filmmaker, and rapidly expanded to the point of having up to 250 local chapters worldwide, attracting many thousands of supporters. Whereas TVP focused more on blueprints and designing sustainable structures, such as ‘circular cities,’ TZM emphasised grassroots activism and cultural transformation. Underlying tensions arising from these differences in approach resulted in TVP and TZM drifting apart in 2011.

As with TVP, there is much in what TZM says that socialists can endorse, but there are also fundamental, even irreconcilable, differences, particularly over the question of class and the need for democracy.

Nevertheless, any attempt to transcend the rigid barriers a money-based mindset imposes on our thinking is welcome and a step forward. The point is, surely, to take serious steps further in that direction.

ROBIN COX

A word to the electors of Clapham Park



Credit: Adobe Stock

Our manifesto for a local council by-election in Lambeth on 9 July.

YOU ARE being asked to vote in yet another election. The other parties will come to you with lists of promises: more housing, safer streets, better parks, protection for LGBTQ+ people. They will tell you that if you elect them to the council, they will manage capitalism a little more humanely.

We say: we have all heard these promises before. Labour, Lib Dem, Green, they have all sat in the council chamber. The housing crisis has deepened. Rents have soared. Our parks have been fenced off for private profit. And still they ask for your vote on the promise that this time it will be different.

The SOCIALIST PARTY does not make promises we cannot keep. We do not ask you to vote for us in order to administer capitalism more efficiently. We ask you to use your vote as a weapon of class consciousness, to register that you understand the root cause of every problem facing Clapham Park, and that the solution lies not in the council chamber but in the abolition of the wages system itself.

Housing: against privatisation, for the commons

Lambeth Council has spent decades

selling off, demolishing, and privatising the housing stock that working people in Clapham Park depend upon. Council homes have been transferred to housing associations. Estates have been handed to developers under 'regeneration' schemes that mean demolition for tenants and luxury flats for investors. The Clapham Park Estate itself has seen the slow erosion of social housing, replaced by 'mixed tenure' developments where the 'mix' means that those with money and those without are segregated within the same postcode.

The other parties will tell you they will build more 'affordable' homes. But 'affordable' to whom? To the buy-to-let landlord? To the overseas investor with an empty flat? To the young professional on a six-figure salary? Affordable housing is a contradiction in terms under a system where land and property are commodities to be speculated upon.

The SOCIALIST PARTY has always maintained that housing problems cannot be solved by reform. Every reform, council housing, rent control, 'right to buy', has been absorbed, undermined or reversed by the logic of capital. As we argued in the *Socialist Standard* over a century ago, and as history has proven again and again: what is given by reformist legislation is taken back by economic necessity.

From a socialist perspective, we do not seek to 'improve' social housing as a transition to socialism. We recognise that

the very form of the commodity, whether a council flat or a private apartment, must be abolished. Housing must cease to be an asset class and become a commons, a space for social engagement, collectively controlled and freely accessible. The 'communalisation of housework' demanded by feminist commons theorists is inseparable from the communalisation of housing itself.

Housing under capitalism means rent, mortgage debt, eviction, and 'regeneration' that regenerates profit for developers while displacing tenants. Council housing, housing associations, 'affordable' rents — all are attempts to manage this contradiction, and all have failed because they leave the wages system intact.

Socialism means the common ownership of land and buildings. No rent. No landlords. No 'property ladder.' Shelter produced and distributed according to need, not according to ability to pay. This is not a policy to be voted through a council chamber. It is a necessary part of working-class revolution.

Brockwell Park: ecology against 'parksplotation'

Brockwell Park is being destroyed before our eyes. Not by neglect, but by commercialisation. Lambeth Council has handed our park to Brockwell Live, a festival operator owned by the private equity firm KKR, managers of approximately £600

Socialist Standard July 2026

billion in assets, with average returns of 18-23 percent. KKR is accountable only to its shareholders. It has no interest in our park, our ecology, or our community.

The result? Up to 32 days of fenced-off, ticketed events. The 'Great Wall' erected across public land. Ancient trees damaged. Grasslands turned to mud. And for what? So that profits can be extracted from what was once free space for all, then funnelled through a Luxembourg holding company while Lambeth claims it needs the revenue to 'subsidise' the very community events it has now cancelled.

This is not mismanagement. This is capitalism functioning exactly as designed: the enclosure of the commons, the selling-off of things we all use, the subordination of our natural and social landscape to the imperative of profit.

The Green Party will tell you to vote for them to 'protect' the park. But 'protection' within capitalism means regulation, consultation, planning permission, a slower form of the same enclosure. The Labour Council, meanwhile, has been found by the High Court to have acted unlawfully and irrationally in its handling of these events. Yet they press on.

From a socialist standpoint, we reject the framework that says Brockwell Park must 'pay for itself.' Public space is not a revenue stream. Ecology is not a balance sheet. The SOCIALIST PARTY has long argued that capitalism treats the environment as a 'free good' to be exploited at no cost to capital. We say: the park belongs to the people who use it, not to the council that administers it, and certainly not to a private equity firm.

Brockwell Park under capitalism is being enclosed by KKR because every space is subject to the logic of the profit system. Labour has managed the park's enclosure. The Greens would regulate it. Neither questions the system that requires it.

Only socialism can de-commodify public space. Only when production is for use, not profit, can a park be simply a park — trees, grass, birdsong, and the free association of human beings without ticket barriers, security fences, or 'events strategies.'

LGBTQ safety on Clapham High Street

Clapham High Street should be a space where LGBTQ people can move freely and safely. The recent history of violence, harassment, and hate crime in the area is real and must be addressed. But how it is addressed matters.

The other parties will tell you the answer is more police. More CCTV. More 'hate crime' legislation. More reporting mechanisms that funnel vulnerable people

into the arms of the same criminal justice system that disproportionately arrests, harasses, and imprisons LGBTQ people especially trans people, and sex workers.

The SOCIALIST PARTY has always maintained that the police are not a neutral force. They are, as we have argued since 1904, part of the coercive wing of the capitalist state. Their function is not to protect the vulnerable but to protect property and the social order that produces vulnerability. The modern police force emerged to discipline the working class, break strikes, and enforce the property relations that create the conditions for violence in the first place. As we have consistently pointed out, the police do not prevent crime; they manage its distribution, channelling it away from the wealthy and toward the poor.

The 'community policing' advocated by some reformists is no solution. It merely extends the reach of surveillance and control into our neighbourhoods under a friendlier face. The abolition of state policing does not mean its replacement by 'community policing;' it means the abolition of the conditions that make policing 'necessary.'

From a socialist perspective, safety is not produced by force but by different social relations. When housing is secure, when work is voluntary, when gender is not a source of economic precarity, when the 'family' is not the enforced unit of social reproduction, then the violence that policing claims to address withers away. The work of collectives like Cradle Community, developing transformative responses to harm that do not rely on coercive institutions, shows us what is possible. But these experiments remain trapped within capitalism, unable to address the structural roots of the violence they respond to.

Policing under capitalism is not a neutral service but the defence of property relations. The police do not prevent violence against LGBTQ people; they manage its distribution, channelling it toward the poor and the marginalised. 'Community policing' fulfils the same role, but with a friendlier face.

The socialist alternative is not a different kind of policing but the abolition of the conditions that make policing 'necessary.' This is not reform. This is revolution.

Why we stand

THE SOCIALIST PARTY is often called 'impossibilist.' We accept the term. We were given it by reformists who thought socialism could be achieved piece by piece, reform by reform, compromise by compromise. Over 120 years, we have watched every such attempt fail or become diluted. The welfare

state was built then partially dismantled. Council housing was built and sold off. The 'right to work' became the obligation to work for a pittance.

We do not stand for allegedly 'possible' improvements within capitalism. We stand for the so-called impossible: a world without wages, without landlords, without police, without states; a world where production is for use, not profit; where the means of life are held in common; where human need, not the accumulation of capital, governs society.

This is not a distant utopia to be achieved after a 'transition period.' It is not a programme to be implemented by a party or a state. It is the practical activity of working people abolishing for themselves the divisive and exploitative categories of wage, commodity, property, gender and race.

We do not ask you to vote for us in order to 'represent' you in the council chamber. We ask you to vote for us in order to register your rejection of the entire framework of capitalist politics. Every vote for the SOCIALIST PARTY is a vote for the common ownership of the means of life. It is a declaration that you understand that Clapham Park's problems over housing, ecology, safety, dignity cannot be solved by better management of the same system that produces them.

The only way forward

The other candidates will tell you they can make Lambeth 'better.' We tell you the truth: Lambeth cannot be made better while capitalism remains. The council, whatever its political colour, is an administrative body of a class state. It manages the affairs of capital in our locality. It cannot abolish the profit motive. It cannot communalise housing. It cannot de-commodify our parks. It cannot produce safety without force.

Only the conscious, organised working class can do these things. Only when the majority of people understand their interest in the abolition of capitalism and act upon that understanding can we move beyond the endless cycle of reform and reaction.

Your vote for Anya Krycek is not a vote for a councillor. It is a vote for socialism. It is a declaration that you refuse to be bought off with promises of 'affordable' rents and 'community' policing. It is a recognition that the problems of Clapham Park are the problems of the world system and that their solution requires the revolutionary transformation of that system.

Economic leverage

‘WORKERS FACE worst squeeze on real pay since 2022’ was the headline of an article in the *Times* (20 May) by its Economics Editor Mehreen Khan. In the first three months of this year, average weekly earnings increased by 3.4 percent, which was more or less the same as the rise in the Consumer Prices Index. ‘However’, Khan writes, ‘while real incomes are on course to flatline this year, the jump in global oil prices is expected to push annual inflation close to 4 per cent in the coming months’.

If average earnings go up by 3.4 percent and consumer prices go up by 4 percent, that’s a reduction in real pay for workers. So why don’t they simply go on strike and push up wages to keep up?

The answer is that workers don’t have the power to put up the price of what they have for sale — their labour power — just because they want to, even to cover a rise in the cost of what they need to produce what they are selling. They, like all other sellers, can only charge ‘what the market will bear’. And, as Khan and the economists she quotes note, the current state of the labour market will not allow an increase: ‘Rising prices, combined with a weakening job market —

where unemployment has risen to 5 per cent — means workers are losing their bargaining power to demand pay rises, economists said.’

One of the economists, Josie Anderson of the financial services group Namura, used the term ‘soft labour market’. This doesn’t mean what you might expect — surely, the current labour market is a ‘hard’ one as far as workers are concerned? — until you realise she was writing from the employers’ point of view as buyers of labour power. An AI definition of the term (cobbled together from other definitions) makes this clear:

‘A soft labor market (also called a “cooling” or “loose” labour market) is an economic environment where the supply of available workers outpaces the demand for labour. In this climate, hiring slows down, job seekers face stiffer competition, and employers regain negotiating leverage.’

Whether or by how much real pay goes up or down is a question of the respective bargaining strength of employers and workers, which in turn depends on the state of the labour market, but that is not something we are usually told by the media. Normally the story is of greedy workers causing inflation by forcing employers to agree to excessive wage demands.

Sometimes workers are in a favourable bargaining position and can maintain or push up real pay: when business is booming, finding a job is easy, and employers are making good profits; this ‘hard’ labour market for employers gives workers some ‘negotiating leverage’. That is the time to strike or threaten to strike. But the reverse of this is a ‘soft’ labour market for employers; it is they who are then in a stronger bargaining position, as at present and, according to one of the economists, for the fourth time ‘in less than two decades’.

We are talking here just about changes in bargaining leverage over the shortish-time price of labour power. Ultimately, over wages, the capitalist class have the upper hand as they monopolise productive resources. This gives them leverage to force workers to sell their labour-power for a wage in the first place. There is no bargaining about this; it’s just a fact of capitalist life that is imposed on workers. The way out for them is political not economic: to take political action to make the means of life commonly owned and democratically controlled by the whole community. Then there will be no labour market and no wages system.

Party News

Trust me, I’m a reformist

REMEMBER KAA, the snake in the cartoon version of *The Jungle Book*? A thoroughly dangerous and treacherous constrictor whose one interest in life is to get his coils around Mowgli and squeeze the life out of the poor lad.

He nearly manages it too, with his hypnotic eyes and the lisped lyrics of a song that goes:

‘Trusst in me, jusst in me, shut your eyes and trusst in me’.

And if you were to look for a common denominator of all the reformist parties currently slithering around in front of the working class, whatever the details of the various plans they’ve hatched to ensure a wonderful future for the likes of you and me, it would surely be this plea

to ‘Trusst in me’.

And they all echo one of Kaa’s follow-up lines, ‘You can sleep safe and sound, knowing I am around’.

And if you reckon that you will be able to sleep safe and sound by once again voting to hand over the administration of the capitalist system to any of these reformists, you are heading for yet another rude awakening. Because, as we will never tire of reminding you, the system cannot be made to work in the interest of the majority. The minority’s interest will and must always come first.

And unlike the fictional Kaa, who was after just one quick fatal squeeze, in the real world we’re trapped in the coils of a system that is designed to keep squeezing us to provide its owners with profit.

BUDGIE

Janet Carter – Obituary

We regret to have to report that our comrade Janet Carter died at the beginning of May at the age of 89. During the Second World War she was evacuated from the East End of London to Cornwall. Janet first came across the Socialist Party when she bought a *Socialist Standard* at an anti-Vietnam war demonstration in Trafalgar Square in 1967. The following year she joined the Haringey branch, having previously briefly been a member of the Communist Party. Later she was a member of the Redbridge, North London and latterly our Online Central Branch.

Nationally, Janet took on various responsibilities, serving at times as General Secretary, Executive Committee member, and Central Branch Secretary. During the Miners’ Strike of 1984-5 she had two children of miners stay with the family. She had started work as a shorthand typist, and later, after doing a part-time degree course, worked as a qualified librarian. She worked at Walthamstow Central Library where for a while she was a union rep too. She was predeceased by her husband Joe who had also been a Party member. She was a calm, considered voice in the Party who widely commanded the respect of members. Our condolences go to her daughter and son and other members of her family.

Grandeur designs

Credit: Channel 4



KEVIN MCCLLOUD'S *Listed Britain* (Channel 4) is a tour round the country's architectural heritage, particularly buildings which have been awarded 'listed' status. These are those which, because of their history, rarity or style, are deemed worth protecting. A listed building may not be demolished or altered without permission from its local planning authority, and renovations are expected to be carried out using sympathetic materials and techniques. Classifications differ across the UK: In England and Wales, 'Grade 1' confers the most protection, with 'Grade A' as the equivalent in Northern Ireland and 'Category A' in Scotland. The organisations which oversee this are various extensions of the state; in England and Scotland they are 'executive non-departmental public bodies'.

Without safeguarding our most significant buildings, the country would become 'a retail park with aspirations', according to presenter Kevin McCloud. Old structures 'speak through the generations', being physical reminders of the past. When we see their brickwork, carvings or fixtures and fittings, we can imagine the people who made them and the circumstances in which they lived. However, buildings get built because of the prerogatives of landowners and business owners rather than in the interests of those who construct them. The series' second episode covers structures which were intended to express the elite's position in society: 'the status symbols built to impress, dazzle and dominate', as McCloud puts it. Chatsworth House and gardens in Derbyshire were intentionally designed 'to communicate power'. Inside the main house, the most ostentatious display of wealth is the Painted Hall, which boasts an overwhelming range of murals above a cantilevered staircase, summed up by McCloud as 'gargantuan'. The estate was and is owned by the aristocratic Cavendish family, whose successive Dukes of Devonshire prompted expansions during

the 18th century, including demolishing part of a nearby village which apparently spoilt the view.

The building which most obviously embodies political power is the Palace of Westminster in London, completed in 1876 in the 'Gothic Revival' style. So, fittingly, Parliament is housed in an imposing, regimented relic of an outdated era. Also appropriate is that the structure has long been deteriorating and attempts to patch it up are too costly to be viable. McCloud wonders if the £35-40 billion needed to renovate the palace is worth it, as the same amount would fund the salaries of every NHS nurse for over two years. He asks 'do you want to see democracy crumble? Do you want to see all vestiges of it disappear, turn to a pile of dust, or do you want to repair it, keep it going?' 'We as a nation have to collectively decide' he adds, although the crumbling parliamentary democracy he describes doesn't really enable us to 'collectively decide' how the state functions.

As illustrated by the Palace of Westminster, listed status doesn't prevent a building from sliding into decline, and less prominent or unused sites are more vulnerable. The money system holds back buildings of historical and aesthetic importance being adequately maintained because the required skilled workers, specialist techniques and specific materials tend to be prohibitively expensive. Places attract income from visitors if there's a lot to see, but there isn't in 14th century Baguley Hall in Manchester, for example. 'Financial viability and money is always the problem' says heritage expert Catherine Dewar about the struggles with its upkeep.

Listed status isn't only granted to buildings well over a hundred years old. Cathedrals in Coventry and Liverpool from the mid-20th century have Grade 1 classification, as does another place of worship. Being a hub for the insurance market, the Lloyds building in London is

like a cathedral to commerce, where its congregation of underwriters and brokers put their faith in the economy. Completed at the height of yuppie-dom in 1986, with its pipes, lifts and facilities on the outside to leave more space in the middle for business, the Lloyds building looks like it's 'made by machines', and made for the machinery of capitalism.

Not all listed buildings reflect the power of the elite: a hidden grotto lined with seashells and London Zoo's Modernist penguin enclosure were more personal passion-projects. The programme is also keen to emphasise the 'positive energy' of community groups, campaigners and craftspeople working to preserve heritage architecture.

A framework for listing buildings could exist in a socialist society, although the context would be different to that of today. The notion of a cherished building under threat of destruction sits more in capitalism than socialism, as the impetus for destruction is invariably money-driven. Any scheme for listing buildings in a socialist society would be shaped by how they are 'owned'. The understanding and application of who owns buildings would be unlike that in capitalism, where possession is held by individuals or organisations, and 'legitimised' by legislation and money.

The situation with Mavisbank House in Midlothian, Scotland, highlights some of the quirks of ownership in our current society. Constructed in the 1720s as the first villa in the Palladian style in Scotland, by the late 20th century the building was a ruin. The Lothian Preservation Trust's aims of restoration were complicated by Mavisbank's ownership not being clear. Its last documented owner claimed he sold it to three probably fictitious people, and he also sold off its access roads so its actual owner may not legally be able to get to it.

In a socialist society, buildings and their environment would be the responsibility of the community as a whole. So, there would be no separation between ownership and who uses buildings, avoiding one of the restrictions of the capitalist system. As a socialist society wouldn't ration its resources with money, another barrier to maintaining buildings wouldn't apply. Any rules about protecting significant buildings would be decided democratically and managed by whatever method is most accountable and fair. There would still be disputes over whether or not a particular construction should be retained, but their resolution would be more straightforward and transparent, compared with the financial constraints, hierarchies and bureaucracy of capitalism.

MIKE FOSTER

Another New Left

THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING
THE MAKING OF A NEW LEFT, FROM ANTI-AUSTERITY TO THE FALL OF CORBYN
 MICHAEL CHESSUM

This is Only the Beginning. The Making of a New Left, From Anti-Austerity to the Fall of Corbyn.
 By Michael Chessum.
 Bloomsbury.
 2022. 230pp.

AFTER THE collapse of the USSR at the beginning of the 1990s 'socialism' became discredited. It had supposedly been tried and had failed. Apologists for capitalism proclaimed that capitalism was the only game in town and even the end-point of history. After the financial crash of 2008 the tide began to turn and 'capitalism' came to be unpopular. An anti-capitalist movement of sorts arose, demanding that people should come before profits. Chessum was himself involved in this, both as a student activist and later as a Corbynite (he was a treasurer of Momentum).

The decade began with student fury at the breaking by the Liberal Democrats of their election pledge to abolish student tuition fees, when they entered into a coalition government with the Conservatives after the 2010 General Election. Universities up and down the country were occupied and the Tory party's HQ in London ransacked. Then there was the campaign of direct action by UnCut against the premises of firms that were avoiding paying UK taxes by operating from tax havens. Then the campaign against the austerity measures imposed by the Coalition government. The movement had been given a boost by the Occupy movement of 2011 which identified a more general enemy than the government: the 'top 1%', the super-rich.

Chessum concedes that none of these campaigns was a success and writes of 'the defeat of the anti-austerity movement' (p. 104). What, for him, was positive were the new organisational form and methods of these movements: anti-hierarchical with actions being decided by groups of activists on the ground themselves and not directed by some leadership. This meant that not just the Labour Party but also the Leninist groups had no attraction for them and both stagnated.

Ironically, the second half of the decade saw the entry of many of the 'anti-capitalists' into the Labour Party, to elect Corbyn as Leader (twice) and then to try to change the Labour Party. That didn't work out partly because, as Chessum himself experienced, the approach of those around Corbyn was also top-down.

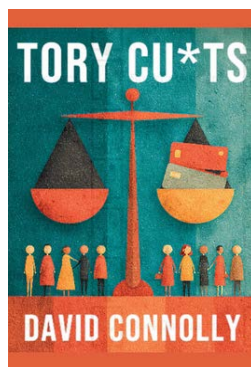
Corbyn resigned as Labour leader in 2020 following Labour's poor showing in the 2019 general election and his opponents took back control of the party. So, another defeat. That's where the book ends, but with Chessum confidently predicting that the anti-capitalist movement would find political expression in some other way. Hence the book's title.

Obviously, it is a good thing that these days there are more people than there were in a recent past who recognise that capitalism puts profits before people and that something should be done about it. But what? Most anti-capitalists seem to think that, with enough pressure from below and with enough determined political will, people can be put before profit; that in effect capitalism can be reformed to allow this. But the experience of past attempts to do this have shown that it can't be. Attempts to do this from below will fail just as surely as past attempts from above have done. It's not a question of the method used but the fact that it is economically impossible to make capitalism put people before profit. Capitalism is driven by profit-making which must — and in the end always does — come first.

Chessum's prediction that the movement would not die with Corbynism has since been borne out. When last July Sultana and Corbyn announced the launch of a new leftwing party, 800,000 expressed an interest. But the two made a mess of it and in the end most went on to join or support the Green Party. Chessum himself was among these and is now a Green Party councillor and Council Cabinet member for 'Economy, Cost of Living and Empowered Communities'. Let's see how he does.

ALB

Cut and thrust



Tory Cuts.
 By David Connolly.
 Self-published.
 2026.

This has been advertised in the classified section of Private Eye and is clearly aimed at the sub-section of society that is actively critical about the way UK society and its economy operate. It is at times amusing and frustrating, the latter mainly because of the large number of editing errors and the rather scattergun approach to structure —

there is an underpinning narrative thread, but it really does test the patience of the reader as it often meanders off on tangents. At root, it needed a much finer editorial hand.

The over-arching theme is that the approach to economic management favoured by the Conservative Party in recent decades (and to some extent Labour) is a form of neo-liberalism that has only served to damage the UK economy, engender class division and infect the UK public sphere. Connolly's solution seems to be Social Democratic Party-style economic interventionism allied with aspects of social conservatism. In some ways it is a 'back to the future' scenario as all this has been tried before and the social democratic economies of Europe (Scandinavia in particular) that he lauds have now been beset by similar issues. Indeed, pretty much all of them have seen falls in their growth rates like the UK and their halcyon days seem well and truly over, with resulting social discontent which hasn't been seen in decades and a concomitant rise of the populist right.

It should be added that there is some very selective use of statistics in this book and some of them could be questioned too (including the over-stated claim that workers in the UK are losing 10 percent of our wages for every 10 years of neo-liberalism). But it is entertaining in parts and brings out the class divide at the heart of society well enough.

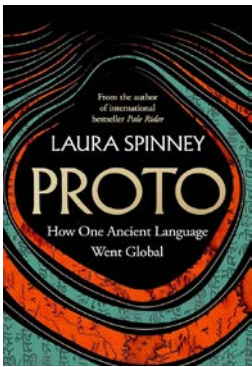
The solution to the problems Connolly identifies lies not in a return to a mythical social democratic past though — a past, after all, that was perceived as being so glorious the working class elected Thatcher and her successors in gratitude. Furthermore, much of what Connolly blames on neo-liberalism and monetarist economics — such as the decline in UK manufacturing — is really much more a product of the shift in world capitalism away from many of the traditional metropolitan centres of capital in Western Europe to China, India and the Far East instead, where labour costs are lower. For instance, while it is true that the proportion of UK jobs in manufacturing fell from around 25 percent of the workforce in 1980 to about 8 percent now, in Germany it fell from around 40 percent to about 19 percent, France from 25 percent to under 12 percent and Spain from about 20 percent to 10 percent. There has been a big fall in the neo-liberal US economy too, of course, though actually less than any of these European countries, many of whom use the same type of broadly social democratic approach he favours.

Ultimately, the underlying cause of the issues Connolly is rightly concerned about is not the actions of Tory governments and those who wish to copy them like Blair and Starmer — it is the way society is organised.

Class division, economic instability and an uneven, antagonistic system of income distribution are at the very heart of all market economies, irrespective of political colours. Top-down, class-divided, based on entitlement and exclusion, with untold riches for a tiny minority and salary slavery for everybody else – that’s the capitalist way and it will need a lot more than a modification of personnel at the top to make it history.

DAP

Indo-European



Proto. How One Ancient Language Went Global. By Laura Spinney. William Collins. 2026. 342pp.

‘Migration has been a constant, “indigenous” is relative’ - Laura Spinney.

This is a book about the ancient language commonly known as Proto Indo-European which, starting around 5,000 years ago, began to spread beyond its home territory in the west Eurasian steppe (modern Ukraine, Moldova, southern Russia) in various different directions. As it did so, it gradually evolved into many different languages according to where the people speaking it went and settled.

Modern research has shown that today approximately half the world’s population speak a variant of that ancestral language in places as far apart as, for example, India and Britain, Iran and Iceland, Russia and the United States. What kind of research are we talking about? Archaeological, linguistic and, most recently, genetic. As the book’s author puts it, ‘the new tools of archaeology and genetics [largely via DNA] have opened our eyes to our past’. And she shows a breathtaking panoply of knowledge in these fields as well as a profound and detailed understanding of historical developments across the world since the earliest times. Furthermore, while producing a work of consummate scholarship, she manages to communicate her material with a reader-friendly lightness of touch and a style which, much of the time, is downright entertaining.

So, as the original Indo-Europeans moved east, west and south from their homeland, they came into contact with other peoples speaking other languages. Sometimes they ended up adopting the languages they came into contact with, but more often they carried on speaking a form of their original

language modified by the different forms of speech of those they interacted with. To such an extent in fact that, over a period of time, many of the languages deriving from Indo-European became mutually incomprehensible – as is the case today between, say, Hindi and English or Russian and French or Welsh and Kurdish, all of which are of Indo-European origin.

The story of the spread of the common ancestor of many of the roughly 7,000 languages spoken around the world today is also part of the story of the wider inbuilt ability of the human species to adapt to changing circumstances of life – referred to by some writers as ‘plasticity’. We are talking here about human behaviour more generally and the truth that the way a human group organises itself in a given physical or social environment context has never been eternal but rather is subject to change according to conditions and circumstances and has been ever-shifting over history.

In its own way, therefore, the story so eloquently told in this book serves as an object lesson to opponents of the idea that there is no alternative to the kind of society we live in and that other different social arrangements, such as the free-access society advocated by socialists, are impossible or ‘utopian’. Those who maintain that we must continue to accept and live in a society divided by class and wealth would do well to heed the fact, made abundantly clear by Laura Spinney, that, in the less than 2 percent of the whole of human history she covers in her book (ie 5,000 years out of 300,000), we have undergone and adapted to multiple changes both linguistically and in a host of other domains. And there is certainly more of this to come. Just as, in Spinney’s words, ‘throughout humanity’s long existence, languages have never ceased to absorb and change each other’, we look forward to changed social arrangements in the future which will allow humans to move from the realm of oppression and necessity to that of cooperation and abundance.

HKM

Exhibition Review **Betrayal?**

In May we reviewed an exhibition at the People’s History Museum in Manchester marking the centenary of the General Strike. There are a number of exhibitions on this topic (see generalstrike100.com), including one at the Working Class Movement Library in Salford, which is on until December, and focuses more on the strike itself, rather than the years since. It is entitled ‘A Great Betrayal?’, which clearly indicates its main theme.

The display consists of information boards

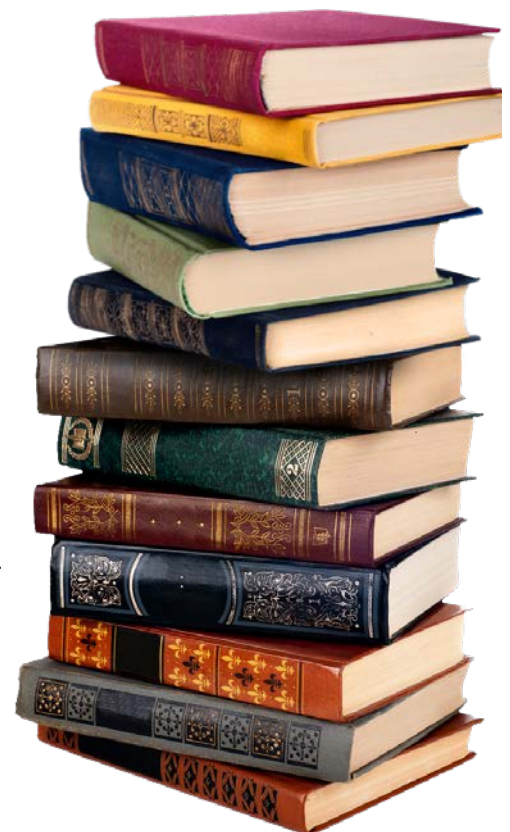
plus some original documents. It is made clear that the government had prepared for a confrontation beforehand, for instance by setting up the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies, and it referred to the strike as an attempted revolution. All army officers were required to participate in strike-breaking. The BBC of course did not present the union side of the dispute. The TUC, which apparently turned down an offer of financial support from Russia, voted for a general strike, but as a defensive action, not as a challenge to the authority of the state (though it is not at all clear what that could have involved).

The information boards are made more personal by including information about individual workers and their treatment. For instance, the miner Bill Muckle spent over two years in prison after helping to derail the Flying Scotsman train, while Jack Forshaw was arrested for distributing a supposedly seditious pamphlet. He was diabetic and died after being mistreated in jail, before being sentenced.

The documents displayed include a booklet on the impact of the strike in Bolton, and also copies of various strike bulletins and of the *British Worker* and the government propaganda sheet *The British Gazette*.

An informative exhibition, though naturally rather restricted in its coverage, and also rather optimistic about what might have been achieved.

PB



The class issue in the American Revolution

WHAT, IF anything, does the Declaration of Independence mean? The approach of its 200th anniversary has produced a small deluge of reviews of the saga of American history and the 'truths' adopted on 4th July 1776. There must be many who, having read and listened, still wonder why a nation claiming to be founded on 'inalienable rights' of equality, freedom of speech and thought and 'the pursuit of happiness' manifestly does not have them. The answer is that the Declaration of Independence was framed as the expression of one class's economic interests...

The greater part of the Declaration of Independence consists of political attacks on George III. In Britain the Georges were supported by the Tory representatives of the landowning aristocracy while the Whigs, standing for the interests of developing capitalism and freedom of trade, were still struggling. In America, still in its early stages, the class issues were confused but the dominant interests were those from which the capitalist class originated: the smuggling merchants, land speculators, and would-be manufacturers. The Tories comprised large landholders, 'respectable' merchants, officials and dependants of the British regime, and the Church of England faction...

The War of Independence ended in 1782, one month before the Tory government fell and the Americans' Whig allies came to power in Britain. This was the beginning of capitalism's rise to maturity. How much the Declaration of Independence meant, and whom it stood for, can be seen in the fact that in the mid-1780s out of an American population of 3½ million (excluding Indians) only 400,000 were 'free' men. Its principles, and the ideas of democracy it embodied, were cast aside almost immediately...

The history books show Independence to have been essential to the emergence of a great modern nation: the creation of a strong central government controlled by the manufacturing and commercial class. The capitalists were a revolutionary class, advancing the capacities of mankind immeasurably. What the Declaration of Independence shows is their inability to fulfil those capacities after two hundred years. Like the aristocracy from whose grip they broke, from a dynamic social force they have long since become an obstruction to mankind. It is time for the next move, to Socialism.

(Socialist Standard, July 1976)

Action Replay

Fifteen to one

WE HAVE written before about the financial problems of professional tennis players (see *Action Replay* for August 2024 and May 2025). The question has now arisen again, with some top players demanding a bigger share of the takings at the largest tournaments, the Majors or Grand Slams (Paris, Wimbledon, Melbourne, New York). They have taken the drastic step of cutting short press interviews, and have also threatened a possible boycott. Taking part in interviews is a requirement at Grand Slams.

This may sound a bit over the top, as the leading players are millionaires, but that is not the whole story. The tactic is to limit interviews to 15 minutes, as a reference to the 15 percent of revenue that the big tournaments allocate to prize money. For instance, the All-England Lawn Tennis Club had an income of £427m in the year to July 2025; players have asked for 22 percent of revenue to go to prize money by 2030.

The players also want the Grand Slams to contribute more to pension and maternity funds, and wish to have more of a say in tournament organisation. This would mean less gruelling schedules and fewer late-night finishes. So working conditions are a bone of contention, as for most of those who have to work for a wage.

To illustrate the kinds of problems that players can have, Maja Chwalińska was runner-up in the recent French Open, her

first success at that level. Her prize was €1.4 million, which of course is pretty impressive. But she did not receive her earnings until after the tournament ended, so she had problems paying for her hotel in Paris, though a Polish company did step in to cover the costs. Losing in the first round would get €87,000 for a woman player. Aryna Sabalenka, the world number one, said, 'It's about the players who are lower in the ranking, who are suffering.'

It has been claimed that to break even

as a player you need to be in the world's top 75, with travel and accommodation costs eating up a large part of a player's income, together with hiring a coach and a physiotherapist. Players from South America have to pay larger amounts than most to compete in tournaments in other parts of the world. Winning £300,000 in a season probably sounds quite reasonable, but it will probably be just enough to break even. The Grand Slams are the major sources of income for players lower down the ladder.

So what may seem from the outside to be a glamorous way of earning a living can for many be a pretty hard grind.

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.

July 2026 Events

World Socialist Movement online meetings

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.

Friday 10 July 7.30pm

Socialism and Football

Speaker: Bill Martin

Friday 17 July 7.30pm

Have You Heard the News?

Discussion of recent happenings.

Host: Paddy Shannon

Friday 24 July 7.30pm

Racists can't define race

Speaker: Paul Bennett

Friday 31 July 7.30pm

To be Arranged

Socialist Party

Physical Meetings

DURHAM

Saturday 11 July

Durham Miners Gala

Old Racecourse, Durham

The Socialist Party will have a stall in the indoor marquee area.

LONDON

Sunday 26 July 3pm

Public Meeting

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.



Declaration of Principles

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

Object

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

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

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

will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

Detectorists and grave robbers

I RECENTLY tuned in to two investigative series on Radio 4. Though they told what on the surface seemed quite different tales, they were linked by an important, in fact fundamental feature of the society we live in. They both equally vividly illustrated the hold that money has on us and the lengths to which some of us will go to obtain it. The first one told the story of two metal detectorists who stumbled upon a hoard of ancient Anglo-Saxon coins and decided not to follow the legal requirement to surrender them to the Treasury but to keep them and try to sell them secretly. The series was aptly entitled 'Fool's Gold', since, in the end, the 'gold' they found had disastrous results for them. The second one, 'The Grave Robbers', investigated the fraudulent methods used by a covert group to claim the estates of people who die without leaving a will.

Detectorists declaring their discovery of ancient coins or artefacts are entitled to 50 percent of what the Treasury deems to be their value, the other 50 percent going to the owner of the land on which they were found. That value, however, is usually only a fraction of what collectors will pay on the black market. In this case the 'official' value of the coins in question was likely to be up to £12m. But the 50 percent of that amount the discoverers would have been eligible to receive was not enough for them and they chose to try to sell the coins themselves. It didn't work, since, as the series told us, in the close-knit detectorist community secrets don't stay secret for long, especially as, when some of the coins started appearing at a Mayfair auction house, rumours of an undeclared hoard begin to spread. The upshot was that the detectorists were exposed and went on the run, but finished up in the dock accused of theft and given prison sentences. However, hundreds of the coins remained unaccounted for, and still do.

The other series, 'The Grave Robbers', investigated a different kind of fraud, one where a 'crime group' uses forged wills to claim ownership of houses when people who lived in them on their own die without leaving a will. The 'gang' forges wills, as the programme put it, 'to take the homes of the dead', with the result that any genuine heirs that might exist are left with nothing. The series found that the group in question, based



in Eastern Europe, was also involved in cannabis farms, money laundering and the sale of fake UK work visas. We hear from neighbours of a deceased man how the gang, using false but legally approved documents, had taken possession of his house, selling everything of value and using the property for whatever purpose they saw fit.

Both these stories illustrate the rampant hold that money or the prospect of it can have on human actions. And they are of course just the tip of the iceberg. We know that every day multiple attempts of all description are made to carry out what has come to be called 'scam' activity at the expense of both individuals and institutions, facilitated of course by the tools of electronic media.

Should we be surprised at this? Probably not, since the class-divided system we live in, where a tiny minority own most of the wealth and the vast majority own little but their ability to work for that majority in order to keep their heads above water, is by its nature a dog-eat-dog affair. Though vast wealth rarely brings meaningful satisfaction to the minority who have it, they do have praise and privilege heaped upon them, creating the temptation among others to look for ways of becoming part of that, to 'get rich', even at the expense of others who have little themselves. There is much talk of guarding against scams, but, within a system ruled by money, profit and wealth accumulation, such activities cannot be controlled. There may be attempts, via legislation or policing, to curb their extent, but, as with the other multiple problems the system throws up, it is unlikely to end up as anything more than tinkering at the edges.

Having said this, we must also observe that, though few people would mind having more money or being rich, the vast majority of us would not stoop to

cheating or deceiving other individuals to achieve that purpose. At the same time, it cannot be denied that, while we are essentially cooperative creatures, we are also capable of a wide range of non-cooperative behaviours according to the situations we find ourselves in or are imposed on us. So, in some of us, the competitive nature of the society we live in can trigger anti-social forms of behaviour – the so-called 'worst instincts'. Yet we all know from personal experience and on a day-to-day basis that most of those around us, far from seeking to make gain at the expense or disadvantage of others, are more likely to go out of their way to come to their assistance. It is, in fact, no exaggeration to say that even the very system we live in, competitive though it is at the core, depends on us cooperating with one another on a day-to-day basis in order for it to operate. The remarkable thing is that, though 'money rules' is the bane of most people's existence, dictating actions and priorities and often causing hardship and suffering, this does not prevent so many of us from behaving generously towards others even if it means financial loss or inconvenience for ourselves. The recent World Happiness Report by Gallup, after carrying out exhaustive research, concludes that a key source of human happiness is being generous to others and engaging in volunteering activity (tinyurl.com/h2t2zsc). This writer can only reflect on how much more effectively human cooperation and generosity would flourish in the moneyless society based on voluntary work, democratic organisation and free access to all goods and services that we call socialism.

HOWARD MOSS