

THE

August 2026 • Volume 122 • Number 1464 • £1.50

SOCIALIST STANDARD

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

The Burnham ~~R~~evolution

New PM plans big changes



A



B



C



Options: A B C,
C C B A, B A C,
C A B, etc...)

Also: Trouble at 't mill
Workers don't control political power
Zeitgeist: a moneyless society
with alienation

The Parkrun – an inkling of socialism?
Mud slinging
Durham Miners Gala



Features

Trouble at 't mill	10
Workers don't control political power	12
Zeitgeist: a moneyless society with alienation	13
The Parkrun – an inkling of socialism?	14
Mud slinging	15
Durham Miners Gala	16

Regulars

Editorial	3
Pathfinders	4

Letters	5
Cooking the Books I	6
Halo Halo	7
Tiny tips	7
Material World	9
Cooking the Books II	18
Proper Gander	19
Reviews	20
50 Years Ago	22
Action Replay	22
Meetings	23
Life & Times	24

Cover image: © Adobe Stock

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'

Burnham's plan to rearrange the chairs

THE NEW Prime Minister seems to have borrowed the argument for his flagship policy from the Welsh and Scots Nationalists. Their mantra is that the problems faced by workers living in their geographical area are due to political decisions being made in London rather than in Cardiff or Edinburgh. Burnham's variation is that the way to solve the problems that workers in England face is to transfer more decision-making powers from London to regional mayors.

These proposals are based on the assumption that governments are able to control the way the capitalist economy works. All the evidence shows that this is not the case. Governments don't, and can't, control how capitalism works. It is, rather, the other way round. The capitalist economy generates economic laws which limit what governments can do in that the only choice they have is between giving priority to profits or provoking an economic slowdown.

If you believe that governments can control the economy you will mistakenly

conclude that solving the problems facing workers is a matter of government policy and that the policy pursued by those who decide what governments do is the key factor. But, as in fact governments can't control the way the economy works — can't overcome its basic economic law that profits must come first — then who makes or where the decision is made to give priority to profit-making is unimportant. Whether this decision is made in London or Cardiff or Edinburgh or Manchester or Midsomer Norton is not going to make any difference. Capitalism will get its way, and as capitalism is the cause of the problems workers face, wherever they live, those problems will continue.

In any event, most decisions concerning the economy are not made by governments, national or regional, but by private enterprises whose goal is to maximise profits for their owners. None of the conventional parties challenge this. So their policies have to be 'business friendly' as it is private enterprises in pursuit of profits that decide what is produced.

Burnham's claim isn't even that devolving powers to regional mayors would directly benefit workers. It is only that it would, supposedly, benefit them by promoting 'growth' which would provide more jobs and extra tax revenue to improve education, the health services and public amenities (after paying more for 'defence'). Growth, in the sense of the accumulation out of profits of more capital, is what capitalism is all about but it is not something that a government can make happen. The most that a government can do is to maintain or create favourable conditions for profit-making for whenever those in charge of private enterprises see a prospect of making a profit.

It's not who makes decisions or where they make them but *what* they decide that is important, and what they decide is imposed by the economic laws of capitalism. We confidently predict that Burnham's 'Manchesterism' won't work, either to bring about capitalist growth or to solve workers' problems. It's no more than rearranging the chairs.

FREE
3-month trial
subscription
to the
**socialist
standard**



For a 3-month trial subscription to the **socialist standard**, or to request more details about the Socialist Party, complete and return this form to **52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN**.



Please send me an info pack



Please send me a trial subscription to the **socialist standard**

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

Subscription Orders should be sent to the address above. **Rates:** One year subscription (normal rate) £15. One year subscription (low/unwaged) £10. Europe rate £40 (Air mail). Rest of the world £40 (surface). Voluntary supporters subscription £20 or more. Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

Lost generations

Credit: Getty Images



LIKE A collective summer madness, the World Cup has passed into memory. While it's tempting to see such events as a harmless flag-waving celebration of ethnic and cultural diversity, the raising of a Malvinas banner after the England-Argentina semi-final was for many a dump of cold water. Rather than being a source of communal pride, nationalism is a nasty and manipulative ideology used to set the poor against each other in defence of the rich.

As media pundits pointed out before the game, the Falkland Islands have been a source of simmering resentment in Argentina ever since the 1982 war. Possibly the thinking is that because the islands are next to Argentina, they should belong to Argentina and the Brits, being not even in the same hemisphere, should keep their grubby hands off it. Silly argument over a few sheep, perhaps, and on that logic much of the world's land should not 'belong' to the non-contiguous states that claim it, for example Greenland, Hawaii, Gibraltar, Guam, Alaska, Guadeloupe, Kaliningrad and a host of other overseas territories. But silly arguments don't stop Russia from pulverising Ukraine, Israel slaughtering the population of Gaza, the RSF slaughtering people in Sudan, China waging a grey-zone war against Taiwan, or any of the approximately 130 armed conflicts going on right now around the world.

But never mind sheep or patriotic fervour, the Malvinas thing is more about mineral rights, with possession of the Falkland, South Georgia and South Sandwich group giving the UK – which is to say the British owning class – formal rights over 745,000 square miles of ocean and oil and mineral-rich seabed, much of which overlaps with Argentine claims (tinyurl.com/3t5cue38). And what's keeping the issue hot is that Argentina's president Javier Milei is enjoying a

cosy 'bromance' with Trump, and may conceivably be tempted to 'do a Galtieri' on the assumption that a) the US would support him rather than the UK, b) it would reinflate his wilting popularity given his brutal austerity regime at home, c) the UK has virtually no navy left with which to defend such a far-flung territory, and d) the global rules-based order has been ripped up and gunboat (or chainsaw) diplomacy is back in vogue.

Why does nationalism work? Because humans like simple explanations, and we like to belong to a group. This combination makes us rather easy to manipulate. Scientists, who strive after objective truth, are not perceived as offering simple explanations. Instead we go for politicians who spin easy but self-serving us-and-them narratives. They make us feel superior while conveniently obscuring questions about who exactly owns all the power and wealth in 'our' country.

Science and rationality are not born human instincts, they're skills we have to learn, and our education systems are paradoxically lukewarm about encouraging that. Capitalism needs workers to be smart enough to boost productivity, but also dumb enough to be consumers who don't ask questions. It needs scientists, sure, but it doesn't need a general population with basic science literacy, who can tell what's plausibly true from what isn't. That's why people believe in cosmic woo-woo, and why some, in the recent heatwaves, forked out up to £120 on hoax air-con systems that supposedly cooled a room in 90 seconds (tinyurl.com/5ra7bmc6).

On the plus side, scientists are getting media savvy these days. *New Scientist* is now doing YouTube, presumably for the same reason as the *New Statesman*, *Private Eye* and others, to boost paper sales in a shrinking market. Arvin Ash does

quantum theory, Sabine Hossenfelder rants against physics and the standard model, and Kurzgesagt does it all as cartoons for kids. Cambridge maths professor Hannah Fry is all over YouTube 'shorts', explaining with engaging insouciance how to instantly cool your overheated car, and how we know when modern humans first migrated from Africa to Europe (approx 100-170,000 years ago) by tracing back the DNA of human body lice, which evolved to stick to clothes (tinyurl.com/36ju8ajm).

Harvard professor of genetics David Reich, author of the groundbreaking *Who We Are and How We Got Here* (2018), also has lectures on YouTube. These explain how the new discipline of palaeogenetics has since 2010 shone a new light on the lost generations of prehistory, including a revision of the 'Kurgan hypothesis' relocating Proto-Indo-European origins from Anatolia to Iran and Armenia, and the discovery of Sapiens, Neanderthal and Denisovan interbreeding. In 'Your ancestors aren't who you think they are', he runs through the huge amount of new genetic evidence which reveals that human populations have been in constant flux in time and space, migrating, merging and mixing, such that concepts like ancestry, ethnicity and nationality have no scientific meaning. In short, we are all from everywhere (tinyurl.com/3adncu6e).

But politicians don't care about any of that. It's much easier, say in the UK, to blame immigrants for a crumbling infrastructure and falling quality of life than to cite the country's long-term geopolitical, industrial and economic decline after two ruinous world wars and the loss of a global empire. In today's miasma of misinformation, bottom-feeding grifters like Farage, Lowe and Robinson can whip up xenophobic paranoia and hope the populist swell carries them into the corridors of power. It's the same story everywhere, a collective madness that won't pass.

The price of flag-waving is ultimately blood. The war in Ukraine has now lasted longer than the First World War and has in some ways recapitulated that ghastly conflict. The survivors at the front – many of them teenagers – now don't even dare to sit in trenches, but hide in underground dugouts from loitering drones. The war has become 'gamified', with competitive points awarded for drone kills. Both states lie about the death rate, but it's certainly enormous. And this keeps happening. Capitalism, like a crazed psychopath, kills its own children, pouring the flower of youth wholesale into nationalist wars that benefit only the rich. We owe it to these voiceless lost generations, and to our descendants, to abolish this capitalist madness forever.

PJS

What about countries without political democracy?

Dear Editors

We have received the following from a reader..

I'VE BEEN wrapping my head around SPGB's democratic approach. It sounds like SPGB puts itself under the mercy of capitalist democracy. So, when capitalists feel threatened, they will curtail the democratic rights that would endanger their capitalist interests, let alone endangering their class rule. One example of this is from SPGB history itself during WW2, where the state issued the prohibition of anti-war 'propaganda' and the SPGB had to comply. Don't you think that there is a contradiction in this approach and this might be the reason why the SPGB failed to become popular among the workers (thus fulfilling one of its main missions of raising class consciousness that leads to the conviction for the need for socialism among most workers) for over a 100 years?

Also, this democratic approach would also mean that workers in un-democratic countries and regions would have to fight (not in a bloody way under the banner of the capitalists of course, but through protests and strikes) for those democratic rights like free speech, freedom of assembly and universal suffrage. But you know before anyone that not all countries and regions can have such a class structure and the level of the development of the productive forces that would allow them to have a capitalist democracy without having 'robust' capitalists at their helm. This case can be clear here from the example of Russia after 1917 or China after 1949, where so-called 'communists' had to do the dirty work of capitalists (by being capitalists themselves of course). Transforming these countries from predominantly peasants backward agrarian countries with weak capitalists tied to the landed aristocracy and powerful foreign capitalists (both having interest in the status quo to remain as it is) to predominantly workers industrialized countries ripe for capitalist democracy that SPGB sees as an indispensable tool for socialism. So, wouldn't that make SPGB's call for fighting for democratic rights in un-democratic countries and regions 'utopian' if taken on a universal basis because the case doesn't apply everywhere, where the conditions aren't there yet? Wouldn't the SPGB be

sending a covert message for workers in these un-democratic and unripe-for-democracy countries and regions to wait for 'the third worldists' to prepare the ground for capitalist democracy (thus socialism) by rallying the workers behind them, to crush them later and brutally exploit them? Isn't the crux of the problem the 'socialism through parliament approach'? Which if it is the case, then that means that capitalism isn't ripe to be overthrown, not because the development of the means of production didn't reach the sufficient level for socialism (we both know that it was reached a long time ago) but because the uneven development of capitalism across the national frontiers.

A food for thought: wouldn't that necessitate the SPGB to change its program to accommodate the fight to erase national boundaries and borders? Wouldn't that constitute the solution for this uneven development of capitalism? (which in fact would lead to the end of imperialist wars and other calamities that affect the workers around the globe and hinder and divide their struggle for socialism through the democratic approach the SPGB advocates for).

Sem Reply:

You are mistaken in assuming that we think that political democracy is 'an *indispensable* tool for socialism' in the sense that if it doesn't exist then socialism cannot be established. What is indispensable for socialism is that a majority should be in favour of it. There can be no socialism without a socialist majority. What we say is that, where effective political democracy exists, sending delegates to parliaments and similar bodies or positions is the *obvious and most straightforward* way to win political control and likely the most effective too. If, or where, this does not exist then the socialist majority would have to find some other way.

We do say that, in non-democratic states, workers are right to struggle for basic democratic practices such as free speech, organisation and assembly, if only to better defend their interests under capitalism. But we don't presume to tell them how to go about this beyond saying it should be based on a recognition of the class struggle and be organised democratically. Socialists in such states

should still campaign for socialism as part of and with help from the worldwide socialist movement. The whole world is ripe for socialism, including where political democracy does not exist. It is not our position, as you seem to be implying, that workers in such places first need to struggle for political democracy and, after that, start struggling for socialism.

Your claim that a capitalist class has the power to close down political democracy at will implies that it is a conspiratorial group that somehow controls state power other than through the election of pro-capitalist politicians and parties. In fact, a capitalist class is not a monolithic group with a single interest but is made up of different groups with differing interests, especially over economic policy. In Britain parliament, elected originally on a franchise restricted to property-owners, evolved as the place where these differences were aired and where the question of which section of property-owners got to control the government was settled.

In the course of the last century the vote was extended to all the citizens of a state, often against the will of sections of the owning class, but the basic situation remains the same. It is through elections that a capitalist class controls the state. Universal suffrage has the added advantage of getting the consent of the governed, which makes a state more governable. A one-party or military dictatorship, even if it supports capitalism, puts political power in the hands of a group that could use this position to line its own pockets at the expense of capitalist profits. Elections keep those who run a state under control. In short, some form of political democracy is the ideal political form for a modern capitalist state.

You envisage a government abolishing this if a capitalist class were under an existential threat from a growing socialist movement. But by the time a majority wanted socialism — which would be reflected in elections — then it would be too late. The boot would be on the other foot. Instead of a minority of socialists having to accept that most people want capitalism (or a war), those who benefit from capitalism and want it to continue would have to accept that a majority wanted socialism and that it was ultimately pointless to try to resist this. If a coup did happen then it would not be able to last for long as a state, with a socialist majority that wouldn't accept its will being frustrated, would be ungovernable. One way or another a socialist majority would get its way. —Editors

Manchesterism

UNTIL ANDY Burnham, as Mayor of Greater Manchester, re-coined the word, ‘Manchesterism’ meant the economic doctrine of the Manchester and district cotton mill owners who favoured a policy of complete tariff-free trade and opposed state interference in industry, as expressed by Richard Cobden, one of the leaders of the Anti-Corn Law League of the 1840s. In England they were known as the Manchester School. On the continent their doctrine was called *manchesterisme* in French and *Manchesterismus* in German. It wasn’t that popular there as the local factory owners realised what was behind it — that their British rivals wanted wider access to continental markets for their cheaper goods.

Engels lived and worked in Manchester for over twenty years and was well aware of the views of the Manchester School, if only from socialising with them. Writing in English he used ‘Manchester School’, but in German he used the word ‘Manchesterismus’ as in a note he wrote about a May Day meeting in London in 1890 where he refers to new trade union members wanting ‘no more to do with the Manchesterism of the old Trade Unions’ (‘4 May’, *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Volume 27).

When he re-coined the term, Burnham

may not have been aware of its previous use and meaning, but others were and asked him if there was any connection.

PoliticsHome (15 April) recorded:

‘Asked whether he identifies more with Richard Cobden or Friedrich Engels, he chooses Cobden, the Mancunian Radical and free-trader’ (tinyurl.com/4bkrt7tj).

There is not in fact that much in common between Burnham’s and Cobden’s Manchesterism. Cobden was a free marketeer while Burnham has defined it as ‘business-friendly socialism’ (tinyurl.com/mrf6ur85). It is, however, revealing that when asked to choose between a capitalist free-marketeer and an opponent of capitalism in all its forms, Burnham identified more with the former.

What Cobden and Burnham have in common is that they both support capitalism. ‘Business-friendly socialism’ is an oxymoron but if you understand ‘socialism’ to mean Labourism then it becomes, like a ‘round circle’, a pleonasm. Starmer and Reeves expressed it more directly when they said that Labour was ‘the party of business’.

Insofar as Burnham’s Manchesterism is more than a populist slogan which sets workers in the North against workers in London and the South East, it seems to mean

giving regional authorities more freedom to raise money locally and to attract capitalist investment to their region. In other words, a mere change in the political superstructure in the hope that it will stimulate ‘growth’. But what drives growth is the pursuit, and accumulation as new capital, of profits. If the prospect of a profit is not good, then investment won’t take place, whatever the political arrangements.

But what sort of investment? These days British capitalism lives not so much by producing surplus value directly in industry as by capturing, through selling financial and legal services, surplus value produced elsewhere in the world. Under Burnham, Manchester has been able to divert some of this from London to Manchester, but not everywhere will be able to do this.

The other type of capitalist investment that regional authorities can seek is ‘property development’. In fact the two businesspeople that the *Times’s* Economics Editor, Meerhen Khan, interviewed (25 June) who had found Burnham ‘business friendly’ were both in the property business. One said that ‘all the evidence suggests that he’s incredibly pro-business’ and that ‘his comments on the excesses of neo-liberalism were also a critique of its social impact on communities in post-industrial cities like Manchester rather than an outright rejection of market capitalism’. So says a Labour-friendly capitalist.



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.

Residential bookings for Summer School have now closed, but the talks will also be run on Zoom.

Friday 21 August
7.15pm—8.45pm
Populism As A Keyword
Speaker: Bill Martin

Saturday 22 August
10:00am—11:30am
Rage Against The Dying Of The Right
Speaker: Brian Gardner

2.00pm—3.30pm
In Search Of Left-Wing Populism
Speaker: Paul Bennett

7.15pm—8.45pm
Red-Brown Politics In Russia And Beyond
Guest speaker Edmund Griffiths

Sunday 23 August
10.00am—11.30am
Should / Could Socialism Be Populist?
Speaker: Paddy Shannon

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.

Halo Halo

Analogy alert: there's one coming your way right now

DID YOU ever do anything that was extremely foolish and dangerous when you were small? Bet you did!

Me too – here's what happened. When my dad found out, he gave me a right good old-fashioned rollicking for it as I stood there with hands clasped, eyes to the ground, ears burning. And when I could get a word in, I told him that a big boy told me to do it.

Then he asked if I'd jump off a cliff if a big boy told me to. I kept quiet and just thought 'Don't be silly, of course I

wouldn't'.

And now I'm all grown up and would never dream of trying such a lame excuse ever again. And we'd all just laugh at any adult who did.

Well....

Just read the news, there are an awful lot of people in the world unthinkingly doing just what a big boy tells them to do. Only the big boy is a Him or one of His reps down here below. And Hims, of one sort or another, have been pulling this trick seemingly forever, usually via a Holy Book. Failing that, via a message on a Holy Piece of Toast, or the more traditional chicken's entrails. Afraid that disobedience will make their Him fall out with them Forever and Ever, they might even go so far as to terminate anyone who doesn't

unconditionally worship their Him.

Analogy explainer alert: there's one coming your way right now

Just as I invented a big boy to excuse my actions when I was small, a pre-invented Big Boy up in the sky is often used as a get-out-of-jail-free card for the most heinous of acts.

Bad boys

Talking of things heinous, Richard Dawkins made this comment in *The God Delusion*: 'The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser, a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, and more, and more, bully.'

You may have your own least-favourite sky fairy but there's one thing for sure. These days, they're all used to keep the plebs in line, fearful and grateful for crumbs that fall from the table of the rich.

DC

Tiny tips

UNITED NATIONS (UN) Secretary-General António Guterres says that 800 million people around the world are living in extreme poverty... [He] had previously stated that nearly three billion people are living in inadequate housing conditions (**8am media, tinyurl.com/ykczetkk**).

In Shanxi, the province that sits at the heart of China's coal-mining industry, there's long been a saying: 'Only go down a coal pit when you have no other way out'. For decades, life in these pits was intertwined with tragedy. It became so common that it gave rise to other sayings: about how miners were 'exchanging their lives for money' or 'staking their lives for tomorrow' when they ventured into underground tunnels where they died from gas explosions, flooding and shaft collapses. Over the past decade, safety reforms steadily erased the industry's deadly reputation, and those days were thought to be behind China- until 22 May, when a blast at the Liushenyu coal mine in Shanxi killed 82 people and injured more than 120 others (**BBC, tinyurl.com/ykczetkk**).

[com/3us2xwtj](https://tinyurl.com/3us2xwtj)).

A leading Nicaraguan indigenous leader has died after being detained by the ruling authoritarian regime for nearly three years. Brooklyn Rivera, who founded the central American nation's indigenous movement Yatama, died due to 'physical and neurological deterioration' linked to a Covid-19 infection, the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health stated on Sunday. The government, headed by President Daniel Ortega, took 15 hours to confirm the death and are refusing to release the 73-year-old's body to his family, opposition media report. The Nicaraguan government is routinely accused of political oppression, and Rivera is one of a growing number of dissidents to die in custody (**BBC, tinyurl.com/4d887twz**).

Greta Thunberg... has said little publicly about the recent protests in Iran. Similar criticisms have been directed at a number of prominent left-wing intellectuals and activists in Europe and North America, including Tariq Ali, Naomi Klein, Alain

Badiou, Richard Falk, and others. The pattern extends beyond silence. Judith Butler, the American philosopher and feminist theorist, has previously expressed support for Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine, describing them as progressive social movements that form part of a broader anti-imperialist struggle (**International Policy Digest, tinyurl.com/5n889f88**).

An elderly man spent days on the floor of his HMO while maggots infested wounds in his legs before he was discovered and later died, a report has found. The 69-year-old from Oldham, named 'John' in a safeguarding review, was discharged from hospital just two weeks before the fall that led to his death.... The recently published report found the local authority and medical professionals at Royal Oldham Hospital 'missed opportunities' to support John. Prior to his death, John was treated for severe malnourishment and an acute kidney injury. At the time, he shared with staff that he 'did not feel safe in his home', as he lived in a HMO with five other people, all of whom had serious alcohol and substance abuse issues (**Oldham Evening Chronicle, tinyurl.com/4kwj3ze2**).

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

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

London regional branch. Meets last Sunday in month, 2.00pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Contact: 020 7622 3811. spgb@worldsocialism.org

MIDLANDS

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

NORTH

North East Regional branch.

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

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

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

Bolton. Contact: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589.

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

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

Yorkshire Regional branch.

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

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

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

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

South West regional branch. Meets 3rd Sat.

2pm on Zoom. For invite email: spgb.southwest@worldsocialism.org

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

Canterbury. Contact: Rob Cox, Contact: spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org **Luton.** Contact: Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP.

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

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

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

IRELAND

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

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh. Contact: Fraser Anderson f_raz_1@hotmail.com

Scotland Regional branch.

Contact: spgb.glasgow@worldsocialism.org

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

WALES

South Wales branch (Cardiff and Swansea)

Meets 2nd Monday 7.30pm on JITS. (meet.jit.si/spgbsouthwales3). Contact: botterillr@gmail.com or Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. 01792 643624

Central branch

Contact: spgb.cbs@worldsocialism.org

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

AFRICA

Kenya. Contact: Patrick Ndege, PO Box 13627-00100, GPO, Nairobi
Zambia. Contact: Kephass Mulenga, PO Box 280168, Kitwe.

AUSTRALIA

Contact: Trevor Clarke, wsa.info@yahoo.com.au

EUROPE

Norway. Contact: Robert Stafford. hallblithe@yahoo.com

Italy. Contact: Gian Maria Freddi gm.freddi@libero.it

Spain. Contact: Alberto Gordillo, Avenida del Parque. 2/2/3 Puerta A, 13200 Manzanares.

COMPANION PARTIES OVERSEAS

Socialist Party of Canada/Parti Socialiste du Canada. Box 31024, Victoria B.C. V8N 6J3 Canada. spc@worldsocialism.org

World Socialist Party (India) 257 Baghajatin 'E' Block (East), Kolkata - 700086, 033- 2425-0208. wspindia@hotmail.com

World Socialist Party (New Zealand)

P.O. Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New Zealand. wsmnzparty@gmail.com

World Socialist Party of the United States.

P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 USA. contact@wspus.org

Publications to order

PAMPHLETS (£4.00 each unless stated otherwise)

- | | | |
|--|--------------|--------------------------|
| What's Wrong With Using Parliament? | £2.50 | ☐ |
| Ecology and Socialism | | ☐ |
| From Capitalism to Socialism | £3.50 | ☐ |
| Africa: A Marxian Analysis | | ☐ |
| Some Aspects of Marxian Economics | £5.50 | ☐ |
| How the Gods Were Made by John Keracher | | ☐ |
| Marxism and Darwinism by Anton Pannekoek | | ☐ |
| Art, Labour and Socialism by William Morris | | ☐ |
| How We Live and How We Might Live by William Morris | | ☐ |
| The Right to be Lazy by Paul Lafargue | | ☐ |
| Socialist Principles Explained | £2.50 | ☐ |
| The State and the Socialist Revolution by Julius Martov | | ☐ |
| An Inconvenient Question | | ☐ |
| Sylvia Pankhurst on Socialism | £3.00 | ☐ |
| Why Socialists Oppose Zionism & Anti-Semitism | £3.50 | ☐ |
| Rosa Luxemburg on Socialism | | ☐ |
| The Magic Money Myth | | ☐ |

BOOKS

- | | | |
|---|---------------|--------------------------|
| Strange Meeting: Socialism & World War One | £4.50 | ☐ |
| Are We Prisoners of Our Genes? | £5.50 | ☐ |
| Socialism or Your Money Back | £4.00 | ☐ |
| Centenary of the Russian Revolution | £8.00 | ☐ |
| All of the above books (25% discount) | £16.00 | ☐ |

DVD

- | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------------------|
| Capitalism and Other Kid's Stuff | £5.75 | ☐ |
|---|--------------|--------------------------|

All prices include postage and packing. For six or more of any publication, reduce the price by one third.

Return this form along with your cheque or money order to: **The Socialist Party, Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN**

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:

.....

POSTCODE:.....

Reformism in the USA: Bernstein rides again

IN AN article in *Counterpunch* in June on 'What's Wrong with the American Left' (tinyurl.com/pxkv9e24) David Schultz says he is writing in the tradition of 'the democratic socialism of Eduard Bernstein, who tied the classless society to the ballot rather than the barricade, and of Michael Harrington whose *The Other America* forced a prosperous country to look at its own poor'.

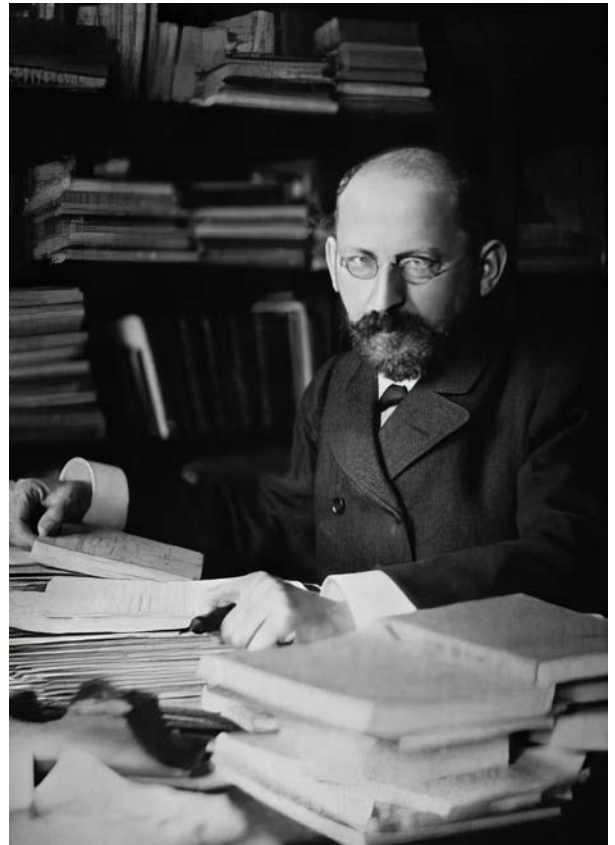
Bernstein, he says, was 'betting that universal suffrage could be turned into economic democracy'. Bernstein, Harrington and others he mentions 'believed, as I do, that the point of the left is to assert that capitalism does not get to dictate how democracy operates, but the reverse'. The reverse is of course that democracy gets to dictate how capitalism operates. Which is what Bernstein's reformism set out to try and do. Whatever else might be said about US self-confessed reformists, they are more theoretically minded than their counterparts this side of the ocean. Ask a reformist here who Bernstein was and they wouldn't know (unless they had been in some Trotskyist sect when they were a student).

Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932) was a member of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) who, in exile in London, had worked closely with Engels. He had even written a book in 1895, applying the materialist conception of history to the English revolution, published in English in 1930 as *Cromwell and Communism* which introduced its readers to the Levellers and the Diggers. At the turn of the 20th century, however, he sparked off a controversy in the German and international Social Democratic movement by suggesting that Marx and Engels had been wrong on certain key points and criticising those who argued that socialism would result from a violent revolution following a catastrophic collapse of capitalism. Instead, it would come about, and was in fact already coming about, as a result of democracy gradually spreading to all aspects of society, including the organisation of the production and distribution of wealth. The book in which he expounded this 'Revisionist' position was given the English title of *Evolutionary Socialism*. Rosa Luxembourg's pamphlet *Reform or Revolution* is a polemic directed against Bernstein. We joined in the 'Revisionist controversy' with an article in the October 1909 *Socialist Standard*

entitled 'Bungling Bernstein' (tinyurl.com/5advkhx).

An article in the January 1956 *Socialist Standard* on 'The Fabians, Bernstein and Revisionism' summarised Bernstein's views as: 'That the numbers and wealth of large and small Capitalists tended to increase and society to become more democratic. That class antagonisms were being modified by ethical and patriotic considerations. That crises were decreasing in size and frequency through a process of adaptation largely influenced by trusts, cartels and the like. That the Materialist Conception of History overestimated the economic factor; the influence of the economic factor was diminishing whilst the influence of ideological factors, including the ethical, was increasing. That Capitalism had undergone fundamental changes since the middle of the 19th century when Marx made his analyses, but, though true for the time of which he was writing, they no longer applied. That the theory of surplus value was incomplete and needed the addition of the theory of final utility. That the workers have now become citizens of the country and therefore have a fatherland to defend. That as Germany is becoming more and more dependent upon products from the colonies, these colonies should be developed and protected. Savages have only a conditional right to the land occupied by them; the higher civilization of advanced countries can claim a higher right. That Socialism is a long way ahead and will only come by a process that is gradual and almost imperceptible; consequently we should not worry about the future but concentrate on the present, on the extension of the political and economic rights of the working classes and "In all Advanced countries we see the privileges of the Capitalist bourgeoisie yielding step by step to democratic organisations" (Preface, page XI). That the Social Democratic Party should form alliances with the Capitalist parties nearest to them' (tinyurl.com/3brxahvc).

It is easy to see from this why Bernstein is regarded by Social Democrat reformists as their mentor. He anticipated what after WW1 became the practice of all European Social Democratic parties, including the



SPD, despite some of them still being committed on paper to Marxism. It was also the practice of the Labour Party even though they never made a theory of it.

Bernstein's gradualism has been tried for over a hundred years now. But the result has not been any progress towards socialism. Production is still the hands of profit-seeking companies and oligarchs. The economy is still driven by the pursuit of profits. There may be a 'welfare state' of sorts but that's being eroded not extended. There is no democracy in workplaces. Rather than the Social Democratic reformists gradually changing capitalism it has been the other way round. Experience of governing under capitalism has changed them into mere managers of the capitalist economic system, accepting and applying its logic that priority must be given to profit-making.

Although Bernstein was not all bad — he did oppose WW1 and he was right about capitalism not collapsing of its own accord — his gradualist reformism must be pronounced a failure. Political democracy has not got to dictate how capitalism operates and never will. It is rather that capitalism dictates how governments act by giving them only the choice of putting profits first. He bet that 'universal suffrage could be turned into economic democracy' and lost.

ADAM BUICK

Trouble at 't mill

Credit: (@LondonStudent/Twitter)



'TROUBLE AT 't mill' has become a kind of cliché to refer to problems individuals or groups of workers may be having in their place of work. Workplaces are not mills today of course, but the basic ruler-ruled relationship between employer and employee that existed at the time of the mills still applies today. And the same 'trouble' still continues to arise, more often than not associated with money and working conditions.

University cuts

And it's happening currently in what many people might consider an improbable place – institutions of higher education – i.e., universities. Traditionally, work in universities, whether as a teacher, researcher, administrator or anything else, has been considered a relatively secure form of employment. Until 1988 in fact academics had what was known as 'tenure' whereby, barring some form of gross misconduct, they could not legally be sacked from their jobs. And even after this, the likelihood of university lecturers losing their jobs remained relatively small for a long time, at least compared with most other areas of employment. But more recently all this has changed. What university employees are now finding is that, as for most other fields of work, they are at significant risk of being declared redundant as their institutions struggle to stay solvent and look to make savings.

In the last couple of years in particular, a whole swathe of universities, from those lower down the pecking order that were once called polytechnics to historic and well-established institutions higher up the scale, have begun declaring deficits

– referred to sometimes as 'black holes'. They are forced, they say, to drastically reduce regular expenditure in what they see as the only effective way – by shedding staff. The term they often use to describe this is 'reducing the head count', clearly an attempt to mask the personal impact on the individuals whose lives are suddenly turned upside-down. The main pressure on universities to do this has been the downturn in the number of young people entering into higher education as well as the shortfall of overseas students coming to study in the UK, so denying universities the necessary level of tuition fees to keep them solvent. Examples of institutions currently engaged in making staff cuts and declaring people redundant are Teesside University, Sheffield Hallam, Swansea, Leicester, Nottingham, Edinburgh and Birmingham.

Strike action?

Some universities have done U-turns on declaring redundancies due to the threat of strike action by the lecturers' union (the UCU – University and College Union), but others have ignored such threats and have gone ahead with dismissing staff despite industrial action. Clearly they view their financial situation as so dire that cutting their long-term wage bill seems more important than the consequences for their reputation of students complaining about not being taught or not receiving their degrees on time. And, at times, universities have openly declared that failing to lower their costs will threaten their very existence. A good example here of how trade unions can sometimes succeed in taming to some extent the imperatives of the financial compete-or-die system all

workers (and their employers) live under, but also of the limits of trade union action with the employer simply holding out in the expectation (often realised) that workers are only likely to stay out on strike for as long as they are able to hold out financially themselves.

In the same boat

It also offers a prime example of how the system we live under inevitably threatens with insecurity all those obliged to sell their energies to an employer for a wage or salary – so the vast majority of any population. Such is the case whichever rung of the salary scale a worker happens to be on. The current crisis in universities provides a suitable microcosm of this. Whether someone works as a porter, a secretary, a technician, an ordinary lecturer or a professor, all are equally likely to find themselves out of a job and having to scramble around to find alternative employment. And for academics in particular finding such employment at the moment is unlikely given the current job market in higher education. As a volunteer union representative in my own institution, I have recently seen a science professor of 22 years standing and international reputation break down in tears and state that his life is destroyed. He had been subjected to a humiliating process of 'pooling' and then being informed that, after comparing him with his colleagues, it had been decided that his role was to be 'deleted'. I have been assisting another colleague who, fearing redundancy and having applied for a job in another institution, received a stock response informing her that they had received over 500 applications to their job advert and that she might hear nothing further regarding her application. She did not.

Legal action?

A common reaction from staff hearing that their employment is to be terminated is to talk about taking legal action via an employment tribunal on grounds of unfair dismissal. But if they go to their trade union for assistance in this, they are likely to be told that, if the employer has taken the necessary steps laid down in law – and they usually have – then their dismissal is unlikely to be considered 'unfair'. The reality, of course, is that, regardless of any tweaks made to employment regulations by governments (something that is happening currently), the system will continue to be weighted in favour of the employer and to give them the upper hand, as it must in the wage-slave society we live in. So unless the employer makes a mess of things by not going through the right motions, then any legal appeal against redundancy is likely to

fail. And even if such an appeal is successful, the court will not order reinstatement but only financial compensation, which is often a dismal amount and in any case cannot in law exceed a maximum of the claimant's annual salary. If legal action is attempted, furthermore, any claimant can expect to wait a long time indeed for their case to be heard. One of the criticisms of the employment tribunal system recently highlighted by the Institute of Employment Rights was that people bringing unfair dismissal claims are waiting up to five years for their case to come to court (tinyurl.com/5xhj4pju).

Employment insecurity

Finally, in the higher education sector at least, a further negative consequence of the redundancy exercises employers go in for to reduce their costs is that these

inevitably signal a deterioration in working conditions for those employees still in post. Despite the terminology of 'deletion of role' that employers often use, everyone who works in universities knows that the work (or at least some of the work) of staff who have been dismissed will still need to be done, which inevitably means longer hours and increased pressure for the remaining staff. Though these staff will be breathing a sigh of relief that they still have their jobs, nevertheless they know they will be called upon to work longer hours and more intensively to cover that work. And they know that, if they don't come up to the mark in this, they may well be the ones for the high jump next time the employer sees it as necessary to embark upon 'reducing the head count'.

What's for sure, finally, is that no solution to this kind of merry-go-round in any sector

of employment is to be found in seeking to change employment law or giving employees more 'rights' - or anything like that. This is the case whether it's a sector focused directly on realising profit for its owners or shareholders or one that is part of the infrastructure of the profit-making system, such as education. All forms of employment are locked into the system of buying and selling and production for profit, together with the insecurity and upsets it causes for workers through its constant need to reorganise in order to adapt to capitalism's economic conditions. And this will continue until those workers decide collectively to do away with that system and replace it with one of common ownership, voluntary work and free access to all the goods and services they produce – what we call socialism.

HKM

What **we** want...

What we want. A moneyless, stateless, classless society of common ownership and democratic control of the world's resources. Production solely for human need, not profit. No wages, no money, no markets, no governments as we know them.

How we get there. Not through vanguards, coups, or insurrection. Through a majority of the working class consciously choosing socialism. Where parliamentary democracy exists, we'll use it but Parliament isn't the goal, it's the mechanism. The working class takes control of the state machinery, converts it from 'instrument of oppression' to 'agent of emancipation', to abolish it.

What we reject.

- Reformism: no palliatives, no 'making capitalism nicer'. Every reform leaves the system intact.
- Leninism: no vanguard party, no dictatorship of the proletariat, no 'transitional period'.
- Nationalisation: state ownership isn't socialism—it's just state capitalism.
- All other parties: Labour, Greens, Communists, Trotskyists—all aim to administer capitalism in one form or another.

Our core insight. Capitalism cannot be reformed into socialism. You can't regulate greed into generosity. The system's basic drive—accumulation of capital—makes ecological destruction, inequality, and war inevitable. Only abolishing the system itself works.

Our method – education and publicity. No stunts, no violence, no shortcuts. We believe workers must understand and want socialism before it can work. A socialist society run by people who don't understand socialism would collapse or be captured by authoritarians.

Our slogan – World socialism or nothing. The SPGB founded in 1904 is Marxism with none of the 20th-century add-ons: no Lenin, no Trotsky, no Stalin, no reformist gradualism. Just the original recipe: common ownership, majority consciousness, democratic revolution, then freedom.



Workers don't control political power

The state presents itself as a neutral arbiter, a set of institutions that balances competing interests, responds to democratic pressure, and governs in the common good. This is an illusion.

THE STATE is not neutral. It is the organised power of the ruling class. Its courts, police, military, and legal apparatus exist primarily to protect property relations, to guarantee that those who own the means of production continue to own them, and that those who don't must continue to sell their labour-power to survive.

The wage system: concentrating wealth and power simultaneously

This is the mechanism at the heart of everything. Workers are paid less than the value they produce, the difference is appropriated by those who own the means of production. This isn't occasional exploitation or the result of individual greed. It's how the system functions by design.

And here's the critical point: wealth and power are not separate things. Money is power, directly and immediately. Accumulated capital buys political influence, funds media outlets, finances lobbying operations, endows universities, and shapes the terms of public debate. Every pound extracted from the wage relationship doesn't just enrich an owner, it widens the power gap between owner and worker. Wealth concentrates, and with it the ability to shape society in the interests of the wealthy.

The wage system therefore performs a double function simultaneously: it extracts wealth upward and concentrates political power upward at exactly the same rate. These are not two separate processes. They are one process with two consequences.

The anger this produces

Most working-class people don't articulate this in political terms. But they feel it, viscerally, daily, in ways that produce real rage.

The nurse who works twelve-hour shifts

and can't afford to heat her home properly while energy company executives collect eight-figure bonuses. The warehouse worker tracked by an algorithm, disciplined for toilet breaks, earning just enough to survive while the company posts record profits. The young person who does everything right, works hard, studies, plays by the rules and still cannot afford to rent a decent flat, let alone buy one. The family that chooses between food and bills at the end of the month while being told the economy is performing well.

This is not bad luck. It is the system working exactly as intended.

The frustration deepens when people turn to politics for relief and find the same story. A new government arrives promising change. Within months it is managing the same constraints, making the same concessions to capital, explaining why things cannot move as fast as promised. The cycle repeats. The sense that the game is rigged, that no matter how you vote, nothing fundamental shifts, is not cynicism. It is an accurate reading of how power actually works.

When anger is misdirected

That anger is real and legitimate. But without a clear analysis of where it comes from, it gets captured and redirected. At migrants. At benefit claimants. At a remote cultural elite. At any target that doesn't threaten the underlying system.

The worker who resents his neighbour for claiming housing benefit while a landlord extracts half his wage in rent has had his anger pointed in exactly the wrong direction. The voter who turns to a nationalist strongman because mainstream politics has failed them is expressing genuine grievance through a vehicle that will deepen their exploitation while appearing to challenge it.

This misdirection isn't accidental. Concentrated wealth funds the media, the think tanks, and the political movements that perform this redirection. It is one of the functions that money-as-power performs most effectively.

The vote and its limits

Workers can vote. In many countries they won that right through bitter struggle. But voting periodically for competing sets

of managers of the capitalist system is not political power. Governments change; the underlying economic structure does not. Whichever party takes office inherits the same constraints, bond markets, capital flight, corporate lobbying, and the basic requirement that the economy remains profitable for investors. Policy operates within those limits or faces immediate economic punishment.

The wealthy don't need to buy every politician or rig every election. They don't have to. When economic power is sufficiently concentrated, the range of politically possible options narrows automatically. The system polices itself.

The structural problem

Economic power can precede and shape political power. Those who control investment, production, and employment set the terms within which governments operate. A government that seriously threatens property rights finds capital withdrawn, currency attacked, and media turned hostile almost immediately. This isn't conspiracy, it's the structural logic of a system where production is privately controlled.

Reform and its ceiling

Reforms, like better healthcare and labour protections, can sometimes be won. These matter. But they are concessions extracted under pressure, not transfers of power. And they are reversible, as decades of austerity have demonstrated. The ceiling on reform is the point at which it begins to threaten profitability. Beyond that point, the state's coercive functions become more visible.

The conclusion

The anger felt by working people is not irrational. It is the rational response to a system that extracts their labour, concentrates the proceeds as wealth and power in a minority's hands, offers them a vote every few years as a substitute for genuine agency, and then blames them when they lose faith in the process.

Real political power for workers would mean controlling the conditions of their own lives, the economy, production, distribution. That requires not managing capitalism better but replacing it with common ownership and democratic control. As long as the wage system stands, wealth will continue to flow upward and power with it. Everything short of abolishing that relationship leaves economic power, and therefore real political power, in the hands of a minority.

JAKE (Australia)

Zeitgeist: a moneyless society with alienation

MARX'S INSIGHT in *Capital*, Volume 1, remains startling in its simplicity. He writes about how spiders spin webs out of instinct, and bees also create architecture in their hives from instinct. He writes about how humans must first imagine what they are to do before making something a reality: the worst architect surpasses the most industrious bee because humans first construct in imagination what they later build in reality. This capacity for conscious, creative design – the ability to envision and reshape our world – defines our species-being. Yet under capitalism, this distinctively human power becomes alien to most humans. Workers execute plans conceived by others, their labour becomes separate from their creativity.

The resulting tragedy is the systematic suppression of human creative potential. Under capitalist production, the worker 'does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind' (Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*). The creative architecture of society – what we produce, how we organise our collective life, toward what ends we direct our energies – becomes the exclusive province of capital accumulation. Profit, not human flourishing, determines the shape of our world.

Marx, of course, wrote about the need for the working class to emancipate itself from the capitalist mode of production by creating a borderless world where money and governments have been abolished. He was very clear about socialism being a moneyless and stateless society: 'In the case of socialised production the money-capital is eliminated' (*Capital*, Volume 2, Chapter 18, Section II), and 'But the whole programme, for all its democratic clang, is tainted through and through by the Lassalleian sect's servile belief in the state, or, what is no better, by a democratic belief in miracles, or rather, it is a compromise between these two kinds of beliefs in miracles, both equally remote from socialism' (*Critique of the Gotha Program*, Section IV). There is also the famous building block for socialist society, 'From each according to ability; to each according

to need.' This highlights that humans are individuals with unique gifts and talents.

One might expect movements explicitly rejecting capitalism to restore this creative capacity to humanity at large. Yet the Zeitgeist Movement, despite its anti-capitalist rhetoric and vision of a moneyless society, proposed to reproduce the same alienation under different management.

The Zeitgeist Movement proposed a 'Resource-Based Economy' where scientific experts and technocrats manage society through rational calculation and technological optimisation. Computers would track resources, engineers would design production systems, scientists would determine social organisation according to 'the scientific method.' Money would disappear, but so would democratic participation in the creative decisions that shape collective life.

The structure of alienation remains intact, merely changing personnel.

Under capitalism, creative control flows to those who own capital, justified by property rights. Decisions about production, distribution, and social organisation follow the logic of profit maximisation. Workers execute designs conceived by others in corporate boardrooms and management consultancies.

Under Zeitgeist's technocracy, creative control flows to those who possess technical expertise, justified by scientific knowledge. Decisions about production, distribution, and social organisation follow the logic of efficiency and resource optimisation. The majority execute designs conceived by others in technical committees and research centres.

In both systems, ordinary people remain alienated from their natural creative capacity. The creative/conceptual moment – that distinctively human capacity to imagine before building – stays concentrated in an elite class. Whether that elite derives authority from property ownership or technical credentials changes the justification, not the fundamental separation of mental from manual labour, of conception from execution.

Marx himself advocated something fundamentally different: democratic



planning, not technocratic planning. In his vision, the associated producers would 'govern the human metabolism with nature in a rational way, bringing it under their *collective control* instead of being dominated by it as a blind power' (*Capital*, Volume 3, Ch 48). Note the emphasis: 'collective control' by the producers themselves, not management by experts on their behalf.

This requires, as Marx understood, abolishing the division between mental and manual labour itself. Not placing mental labour in charge of manual labour, but reuniting conception with execution in the lives of actual people. Education, rotation of tasks, democratic control over technology, genuine participation in social decision-making – these begin to restore human creative capacity.

The Zeitgeist Movement's failure lay not in its rejection of money, but in its preservation of hierarchy. It promised liberation while maintaining the structure that produces alienation. A moneyless society where technocrats design your life remains a society where you are separated from your creative essence, where the distinctively human capacity to imagine and build your world belongs to someone else.

So the choice between the two moneyless systems lies in what kind of humans we want to be: do we each want to engage in the creative architecture of building our society, or do we just want passively to allow our mental and physical energies to be directed by others?

DAN MULLEN

The Parkrun – an *inkling* of socialism?

Credit: Bushyoffice



ON 13 June this year, the 13 runners and 5 volunteers who set up the first parkrun ever in 2004 at Bushy Park, London, celebrated one million parkruns worldwide since then. On that day runs were taking place in 2,800 places across 23 countries. In an interview with the *i* newspaper, one of the original parkrun organisers, Paul Sinton-Hewitt, said that the success of the event was ‘clearly down to the simplicity ... the fact it is for everybody, inclusivity, the nature of that, the fact that it’s free’. Another of the founders, Andrew Lane, said he’d originally predicted that, if the event got going, participation would peak at 200 runners per time, otherwise the course would be too crowded. But at the 1,000th Bushy Park run in 2024, there were over 6,000 participants.

Clearly people didn’t mind being crowded together with others and, since they weren’t competing with one another as in a conventional race, getting a clear unimpeded run wasn’t a priority for most. At best if people were there to compete, it was against themselves, ie, trying to improve their personal best time. Lane went on to say that he’d also predicted, wrongly again, that there would be a lack of volunteers coming forward to do the organising and this would hold growth back. But, as he put it, ‘I failed to realise ...

how much volunteering would become a great pleasure and destination in itself’.

Interesting words

There are some interesting words here: ‘inclusivity’, ‘free’, ‘volunteering’, ‘pleasure’, for example. Interesting because they describe a voluntary, cooperative, communal kind of activity enjoyed by large numbers of people and going directly contrary to the ethic of a society, the one we live in, based on me-first competition, beggar thy neighbour and the gaining of personal wealth and status. A society too in which we often hear of how people have become alienated, disconnected from one another (‘atomised’ is the word often used) and bereft of any clear sense of purpose. In the parkrun, however, we have an activity that is entirely cooperative and purposeful, where money doesn’t enter into any part of the equation and which is pursued by increasingly large numbers of people, whether as run participants or organisers. And clearly the ‘non-runners’ too experience a sense of community as well as a perception that they’re doing something useful, as well, no doubt, as enjoying the approbation, spoken or otherwise, of the people around them.

Social animals

Should we be surprised? Well probably not, because regardless of the way current society is organised with its massive economic inequality, its ever-present wars, the stresses and frustrations of its employment system, human beings are fundamentally social animals who, given even small opportunities, are ready and willing to work together to carry out activities and achieve ends they consider worthwhile. Apart from our common everyday experience where, in a whole host of situations and pursuits, humans display cooperation and empathy with one another, a plethora of studies, sociological and anthropological, many of which have been discussed in the pages of the *Socialist Standard* (tinyurl.com/yycedd53) continue to illustrate and confirm this.

This year’s ‘*World Happiness Report*’ by Gallup, which rates countries according to the level of ‘happiness’ of their citizens, concludes unequivocally that what makes individuals feel most happy is ‘being generous and volunteering’, since it gives ‘a feeling of belonging and sociality’ (www.worldhappiness.report/). A recent discussion on the Gallup report on BBC radio reiterated this, with the broadcaster Evan Davis, one of whose specialities is business and economics, stating that

Socialist Standard August 2026

‘money matters to a certain extent for the agency and control it gives you’, but that ‘the main individual thing is to be generous to other people and to volunteer [and] you will make yourself happier’.

Another recent study carried out by a team of scientists from American and Australian universities entitled *‘Altruistic, not reputational concerns, drive human prosociality, values and aspirations across the world’*, studied anonymous survey responses from almost 1 million individuals spread over more than 100 countries, taking into account different cultural contexts, age ranges, socioeconomic levels, and time periods (osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/bycux_v1). The researchers found that the vast majority of people reported performing acts of altruism because they were interested in the well-being of others, not because these acts benefitted them directly. They concluded that people are more likely to want to be remembered for making a difference, helping others, and improving the world, and to value things like caring over status or personal gains. The way a review of this study put it was ‘people really want to be good’ (tinyurl.com/5c8brd44).

Cooperation or ego?

Another new piece of research, this time from the fields of archaeology and anthropology and published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science*, provides evidence that it has been humans’ ability to empathize and relate to one another that has allowed our species to thrive and build complex cultures over the whole

planet (tinyurl.com/8m96uexs). It points to how the archaeological record illustrates the capacity of early humans to make long-term commitments to one another’s well-being, to tolerate frustration, to plan collectively, to make sacrifices, and to trust others. In many instances, for example, archaeologists have unearthed remains of disabled and elderly humans who could not possibly have survived alone.

A review of this study on the IFL Science website concludes that yet again we have evidence that ‘one of humanity’s greatest strengths was never just ego or ruthlessness, but profound emotions and our extraordinary ability to turn those feelings into cooperation’ (tinyurl.com/3xsu7txb). Of course we see ‘ego’ and ‘ruthlessness’ around us too, we see displays of non-cooperation and lack of sympathy and understanding for others. But, perhaps contrary to appearances, we see this much less frequently than the opposite. But precisely because it is less common, it attracts greater attention and becomes more ‘newsworthy’.

Purpose and enjoyment

What has all this got to do with socialism? Put quite simply, socialism – the moneyless, wageless society of common ownership and voluntary work with free access to all goods and services which we campaign to see established – can only work if human beings are able to cooperate freely and willingly to produce and distribute everything that is needed to provide a comfortable, purposeful life for all. And what we learn from the

kinds of research mentioned above, from everyday experience and from voluntary on-the-ground activity such as the parkrun is that we are geared, we have the capacity, to organise ourselves and our society in that way.

We learn too that the dog-eat-dog mentality that we also see around us and can set people against one another, often in ugly and irrational ways, arises not from any ‘natural’ human inclination but from the conditions of life in the society we live in, from the very nature of the competitive, profit-driven system we call capitalism – a system effectively described by one commentator as ‘a scramble to sell our energies under conditions of duress and unfreedom’. We draw from all the evidence that such behaviour and such conditions can be overcome if we are willing to take the bull by the horns and decide, via collective and democratic political action, to establish and organise a society in which volunteering and cooperative, communal activity is the norm in every facet of life. Of course, despite the constraints of capitalism, a vast amount of such activity already takes place, not only in parkruns but across a whole range of endeavours. But socialism will provide the opportunity for us to fulfil our potential for cooperation not just in our spare time but as a way of organising the whole of society efficiently and effectively and giving us all lives that are enjoyable, meaningful and fulfilling and satisfy our deep-seated need for social interaction.

HKM

Mud slinging

IF YOU ever go on social media sites that discuss Marx, it’s likely that you’ll come across a post that claims to refute/debunk his ideas. One of the common charges against Marx is that his theory of value, based on labour-time, is untenable because not all labour produces value. The evidence for this? The mud pie.

Now it’s true that, however many mud pies you make, however much labour-time you expend on that task, you won’t create any value. So surely, Marx got it wrong.... And if his theory of value falls, so does the entire edifice of Marx’s economics.

But here’s why the mud pie argument doesn’t work. References below are to *Capital* Volume 1.

First, we ought to remind ourselves

that, at root, Marx is dealing with an issue that is key to human existence: the labour process, by which ‘Nature’s material [is] adapted by a change of form to the *wants of man*’ (chapter 7 section 1), a process which creates useful things, otherwise known as use-values. At a certain time in human history the results of this process take the form of the commodity.

To drive home the point, a commodity is ‘an object outside us, a thing that by its properties *satisfies human wants* of some sort or another’ (chapter 1, section 1).

When the commodity appears in history, so too does value and ‘Value is independent of the particular use-value by which it is borne, but it must be embodied in a use value of some kind’ (chapter 7 section 2).

Lastly, from chapter 8 ‘Value exists only in articles of utility, in objects’.

The takeaway message: Marx’s theory applies to human beings carrying out productive activity to satisfy real needs and wants, not to a child making mud pies (or sandcastles).

By the way, the people who put forwards the mud pie argument have plainly never even opened a copy of *Capital*, let alone read or understood it. The only reason for dealing with this infantile guff in the *Socialist Standard* is that the argument re-appears regularly online, presumably on the assumption that if you keep throwing mud, some of it will stick.

BUDGIE

Durham Miners Gala



'IT'S NOT bloody 'gah-la', they call it 'gay-la' round here.'

'No it's not, it's 'gah-la', I've heard people say that.'

'For cryin' out loud, it's both. And it's your round.'

The important thing you learn from the Durham Miners Gala is that, contrary to dismal impressions, radical left politics in the UK is not dead, but alive and well and willing to celebrate the fact every July. The Gala has been going since 1871, and attracts around 200,000 people, making it the world's biggest such event, and jamming Durham's small historic streets with crowds, performers, party-heads and the inevitable brass bands.

The enormous Gala field looked like a rock festival, with marquees, food kiosks, a bar with a very long queue, and a funfair. Pop and folk acoustic bands played on a

big sound stage, in between impassioned speeches about union solidarity, including the fact that when the Reform-controlled council defunded Durham Pride, Durham Miners stepped up to support the event, recalling the support given to them by Pride members in 1984 (tinyurl.com/mtfewep8).

Our members were everywhere, discussing politics at our marquee stall, or out in the field, or on the way in. We dished out hundreds of leaflets, and distributed a lot of books and pamphlets, though we underestimated how much material we needed, forgetting that last year our stall was cleaned out.

All in all, a terrific event and one worth getting involved in for any member who can make the time to come along. We'll be doing it again next year, for certain!

PJS

AS EVER a fabulous day out where there is always a real buzz all day. I would recommend it to anyone. What I find really heartening is the number of people who are willing to come over to our stand (and presumably the other political stands) and have an open and straightforward discussion about politics. There was very little rancour in the discussion. We had the opportunity to discuss our case in a degree of depth with many people ranging from anarcho-syndicalists to some older members of a local boy scout group. Wandering around the Gala field is also very interesting. As usual there are the various leftist groups who all hate capitalism, but not quite as much as they hate each other. The Gala organisers either by luck or judgement managed to place the various Trotskyist splinter groups in a way that meant that the Trots





were firewalled from each other, usually by some hardline Stalinists or the Labour Party. What becomes apparent when you talk to them about their politics is that generally speaking they just want to

cosplay the 1917 October Revolution and that the differences between each group is that their different leaders fell out with each other because they thought it was their turn to wear the Lenin or Trotsky

costume. They really should stop referring to themselves as political parties and call themselves what they are: Historical Re-enactment Societies.

TK

Durham Leaflets

Party members distributed the 2 texts below at the 2026 Durham Miners' Gala.

Having a laugh

IF THE tiny minority who claim ownership of the world's wealth ever stopped to consider their situation, they'd surely wet themselves laughing – because the majority accept their claim, even though it's the majority who create the wealth in the first place.

And there's more merriment for the capitalists as most people keep swallowing the line served up by political parties – 'we promise to make the system work for "hard-working families"'.

Bullshit of course! The system is and always will be loaded against the majority. It will always keep us on edge, forever worried about making ends meet, about downwards pressure on wages, about losing our job.

Our message: we could all get along fine without capitalists and the SPGB's aim is to get rid of their stupid system. Please think about joining us. Either that or be one more reason for capitalists to be cheerful.

The next revolution

This Gala celebrates the storied history of working-class resistance against the bosses.

But why do we have bosses?

Because the world's fabulous wealth is held in private hands.

The rich own the Earth, while the rest of us do all the work.

Do you think the rich are doing a good job looking after the planet?

They're not, are they?

They would rather see it all burn than give up their wealth.

The next revolution must be to abolish private ownership.

Abolish billionaire elites and their puppet politicians.

Abolish property trading, markets and money.

Abolish poverty, environmental destruction and nationalist wars. And abolish bosses.

We have the technology. We have the wit. We just need the will.

Democratic common ownership. It's the only future worth celebrating. Join us, and bring it one step closer.

David Gluck – Obituary

MY BROTHER David (who was a member of the Socialist Party, London Branch) passed away aged 91 on the 8th of July 2026. Dave was a long time member active as a speaker, correspondent and unofficial security worker from the late fifties.

David spent his early childhood in Whitechapel around the Brick Lane area and carried the roots of the old East End culture until the day he died. The family moved to Adelaide Road in leafy Primrose Hill at the end of the Second World War; we were a bit like the local 'Beverly Hillbillies'.

David's dad Jack was a SPGB member as are his brothers Tony, Graham and as was their late sister Sandra. Having experienced the anti-semitism of the post war years David took up boxing and was good enough to be selected to represent the ABA versus the Met Police, which was filmed at the Albert Hall. Dave stopped boxing after being disheartened by the accidental death of a club mate. He later took up Olympic wrestling and in his best year defeated two national champions (Abdul and Joseph).

My brother was widely travelled, serving in the merchant navy in his early twenties, then working in Israel and as a *Gastarbeiter* in Germany. Dave finally retired to Poland living on his pensions from Germany and the UK. Besides his interest in politics David was quite expert in jazz, sport and history. He was a tall, athletic man with a commanding and knowledgeable presence. David Gluck is survived by his brothers Tony, Graham and Harry and by his daughter Fiona.

GRAHAM GLUCK

'Raise everyone's wages'

'CUT BILLS and raise everyone's wages' promised the Green Party in a leaflet put out for elections earlier this year (*'Stop Reform. Replace Labour. Vote Green'*). Wage increases all round is more typical of Trotskyist candidates trying to get workers to follow them by dangling impossible 'transitional demands' in front of them. In this case it was an example of Polanski's professed 'ecopopulism' which consists of making attractive promises on bread-and-butter issues to gather votes, in particular from those who normally vote for the Labour Party. But it is just as unobtainable as any Trotskyist carrot.

If ever the Green Party came to form the government and decreed that all employers should pay their workers more, the result would be an immediate financial and economic crisis since everyone's wages could only be increased at the expense of overall profits and profits are what drive the capitalist economy. A lower economy-wide rate of profit would mean less investment and so a drop in production.

Derek Wall, a one-time speaker for the Green Party (before they had a Leader) and still a Green Party activist, described

in 1990 what he expected to happen if a Green government came into office on a programme of putting the environment before profits:

'A Green government will be controlled by the economy rather than being in control. On coming to office through coalition or more absolute electoral success, it would be met by an instant collapse of Sterling as "hot money" and entrepreneurial capital went elsewhere. The exchange rate would fall and industrialists would move their factories to countries with more relaxed environmental controls and workplace regulation. Sources of finance would dry up as unemployment rocketed, slashing revenue from taxation and putting up social security bills. The money for ecological reconstruction — the building of railways, the closing of motorways and construction of a proper sewage system — would run out' (*Getting There. Steps to a Green Society*, p. 78).

As the Green Party accepts the ownership of the means of production by private corporations and individuals and doesn't even have any state-capitalist pretensions, it is fair to assume that they

would come into office, if ever they did, under capitalism as it is today. So Wall's scenario is entirely plausible.

Wall envisaged this happening if the Green government was elected on the basis of implementing far-reaching measures to protect the environment. The Green Party doesn't seem to say much these days about protecting the environment (the leaflet in question doesn't mention it at all) but the same would happen if a Green government were elected on a pledge to make all employers pay their workers more. In fact, the immediate crisis would be economic and not just financial as Wall envisaged. Some employers would go bankrupt immediately. Others would lay off workers. Unemployment would soar. Production would slump.

The Greens are taking workers for fools, though we doubt many were fooled into voting for them because they believed that the Greens would, or even could, bring about a general increase in wages. Increased wages for everybody sounds good but is too good to be possible under capitalism.

Socialist Party custom printed cotton bags available in three different designs



Dyed 5oz Cotton bags in black with design printed on both sides. • £5 per bag including UK P&P

Available to buy online from www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/product-category/merchandise/ by card or PayPal account payment

By post from: The Socialist Party of Great Britain 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN by cheque or money order payable to 'The Socialist Party'. Please state design(s) required (make capitalism history, Want Better or Gerrard Winstanley quote) and mailing address.

Bags measure 38 x 42 cm and have two shoulder length cotton handles.

Price £3 plus £2 for UK P&P. Single orders posted in C4 size gusset envelopes for easy recycling.

For overseas or bulk order P&P details please enquire by email with subject 'Cotton bags' to spgb@worldsocialism.org.

Also available to buy direct from Head Office at £3 each (plus P&P if by mail order).

Stepping on the platform

Credit: BBC



AS ANYONE with a social media account knows, a price we pay for being able to share our thoughts with a global audience is being open to insults and abuse in reply. People with a prominent online presence, such as influencers and vloggers, attract attacks through making more of their lives available for comment. The messaging forum Tattle Life has threads about various influencers where opinions about them can be posted anonymously. One subject of a thread is GK Barry, who has branched out from running a sex-themed podcast into other media, now including presenting a documentary about Tattle Life for the BBC. *GK Barry: Toxic Gossip* starts with Barry reading some of the puerile slights written about her on the website, with other people having been victim to worse abuse. She speaks with loved ones of two people who had a presence on Instagram. Richard Davies ran the 'bowelbro' video diary of his struggle with cancer, which posters on Tattle Life accused of being faked, even after his death. Princess Dickson took her own life aged 16 after insulting comments about her appearance were repeatedly made on the forum. Her mother, Sophie, and Lisa, Richard Davies' widow, tried to contact Tattle Life's moderators about the messages and their impact, with no response.

Tattle Life was launched in 2018, and for many years its owner wasn't known publicly. In 2023, entrepreneurs Donna and Neil Sands began legal proceedings against the website, claiming libel, harassment and breach of privacy, with the defendant's identity not disclosed to the Sands. So, they hired a private investigator who discovered the person behind Tattle Life to be Sebastian Bond, later revealed in the press. Before Tattle Life, Bond ran a blog about veganism, whose demise, suggests Barry, made him jealous of other people's success as influencers. Tattle Life now has nearly 375,000 registered users, with millions more people who just

browse its threads. They aren't only an audience for gossipy messages but also the adverts cluttering up the site. These have generated around £1 million in advertising revenue, according to the documentary. As Lisa says regarding the thread about her husband 'the footfall to those pages was immense, and for them, that's money'. So, it is in the site's financial interest to have contentious threads.

Unfortunately, slurs grab the attention in a more immediate way than a reasoned critique does. It's doubtful that those who post the most offensive messages on Tattle Life's threads would repeat them face-to-face with their target. Communicating virtually and anonymously enables people to stir up trouble and cause upset without any personal comeback. Tattle Life's defenders would say that it holds influencers to account and upholds free speech. In the abstract, this sounds reasonable, but in the real / virtual worlds the context shapes the matter. 'Free speech' in capitalism is defined by a legal framework which reflects the prerogatives of the status quo. As Tattle Life is a business, there is a separation between who owns the platform and who uses it, which complicates who owns and is responsible for the content posted there. Even when laws aim to prevent or protect victims, they are only attempts to patch up a system which encourages such problems as defamation and threats. The need to make money is, as always, a factor; here, represented by the site's income from hosting adverts, which can increase if shocking content attracts more viewers. That a supposed platform for free speech has been mired in secrecy and is driven by money is one of the consequences of the market system.

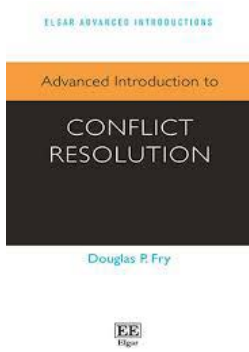
Recruiting Barry to present a documentary about Tattle Life and the realm of influencers comes across as an attempt by the BBC to court the younger demographic more likely to be scrolling

through social media than watching TV. According to Ofcom's 2025 *Media Nations* report, only 45 percent of people aged between 16 and 24 switch on any broadcast television in an average week. *GK Barry: Toxic Gossip* comes across like a primer to introduce this cohort to the documentary format. It follows the usual template of interviews with victims and experts, text of quotes, facts and figures, and the presenter poring over screens between their segments of spiel. Each component is brief so everything fits into the show's half-hour running time, and perhaps the audience's expected attention span. Where the format requires a confrontation with the villain of the piece, it ends up as looking quite desperate. The narrative through the programme is Barry's search for Bond, which includes tracing a location from details in a photo and speaking with his previous neighbours, and culminates with Barry sitting in a car outside his parents' house and then delivering a letter to them. She doesn't receive a response from Bond, although Tattle Life's moderator says 'for the BBC to include door-stepping harassment of pensioners in the documentary is abhorrent' in a statement on the forum. They add 'almost all articles on Tattle Life are misinformation and heavily biased by influencers and their PR who wish to shut down all opinions they dislike' (tinyurl.com/msmdswrn).

Tattle Life is just one website, which reflects wider issues with the culture of online communication. Social media platforms are run to make money for their owners, who are distanced from those who use or are affected by them. This is built into how they need to operate, which the legal framework tries to facilitate. Ideals of 'free speech' have to fit in with this context. The motivation to post 'toxic gossip' doesn't come from social media itself, but from how people are socialised. Having the kind of mindset to want to do this is a result of living in an alienating, divisive environment: hurling insults is an attempt to express some power when someone has little else in their lives. The impact of online abuse on people already vulnerable can be devastating, as the documentary illustrates.

MIKE FOSTER

Prosocial



Conflict Resolution.

By Douglas P. Fry.
Edward Elgar.
2026. 121pp.

'Nomadic foragers, as we all used to live, were socialist, prosocial, egalitarian societies' (Douglas P. Fry).

IN THIS distillation of long years of fieldwork and scholarship, the world-leading anthropologist Douglas Fry draws upon his knowledge and experience to propose means of resolving conflicts between individuals or groups as they might arise in contemporary contexts. Its analysis and recommendations are underpinned by the author's accumulated understanding of how human beings have related to one another throughout the 300,000 years of our species' existence. And it is precisely this that makes it of particular interest and relevance to socialists.

To be specific, a central plank of his arguments is how entirely fallacious are the oft-repeated claims that war, aggression and greed are rooted in the human psyche. All the evidence, he insists, is that such forms of behaviour, far from being somehow embedded in our nature, are, when they occur, an outcome of social conditioning and that our evolutionary history shows that we have just as much potential for, and indeed a much more natural bent, towards attachment, caring partnership and cooperation.

Drawing on decades of his own research and with evidence from various different fields of study, he demonstrates how over the approximately 290,000 years of prehistory (the Palaeolithic era), the overwhelming principle of existence among human groups was (and still is today among indigenous populations he has investigated across the world) non-violence, cooperation and egalitarianism, characterised by sharing food, caring for the vulnerable and maintaining social bonds. This the author sums up as 'community solidarity and harmony', reinforced by 'socialization and social control mechanism geared toward promoting prosocial values and behaviors'. Not that violence, greed or attempts to monopolise necessities would never have occurred in Palaeolithic societies or never occur in modern indigenous cultures, but in such circumstances ways are usually found to resolve the conflicts caused via 'restorative' methods or by reconciliation, eschewing violence and seeking to practice 'fairness' in the eyes of the individuals most

directly affected and of the collectivity. But in the rare cases where this is not possible, it may be necessary to apply sanctions to 'wrongdoers', probably via some form of social ostracism or banishment. As for large-scale organised killing, the author echoes the now widely accepted view that this has been largely a feature of the last approximately 10,000 years. Starting then, hunter-gatherer life (referred to in this book as 'nomadic foraging') gave way to settled agriculture with social hierarchies and control and domination of wealth by small groups of people developing and eventually becoming the norm. Later, of course, the industrial production of capitalism took over from agricultural society, but that society continued to manifest, as it still does, those same basic features: power and wealth concentrated in the hands of the few, leaders and led, and a willingness of the many, via social conditioning, to sacrifice themselves in the interests of the privileged few.

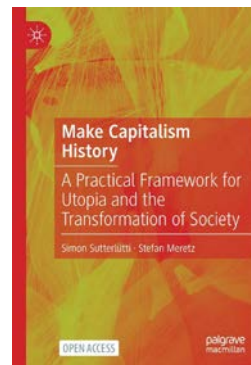
This book is one of many in the field of anthropology, archaeology and a gamut of other disciplines which have contributed to exploding the enduring myth that violence, competition and selfishness are somehow 'locked into' human interaction, that there exists inevitably some kind of 'war of all against all'. Douglas Fry's stark opposition to that idea is summed up in his statement that 'on the basis of cross-cultural data ... humans have a universal inclination to resolve conflicts and restore normal patterns of harmonious social interaction' and that 'the normal state of social affairs is to exchange good deeds, to feel gratitude, to be generous and appreciate the generosity of others. Overall, people strive to maintain positive interpersonal relations with others through mutually beneficial exchanges'.

All this is serious grist to the mill for socialists, providing as it does a powerful response to those who argue that the cooperative society of voluntary endeavour and free access to all goods and services which we call socialism is impossible because it is against what is usually referred to as 'human nature'. We cannot but agree with the author's plea that 'the human potential for resolving conflicts without violence should be fully acknowledged, nurtured, and further elaborated by the people sharing one small planet in the vastness of space'. At the same time, however, though this plea is expressed, as all else in this book, in truly engaging fashion, it is difficult to see how its substance can be realised within the framework of the current social system of class division and production for profit. Rather, the environment for it to come to fruition has to be a society of economic

equality and production for need.

HKM

Feasible



Make Capitalism History. A Practical Framework for Utopia and the Transformation of Society. By Simon Sutterlüttich and Stefan Meretz. Palgrave MacMillan.

The authors state that one reason for writing their book (which first appeared in German in 2023) was to get those engaged in various struggles to try to make things better under capitalism to seriously consider (rather than just in 'late night pub talks,' as they put it) what a feasible, rationally justified alternative society might look like.

Starting from the basic position that humans naturally want to satisfy their needs as they themselves define them, they argue that a free society can only be one where people are no longer forced to work by economic necessity and where people have secure, open access to what they require to satisfy their needs (they mention 'places resembling modern-day supermarkets but without checkout'); work has to be freely chosen and people must be free to use productive resources to both produce and consume what they need; private ownership has to be replaced by 'collective disposition' (they prefer 'disposition' as 'ownership' has connotations of exclusion whereas productive resources and their products will belong to nobody but just be there to be used). They call the new society 'commonism', but it is obviously socialism.

They are opposed to any form of central planning, on the grounds that it wouldn't work and that attempting it would give power over people to the central planners. In fact, they are opposed to any central administrative body, even if unarmed and selected democratically. What they envisage is production and distribution taking place through 'stigmergy' (communication by signs) which apparently is how termites communicate to build their constructions. Capitalism does this without central planning with prices as the signs; 'commonism' would do it through (non-monetary) signals about needs.

They describe well that under capitalism the aim of production is that 'money must be invested as capital in order to multiply itself' ('valorisation') and that this is 'not the result of the greed of managers or shareholders' but 'derives from a

structural compulsion to valorise that is built into the system' and enforced through competition: 'if producers display inferior valorisation, therefore less profit than their competitors, they will be at a disadvantage vis-à-vis advertising, the development or acquisition of new machines, the design of new products and so on. That is why, in the short or long-term, they will be defeated in competition and disappear from the market.' The state has some autonomy to resist this as it acquires money not by exchange but through taxation; this autonomy, however, 'remains relative, as state taxes in turn depend on a functioning economy ... Therefore, the economy is the dominant sphere encompassing the state'.

They don't regard state-dominated economies, such as the former USSR, as capitalist — in fact they follow the annoying practice of Continental academics of referring to them as 'Real Socialism' in the sense of a 'socialism' that really existed — but as being subject, through participation in the world market, to the same economic compulsions; also that state ownership is still a property form, excluding the majority.

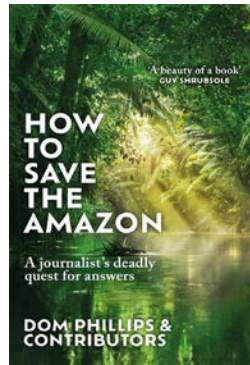
The second part of the book is devoted to discussing how to get to 'commonism'. Here, they insist, a free society can only be established by people who want it and freely choose to establish it; people cannot be forced to be free; a free society cannot be introduced from above by the state, as envisaged by gradualist reformists as well as by violent insurrectionists. Beyond not taking this route, the authors are fairly agnostic, though they also rule out the idea that worker cooperatives could outcompete capitalist corporations on the market or that voluntary communes ('commons', they call them) could spread by-passing the market. They seem to envisage as most likely the 'transvolution' (their alternative word for revolution) being set off by some catastrophe such as an economic collapse of capitalism or an ecological collapse.

In the last chapter they relent a bit on their opposition to political action and concede that it is conceivable that the state could support the spread of 'commonist forms' before dissolving itself — they write of a 'suicide state' — giving the movement for a free society a leg-up, or as they put it 'a stirrup holder, an accomplice to emancipation'.

ALB

Blood and Cattle

The introduction and first four chapters were written by Phillips, but the book was unfinished when he and indigenous specialist Bruno Pereira were murdered in 2022 (one man confessed to the killings and others have been arrested, but it is not known who was behind them, though they



How to Save the Amazon: a Journalist's Deadly Quest for Answers. By Dom Phillips & Contributors. Ithaca £10.99.

were presumably carried out to silence witnesses). A further six chapters were completed by various journalists on the basis of Phillips' notes. Phillips was clearly a courageous and painstaking investigator; as the people who assembled the book say in their foreword, 'these pages have been stained by blood.'

The Amazon rainforest plays a crucial role in stabilising the global climate, storing billions of tons of carbon, among other things. But it is currently under various kinds of threat, most notably deforestation caused by cattle ranching. Fires are used to remove trees and clear land; almost nine-tenths of deforested Amazon land has become cattle pasture. The reason behind this of course is profit, and there are plenty of other attacks on the forest for the same reason, from hydroelectric plants and gold-mining to large-scale fishing and oil exploration. Indeed, the Amazon itself may already be close to a 'tipping point', when it no longer produces enough moisture and may change into a semi-arid savannah. All of this is exposed here, with considerable detail and personal stories.

Biodiversity is another crucial aspect of the Amazon. Having large numbers of different plants can help to build fertile soils. Also, the area is likely to contain drugs that can help combat disease, but about which the outside world knows very little. The

indigenous people who live in the rainforest have a great deal of knowledge about possible uses of plants, and made use of some of their own remedies to fight Covid. But as deforestation continues, biodiversity will decline and some potentially useful plants may disappear.

The policies of the Brazilian government have had a major impact on the Amazon. The right-wing populist government of Jair Bolsonaro encouraged land-grabbers and illegal miners to invade the forest and extract natural resources. Since the election of left-winger Lula da Silva as president in 2022, things may have improved a bit, and he promised zero deforestation by the end of the decade, but it remains to be seen if anything close to this will materialise.

Defending the Amazon rainforest would contribute to limiting climate change and would also protect the indigenous communities that live there. Rather than the people being a means to the end of defending the Amazon biome, the forest should be saved to prevent indigenous genocide. They are not just hunter-gatherers but also 'rainforest gardeners and technicians'. Massive construction projects 'convert self-sufficient forest peoples into the urban poor' (rather like capitalism originally forcing people off the land to become wage slaves in factories).

The book reminds us how many inhabitants of the Earth view it rather differently from those who live under capitalism. As an indigenous representative says in the afterword, 'That land could be owned by a single person is unthinkable to us because everyone's survival depends on it. We can't imagine how anyone could pollute, divert or dam water for their own profit.'

PB



The row about overseas students

STUDENTS WHO come to the UK from abroad to study make another part of the education pot that is at boiling point. But as with the reasons for the cuts in the education system so also with the explanation of the row about overseas students. The causes have nothing to do with so-called academic freedom, or colour prejudice, or the duty to help developing countries. The cause of the dispute is within the economics of capitalism itself in one of its periodic crises.

Cuts are demanded in state expenditure by the capitalist class and in education in particular. One of the things which have been cut back on is the 'subsidy' to overseas students. This so-called subsidy relates to the fact that the fees paid by all students to universities and colleges of higher education do not in fact represent the true cost of the course they will be attending. The real cost will be many times higher and the balance comes

from central and local government grants to the universities and colleges, together with whatever else they can squeeze from private sources. Overseas students (estimated to be about 95,000 for the academic year 1973/4) therefore apparently cost the capitalist class considerable amounts.

For example, the 'price' of one year of a 3-year course in science at University College London, for the academic year 1975/76 was £157. But this figure probably represents no more than 10 per cent of the true cost of providing the services and equipment available to each student on a science course at UCL. So the call grows from the politicians (the mouthpieces of the capitalist class) and others involved to make students who come here to study from abroad pay the market price.

(Socialist Standard, August 1976)

Action Replay

Breaks, shirts and cards

'FOOTBALL UNITES the world' is a FIFA slogan, but the recent World Cup tournament did a great deal to point up the divisions which currently exist.

With three host countries and long travelling distances, it was always going to be a complicated enterprise. A total of 48 teams, 104 matches and 52 referees, all far more than previously: just 64 games in recent years and, when England hosted in 1966, 16 teams and 32 matches. There were plenty of complaints about the prices for tickets, food and drink, accommodation and travel. But then the whole thing is largely about money, with an estimate of \$80bn being the economic 'output' of the whole competition, both qualifying matches and the finals. A number of games did have quite a lot of empty seats, though.

There was plenty of politics involved too. The Uruguay team had to undergo searches of their luggage when they arrived in the US, and a Somali referee and some Iranian supporters were denied entry there. Haiti were forced to change their shirts for the finals, on the grounds that their first choice was political, in that it showed a flag which referred to the Haitian 'revolution' and the country's 'independence' in 1804. Not that the anthems and ubiquitous flags are in any way political.

Then there was Trump's intervention. A US player was sent off against Bosnia—Herzegovina, which, according to the regulations, meant he should miss the next match, a last-sixteen tie against Belgium. But Trump has a record of pardoning

people, even for serious offences, and he appealed to the head of FIFA, Gianni Infantino, to have the suspension overturned. Infantino is a bit of a lapdog for Trump, having awarded him the fantasy FIFA Peace Prize, and indeed the player in question was allowed to take part against Belgium. Not that it did much good, as Belgium won 4–1, and the shenanigans may even have inspired the Belgian players a bit.

The hydration breaks in each half might be a good idea, given the temperatures at some games. But they have happened on cooler days too, and they are officially Powerade hydration breaks, sponsored by a sports drink. On US TV the breaks are

occupied by commercials. There have been claims, too, that the breaks can alter the momentum of a match, giving one or other side an advantage. So a game of two halves may be becoming a game of four quarters.

One thing the competition has shown, though, is the extent of migration and the impact it has on 'national' teams. Many squads consist in large part of sons of migrants or of ex-pats, people who moved to another country but whose family still have links of some kind to their original 'home'. Football may not unite the world, but it demonstrates how the world and its population are changing.

PB



Credit: Yantisimages

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.

August 2026 Events

World Socialist Movement online meetings

Next Friday evening Zoom meeting will be

Friday 4 September at 7.30pm

The Summer School meetings on 21-23 August (see page 6 for talks and times) can be followed on Zoom.

Socialist Party Physical Meetings

WORCESTER

Friday 21 (evening) to

Sunday 23 August (lunchtime)

Socialist Party Summer School

University of Worcester, St. John's Campus.

Henwick Grove, Worcester, WR2 6AJ

KENT

Sunday 23 August 10.30am to 4pm

Kent Miners' Festival

Kent & Sussex branch will have a stall at this event. Betteshanger Country Park, Sandwich Road, Deal CT14 0BF. Our stall will be in the exhibitors hall of the mining museum on site.

Paid parking is available on site or it is expected that a free shuttle bus service will run from Deal railway station – for more info visit <https://www.betteshanger-park.co.uk/event/kent-miners-festival/> or call Rob on 07971 715569.

LONDON

Bank Holiday Monday 31 August 10.30am to 8pm

Carshalton EcoFair

The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event till 6pm.

Carshalton Park, Ruskin Road, Carshalton, Surrey, SM5 3DD.

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.

Hoarding – a disorder of our time

MANY YEARS ago, when I was a youngster, we were often visited at home by Harry, a relative who had had a difficult upbringing, lived on his own and showed signs of self-neglect. He started to give increasing cause for concern and my parents wondered what could be done. So my father and older brother went to his house to check on how he was managing. On their return I remember my brother saying 'It's a rubbish dump with a roof on'. Not long after this Harry was admitted to a psychiatric hospital.

How hoarders feel

All this came back to me on reading a recent *Big Issue* article on hoarding and what causes anyone to adopt a practice so manifestly detrimental to their own wellbeing (tinyurl.com/2dwfsk33). It talked about how, though hoarding is generally associated with physical mess, the mess is also in the mind and is likely to have psychological drivers such as trauma, fear of scarcity, or loneliness. It went on to say that, in turn, the consequences of being known to live a hoarder's life can be shame, fear or reinforced feelings of isolation, but that the intense anxiety felt by hoarders about discarding possessions, regardless of their value, is linked to how 'objects often carry deep emotional meaning or represent security against loss'.

Hoarding and homelessness

Given its appearance in the *Big Issue*, the article's main focus was, perhaps understandably, on how hoarding can lead to eviction or homelessness for those affected and how they suffer a much higher rate of it than for the general population. And it explained that this was the case even though hoarding disorder had been officially recognised as a distinct psychiatric condition and only recently – in May of this year – there was, though little noticed, a National Hoarding Awareness Week. But while drawing attention to the not negligible suffering of people who hoard and to the potential of this condition to lead to even worse consequences, what the *Big Issue* did not attempt to do was to delve into the reasons why people become hoarders in the first place.

Tendencies triggered

The first obvious thing to consider is



that, just as no one is born a thief or a tyrant or a miser, no one is born a hoarder either. It's generally accepted that human beings are eminently flexible creatures whose behaviour is highly dependent on the society they live in and the conditions in which they grow up. Individuals do of course have differing potential tendencies, capacities and talents, which may or may not be realised depending on the events and circumstances of their lives. For example, therefore, would my relative, Harry, have become a hoarder if the early difficult life circumstances he had experienced had not triggered in him the potential for it? Hard to be sure, and it might be said that many of us have a tendency to accumulate objects of a certain kind, often somewhat irrationally. That's certainly the case with me personally when it comes to books which I sometimes feel the need to stock my shelves with even if I know at bottom that I won't read them all. And the same is the case with other people I know when it comes to clothes.

But we can maybe call these minor quirks which may or may not have their origin in some kind of innate tendency in particular individuals but, in any case, are unlikely to have a profound impact on their lives. The same cannot be said of the kind of extreme examples of hoarding that we see depicted in those semi-exploitative TV series on the subject. These are largely the consequence of highly negative situations into which the hoarders have fallen and it seems fair to think that, had circumstances been different for them, their potential for that behaviour may well have remained dormant.

Insecurity

What kind of circumstances are we talking about? Well the *Big Issue* article talks about 'trauma, fear and loneliness' with possessions functioning as 'emotional anchors' and representing 'memories, identity or a sense of security in an unpredictable world'. Of course the majority

of us, whose lives are based on the need to work for a wage or salary in order to survive, manage, flexible beings that humans are, to negotiate that 'unpredictable world' without falling into some kind of addiction or psychosis. In other words, most of us stay sane despite the uncertainty and insecurity visited upon us by capitalism, where the ups and downs of the market and the needs of the profit system can quickly change the complexion of our lives.

But some of us are more fragile and need something to cling to, something that seems to offer a sense of safety – illusory as that may be – in an uncertain, divisive world. This may be drink, drugs, worship of sports or entertainment heroes, or even, in the case of the hoarding habit, something as seemingly banal as filling your life and space with possessions that serve no apparent purpose.

A cure?

So, is there a 'cure' for hoarding? Well, in the alienating, crisis-prone system we live under, probably not, other than a switch to some alternative obsession or addiction. Could there be a cure in a different kind of system, one without the pressure of wages and salaries, one where we have free access to all goods and services and the space to develop our talents and capacities both for our own satisfaction and for the common good? We would have to say yes, definitely. But for this to happen, we first need majority consciousness by wage and salary earners of their plight and then democratic political action to sweep away the profit system and establish the society of togetherness and community that we call socialism – a society based on the principle of from each according to ability to each according to need.

HOWARD MOSS