

socialist standard



July 2010
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Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

Heads you lose...



Bankers play, workers pay
in the new Austerity Age



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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 7 August** at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.
tel: 020 7622 3811
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Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

Editorial

The government declares class war

THE 'SAVAGE cuts' in spending by government departments, cuts in housing benefit, a two-year pay freeze for public servants, less indexation for welfare benefits, price increases due to higher VAT, announced in the 22 June Emergency Budget, and openly trailed as inaugurating a new 'Age of Austerity' and 'years of pain', confirm that the role of governments is to run the state machine in the general interest of the capitalist class, the tiny minority of super rich who own and control the means of wealth production. That governments really are the 'executive committee of the ruling class' that Marx said they were.

In fact, in a throwback to the 19th century, this particular government is overwhelmingly composed of members of the ruling class (see back page). And these millionaires have the cheek to tell us that we must tighten our belts and change our way of life while – even, so that – theirs can continue.

In reducing corporation tax the Chancellor followed the advice of a fellow Tory writing in the *Times* (17 June) to choose "the interests of employers and wealth creators. That won't be popular but healthier businesses – free of tax and red tape – are essential for generating tax revenues, exports and new jobs."

Note the arrogance of these people in describing themselves as 'wealth creators' when in fact it is employees, not employers, who create wealth by transforming materials that originally came from nature into useful things. What employers do is organise that the maximum amount of this newly-created wealth goes to their business

as profit.

But the Tory did have a point. Under capitalism the engine of growth is capital accumulation by businesses and this is fuelled by profits. In this sense, tax receipts and jobs do depend on profit-healthy businesses, even if only as by-products which are used to try to convince the general public that it is in their interest that priority should be given to profits.

That priority has to be given to profits at the expense of the living standards of working people and their dependants is confirmation that capitalism is a system that does not work in the interest of the wealth-creating majority, only in that of the profit-taking minority. Which is why it must go.

In the meantime we have to live with it. That doesn't mean we have to take what the government has planned lying down. The precise cut in our living standards is not something the government can decree. It depends on how determinedly we resist. In other words, on the class struggle. But, since the cards under capitalism are always stacked against us, this will only be a defensive, rearguard action to try to stop things getting worse.

Yet another reason why we should be organising, not just to limit the damage, but to put an end to capitalism and usher in a society based on common ownership and democratic control of productive resources, so that production can be geared to satisfying people's needs instead of being subordinate to making profits for the few.

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Sonic Youth

What do you do if you're young, you've got no money, and you want some kind of social life that actually involves human to human interaction? You can't go to pubs, restaurants, clubs or the cinema without money. Parks close after dark. You can go to a friend's house if the parents allow it but it's hardly neutral ground and in any case you can't meet a whole group that way.

There are places in this country which are so dull, so devoid of sheltered places to meet, so lifelessly unlit after dark, that many young refugees from the parental TV sofa end up hanging around outside the local supermarket. This is not because they have a love of supermarkets. They're certainly not going to buy anything. The neon light attracts them like moths, because the alternative to hanging around in a lit area is hanging around in a dark one. And if you're young and you do that, chances are you'll get arrested on suspicion of being a mugger or a rapist. Either that, or what's infinitely worse, you could get mugged or raped by the genuine article.

So the answer to the question, what you do with no money and a desire to be sociable, is hang around in a shop doorway admiring cornflake box pyramids and BOGOF promotions. That is, until the proprietor calls the police and you get moved on or pulled in.

For, not surprisingly, the supermarket owner is not keen on seeing a bunch of hoodies loitering about in his shop doorway, since he knows it to be a scientific fact that two or more adolescents when combined together exhibit a strong repulsive force on passing trade. Even one hoodie is enough to make senior citizens scurry nervously away from the premises, he reasons, while three is definitely a police matter and five a civil emergency.

This is not very conducive to good relations with the society that has forced this lifestyle on you as a young person. The more you exert your 'right' to a social life the more likely you are to end up with a police record. Unfortunately it's your own fault for not being a rich kid with a car and a fat allowance.

As this problem is deeply annoying for everyone involved, one might expect it to be solved by local authorities providing suitable meeting shelters, but that would be far too simple. Instead, displaying a genius for discriminatory technology that only capitalism could possibly come up with, there is the Mosquito. The Mosquito is a recently invented device which

exploits the mildly interesting fact that the human audio range deteriorates with age. The philanthropic inventor realised that by zeroing in on high frequencies that only under 25s can usually hear, he could devise a hugely irritating sonic weapon that would be unheard by most shop users but would drive any adolescents crazy, presumably as well as any passing dogs.

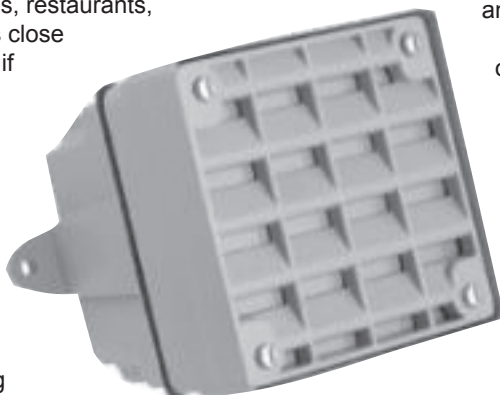
It's not quiet either, with a maximum output potential of 108 decibels, according to the manufacturer. This is a rock-band-in-your-living-room noise level. An airliner's jet engines at one nautical mile before landing deliver around 106 dB while a helicopter 100 feet above your head gives 100 dB. Decibels are an expression of ratios, not a straightforward arithmetic scale, so the Mosquito is, for instance, 16 times louder than a domestic 70 dB vacuum cleaner and 8 times louder than a typical 85 dB household smoke alarm.

3,000 have already been sold in Britain for installation outside Spar shops and the like, while controversy has mounted over human rights and safety questions. No testing for health risks took place before the Ig Nobel prize winner went on sale, and some councils have reacted by banning it, although the government in 2008 declared that it had no intention of imposing any ban and in February 2010 the Labour Home Secretary, Alan Johnson, described it as 'very helpful.'

Those over 25 with no kids and no particular concerns about letting off jet-engines near babies might want to worry nonetheless that the Mosquito has another frequency setting, this time one which we can all hear. This is the shape of things to come, as the technology of non-lethal weaponry becomes ever more sophisticated. Military-grade 150 dB sonic weapon LRAD has already been used as 'crowd-control' against desperate civilians after the Katrina hurricane disaster, as well as in warzones and against Somali pirates, and is the weapon of choice on luxury liners ('Cruise lines turn to sonic weapon', BBC Online, 8 Nov 2005).

As every capitalist knows, what's great about non-lethal weapons is that you can use them whenever you like on the great unwashed without (much) fear of legal difficulty. Pretty soon landowners will be able to save a fortune on guarding their estates by installing weapons that make trespassers throw up, soil themselves, go blind or feel as if they're on fire. With new 'Phasr' dazzling laser-guns already being tested by police and other military products like the Active Denial System (a microwave pain ray) likely to follow suit, the social unrest widely anticipated due to savage government cutbacks may well stimulate a huge growth market in such weaponry.

Meanwhile, the young people congregating outside supermarkets with the ear-defenders under their hoodies might be wondering why society hates them so much. But really, society doesn't hate young people in particular. Capitalist society just hates anybody who doesn't have any money, which in general terms is most of us. Young people grasp situations quickly, as evidenced by the fact that some of them are now downloading the Mosquito frequency as a 'silent' ringtone so they don't have to turn their phone off in school. But what they really need to grasp is that capitalism is their class enemy, and that isn't going to change as they get older.



Killer hurts - the Mk4 Mosquito



Self-employed workers

Dear Editors

I am writing in response to Tony Trafford's letter (*Socialist Standard*, May) regarding self-employed status. I agree fully with the Editors' response and analysis of the matter but wanted to add a couple of points.

As a self-employed skilled labourer in the engineering and construction industries, I do not fit in Marx's capital-owning definition of the shop keeper and I think there is a clear definition to be made between self-employed small capitalists of the kind described by Marx and those of more modern times, like myself and indeed the subject of Tony Trafford's letter, who merely supply their labour.

As such a person, I am in a similar if not worse position than an 'ordinary' employed person. I am not entitled to sick or holiday pay, my employment is not guaranteed down to a daily basis and all my costs for work (fuel, tools, telephone, etc) are my responsibility. As for exploitation, I neither employ and therefore exploit, any others and am contracted to be employed by others and therefore my labour is exploited by capital in the traditional sense. In reality my so-called 'self-employed' status merely refers to how I pay my taxes rather than any social or deeper economic definition.

D. HUMPHRIES, Sussex.

Pete Seeger

Dear Editors

Concerning Roy Beat's letter (March *Socialist Standard*), I (mis)spent the 1960s immersed in the Folk

Movement and recall nothing positive vis-à-vis the dissemination of Socialist knowledge. Politically the scene was one Leftist/Nationalist mess. Significantly Roy Beat fails to produce any contrary evidence.

The banjo's early multi-racial history is common knowledge. However in the wake of the Minstrel Shows its image to many Negroes was tarnished and seeing one in the hands of yet another "condescending white, liberal Yankee" arriving to "emancipate" them was further aggravation.

The significance of the inverted commas around "good causes" appears to have evaded him. Socialists recognise the serious limitations of the Civil (and Woman's, Gay etc) Rights Movements and how at best they can only aspire to parity with their white, male, heterosexual Working Class counterparts within Capitalism. The solution, of course, is Socialism. Who would need "rights" where common ownership and free access prevailed? Likewise, the anti-Vietnam War Movement dealt only with the specifics of that event; not the underlying causes of war at large. On what possible basis therefore could criticising all of this be deemed "sectarian"?

I have much time for Pete Seeger both personally and musically: politically, I have little.

ANDREW ARMITAGE, Scotland

Ballots or bullets?

Dear Editors

Your candidate (for Vauxhall) in the election was to my mind only propping up the outdated evil system with money.

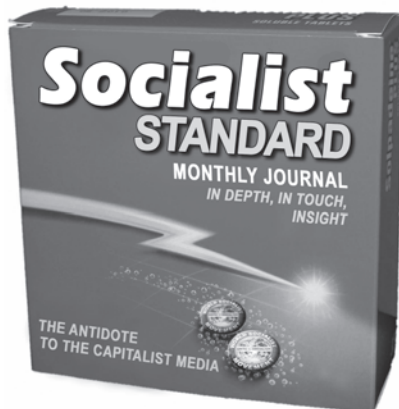
It would have been far better to have spent the cash on leaflets informing the people whatever party they vote X for it will not be in their interests.

The state will never give over power to the workers – the mass of the people have to take power. If one wants something in this life, you have to *fight* to get it.

R. BLOOMFIELD, London SE5

Reply: It is true that we did have to forfeit our deposit of £500 and that that went to the capitalist state but, as a party contesting the election, our election address was distributed free by the post office to 56,000 households in Vauxhall. Besides arguing the case for socialism, the leaflet did make the point you mention about the other parties.

We agree that if you want anything under capitalism you have to struggle for it, if that's what you mean by "fight". If by "fight" you mean take up arms we don't agree. It's just not true – for instance, workers can and do get higher wages and better working conditions without taking up arms. We do think that socialism can be established peacefully but getting there will have to involve a determined political and ideological struggle - *Editors*.



IMAGINE

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Israel's State Piracy: Warding Off the Threat of Peace

THE IMMEDIATE purpose of Israel's state piracy and mass kidnapping in the Eastern Mediterranean is clear. The aim is to maintain the siege ("closure") of the Gaza Strip that was imposed in 2007 to induce the Gazans to overthrow the Hamas administration they had just elected. Of course, the political effect of the blockade, which caused enormous suffering (see 'Material World', July 2008), was just the opposite.

But there is an even more important aim – to reassert Israeli control over Gaza's borders, airspace and territorial waters. This control was not relinquished when PM Ariel Sharon withdrew ground forces and settlers in 2005. Keeping Gaza and the West Bank isolated from direct contact with the outside world is crucial to Israel's claim to continued sovereignty over the occupied territories and preventing the emergence of a sovereign Palestinian state (or two such states).

Some sections of the Israeli ruling class are prepared to accept a peace settlement based on the "two-state solution". Peace would give Israeli business unrestricted access to Arab export markets and cheap labour. The present government, however, is a creature of interests tied to the occupation – above all, the military-industrial complex and the settlers' lobby. The parties of the governing parliamentary coalition are either (like PM Bibi Netanyahu's Likud) loathe to contemplate a genuinely sovereign Palestinian state or (like Jewish Home) committed to Greater Israel and thus opposed to a Palestinian state in principle.

For these people, peace is a threat to be warded off at all costs. A danger that peace might be imposed emerged when the United States, on which Israel is now totally dependent, elected a president who believes that American strategic interests at the regional and global level demand urgent resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Why so violent?

This may help explain a somewhat puzzling aspect of Israel's response to the Free Gaza flotilla. Why was it so violent?

The Israeli navy could have maintained the blockade and its control of Gazan waters simply by blocking the path of the aid ships until they gave up and went away. This method had worked well in the past. By massacring a dozen or so activists and hurting and humiliating many more – including influential individuals such as parliamentarians, former diplomats, and film makers – Israel has created a PR disaster for itself. It has strained relations with countries around the world and alienated its main regional ally, Turkey.

Part of the explanation may be that key members of the Israeli cabinet are ex-generals accustomed to tackling political problems by military means (Defence Minister Ehud Barak) or simply thugs (Foreign Minister and former bouncer Avigdor Lieberman). They seem to have thought that a brutal reaction would deter future attempts to break the siege.

There is another plausible motive. An atmosphere of

heightened confrontation, making progress toward a negotiated settlement impossible, may have been exactly what the Israeli government sought to achieve. And if Israel's state terrorism provokes a new upsurge in Palestinian terrorism, that will serve even better to thwart Obama and ward off the threat of peace.

Offshore gas

There is another aspect to the issue of control over Gazan waters – one that commentators usually overlook. In 1999, the Palestinian Authority (PA) signed a 25-year agreement with British Gas and the Athens-based but Lebanese-owned Consolidated Contractors International Company (CCC) to explore for oil and gas off the Gazan coast. Two wells were drilled in 2000 and, sure enough, a major gas field was found, not very far from the spot where the Free Gaza flotilla was attacked. (Some offshore oil was also found.) Rights to the proceeds were assigned: 60 percent to British Gas, 30 percent to CCC, and only 10 percent to the PA. Nevertheless, the discovery enhanced prospects for an economically viable Palestinian state.

When Sharon became prime minister in 2001, he challenged Palestinian sovereignty over the gas field and declared that Israel would never buy gas from the PA. The consortium made plans to pump the gas to Egypt instead. But all plans were scuppered in 2006 when Hamas replaced the PA in Gaza. Israel then tried to take over the negotiations, but British Gas decided to put the whole risky project on hold. Presumably both Israel and the PA still hope that eventually the gas will be theirs.

What next?

Israeli state piracy did not have the desired intimidating effect. More attempts to run the blockade followed. Iran and Turkey have offered naval escorts for future flotillas. Conceivably this will broaden the war, though it is more likely that the US will force Israel to abandon the siege. This is likely to trigger the collapse of the current Israeli government and greatly increase the chances of a peace settlement under its successor.

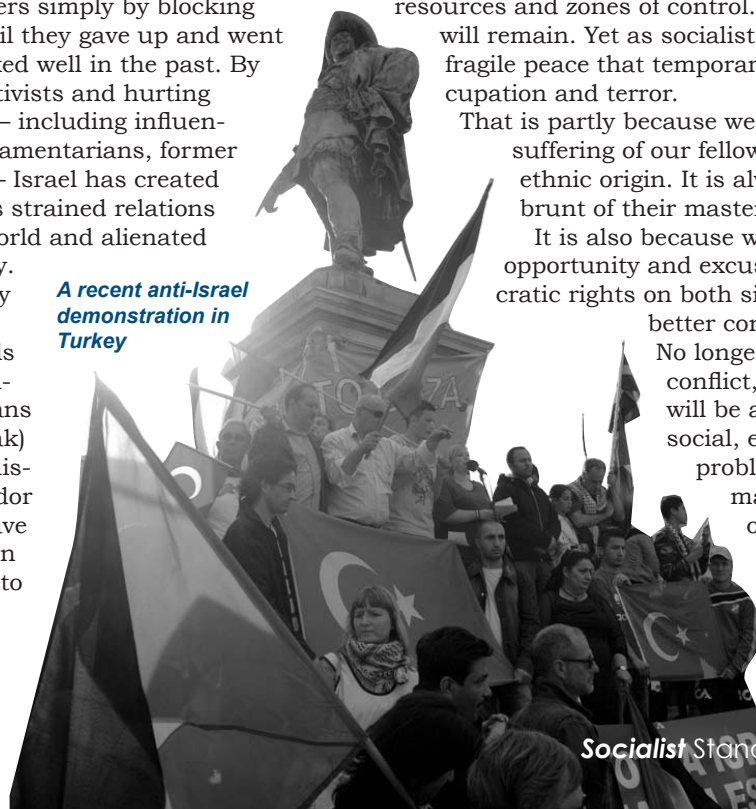
A settlement will not eliminate capitalist rivalry over resources and zones of control. The seeds of future war will remain. Yet as socialists we will welcome even a fragile peace that temporarily halts the horrors of occupation and terror.

That is partly because we sympathize with the suffering of our fellow workers, whatever their ethnic origin. It is always they who suffer the brunt of their masters' wars.

It is also because war provides an ideal opportunity and excuse to suppress democratic rights on both sides. Peace will create better conditions for democracy. No longer obsessed with ethnic conflict, "Jews" and "Palestinians" will be able to refocus on the social, economic and ecological problems spawned by the "normal" peacetime functioning of capitalism. A space for socialist ideas will open up in this corner of our world.

STEFAN

A recent anti-Israel demonstration in Turkey



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WORLD CUP REALITY

"No nation in the world has a gulf between rich and poor as great as South Africa's. Despite billions of euros in investments related to the 2010 World Cup, last year more than a million South Africans lost their jobs. During the first three months of this year, 171,000 entered the unemployment rolls. The official unemployment rate is over 25 percent, the highest level seen in the past five years. Unofficially, it is estimated to be closer to 40 percent. A recent study completed by the University of South Africa concluded that 75.4 percent of South Africans fall below the poverty level – and almost all those poor are black. 'Persistent poverty, rising levels of unemployment and violent crime, together with the crisis in the public health sector,' writes Amnesty International in its annual report, have contributed at least as much as corruption and nepotism to the often violent protests that have recently shaken South Africa." (*Spiegel On Line*, 3 June)

CHEAPENING WORLD ANNIHILATION

"The Pentagon has now told the public, for the first time, precisely how many nuclear weapons the United States has in its arsenal. That is exactly 4,802 more than we need. Last week, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton testified before the Senate to advocate approval of the so-called New Start treaty, signed by President Obama and President Dmitri Medvedev of Russia last month. The treaty's ceiling of 1,550 warheads deployed on 700 missiles and bombers will leave us with fewer warheads than at any time since John F. Kennedy was president. Yet the United States could further reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons without sacrificing security. Indeed, we have calculated that the country could address its conceivable national defense and military concerns with only 311 strategic nuclear weapons." (*New York Times*, 21 May)

"PEACE-LOVING" BRITAIN

"Britain signalled a new openness on nuclear weapons yesterday, revealing that its stockpile will not exceed 225 warheads, including up to 160 that are ready for action. William Hague, the Foreign secretary, said: 'We believe that the time is now right to be more open about the weapons we hold.'" (*Times*, 27 May)

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

"Nicolaus Copernicus, the 16th-century astronomer whose work was later condemned by the Catholic Church as heretical, was reburied by Polish priests as a hero yesterday, 467 years after he was laid to rest in an unmarked grave. His reburial in a tomb in the cathedral where he once served as a church canon and doctor indicates how far the church has come in making peace with the scientist whose revolutionary theory that the Earth revolves around the Sun helped to usher in the modern scientific age. Copernicus, who lived from 1473 to 1543, died as a little-known astronomer working in what is now Poland, far from Europe's centres of learning." (*Independent on Sunday*, 23 May)

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South London branch. 1st Tues.

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Carlisle. Robert Whitfield.

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Canterbury. Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB

Luton. Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP

Redruth. Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1PB. Tel: 01209 219293

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East Anglian Regional branch. Meets every two months on a Saturday afternoon (see meetings page for details).

Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billericay, CM12 0EX. n.deutz@btinternet.com

David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccles-on-Sea, NR12 0SF.

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Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD.

Tel: 01603 814343.

Cambridge. Andrew Westley, 10 Marksby Close, Duxford, Cambridge CB2 4RS. Tel: 07890343044

IRELAND

Cork. Kevin Cronin, 5 Curragh Woods, Frankfield, Cork. Tel: 021 4896427.

Email: mariekev@eircom.net

Newtownabbey: Nigel McCullough.

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SCOTLAND

Edinburgh branch. 1st Thur. 8-9pm.

The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh.

J. Moir. Tel: 0131 440 0995. JIMMY@

jmoir29.freereserve.co.uk Branch website:

http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/

Glasgow branch. 3rd Wednesday of each

month at 8pm in Community Central

Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow.

Richard Donnelly, 112 Napiershall Street,

Glasgow G20 6HT. Tel: 0141 5794109.

Email: richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com

Ayrshire: D. Trainer, 21 Manse Street,

Salcoats, KA21 5AA. Tel: 01294 469994.

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Dundee. Ian Ratcliffe, 16 Birkhall Ave,

Wormit, Newport-on-Tay, DD6 8PX.

Tel: 01328 541643

West Lothian. 2nd and 4th Weds in

month, 7.30-9.30. Lanthorn Community

Centre, Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge,

Livingston. Corres: Matt Culbert, 53

Falcon Brae, Ladywell, Livingston, West

Lothian, EH5 6UW. Tel: 01506 462359

Email: matt@wsmweb.fsnet.co.uk

WALES

Swansea branch. 2nd Mon, 7.30pm,

Unitarian Church, High Street. Corres:

Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street,

Wauan Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. Tel:

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Cardiff and District. John James, 67

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India. World Socialist Group, Vill Gobardhanpur. PO Amral, Dist. Bankura, 722122

Japan. Michael. Email: worldsocialismjapan@hotmail.com.

EUROPE

Denmark. Graham Taylor, Kjaerslund 9, floor 2 (middle), DK-8260 Viby J

Germany. Norbert. E-mail: weltsozialismus@gmx.net

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Italy. Gian Maria Freddi, Casella Postale

n. 28., c/o Ag. PT VR 17, 37131 Verona

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Housing madness

A photo of a row of empty newly-built houses in Dublin was featured on page 4 of the *Times's* Bricks & Mortar supplement of 14 May. According to the accompanying article, "a recent estimate suggested that there were 345,000 empty homes in Ireland". Why? Is it because there are no people living in substandard housing in Ireland? Or because the housing problem has been solved there? Neither. It's because there's no market – no paying demand – for them. The people who need better housing or to move house cannot afford to pay. It's as simple as that.

This situation arose in classic capitalist fashion. Houses like everything else under capitalism are produced to be sold with a view to profit. They are not produced simply for people to live in. A few years ago, when the capitalist economy in Ireland was expanding, there was a strong demand for new houses, which speculative builders in Ireland thought was going to continue. In any event, they felt that they rather than their rivals would benefit from the demand for houses. So they arranged for more to be built:

"This nation of builders became a nation of developers. Massive tax incentives encouraged people to invest. You'd have been a fool not to. Buy one day for €100,000 (£86,750), sell a week later for €200,000. Nobody asked if Ireland needed these buildings or whether they were being built in the right places."

But then came the slump of 2008 (itself sparked off by overproduction of houses in relation to paying demand in the US) and the market for houses collapsed. "Too many" had

been built:

"Developers can't get rid of them, nor can some pay off the bank loans they used to build them. The banks can't acquire them because they are worth so much less than their loans."

Meanwhile, the other side of the Irish Sea, banks and building societies have a different problem but still arising from the fact that houses are produced for sale and not directly for people to live in. They can't get the money to re-lend at a rate of interest that those who want to buy a house can afford.

Banks and building societies are intermediary financial institutions which make their profits by borrowing at one rate of interest and re-lending it at a higher one. They borrow money from two sources: the money market ("wholesale") and individual depositors ("retail").

According to the *Financial Times* (22/23 May) the Council of Mortgage Lenders has

"...warned that its own members – who make roughly 94 per cent of all the mortgage loans in Britain – are facing higher costs as they compete for retail deposits to replace maturing wholesale loans. This is likely to mean that rates on mortgages may have to rise even if the Bank rate remains on hold."

The "higher costs" are the increased rate of interest they will have to offer depositors to get these to lend them money, but, if they are to make the same rate of profit, this will have to be passed on to those to whom they lend money to buy a house. But, as houses buyers may not be able to afford the higher interest, mortgage lenders are not prepared to give them loans as they wouldn't make enough profit, with the result that, in the words of the article's headline, the "housing market recovery shows signs of stalling". A neat illustration of how banks cannot just create the money they lend. A neat illustration too of how capitalism is not a society geared to meeting needs.



Tiny Tips

Only 14 of the world's 1,000 billionaires are self-made women, and only seven of them had no help from relatives, a new list has found...

<http://tinyurl.com/29nwkge>

Food prices are set to rise as much as 40% over the coming decade amid growing demand from emerging markets and for biofuel production, according to a United Nations report today which warns of rising hunger and food insecurity:

<http://tinyurl.com/2cp664t>

Slovak voters have dumped their government, prompting one nationalist firebrand to warn that the country would now be run by "homosexuals and Hungarians," the Slovak news agency TASR reported:

<http://tinyurl.com/3xeth5w>

An Emirati woman who had complained to police that she was gang raped by six men is being tried for having consensual sex with one of them, The National newspaper reported on Tuesday. The prosecution told Abu Dhabi's criminal court that the 18-year-old woman had in effect consented to

having sex with one of the six men, an Emirati friend of hers, because she agreed

to go for a drive with him on May 2, the English-language daily said. The paper, citing the prosecution, said the 19-year-old man had sex with her in his car and then invited five of his friends — four Emiratis and one Iraqi — to join them:

<http://tinyurl.com/38ogm83>

\$350G Lexus LFA supercar: A car so 'hot' you need to get 'approved' by the company to buy it:

<http://tinyurl.com/yzuuxno>

This baby, called the Rising Sun "is currently co-owned by Larry Ellison, CEO of Oracle Corporation, and David Geffen. The yacht is the 5th largest in the world with a length of almost 138 meters (453 ft). It reportedly cost over US\$200 million to build," YachtRisingSun.com, the boat's very own fan site, reports. The boat comes complete with onyx countertops, a gym, spa, sauna, wine cellar, private cinema and basketball court:

<http://tinyurl.com/34rkcmd>

TEBOGO, aged 25, is a security guard in Johannesburg, earning just 11.38 [£1.02] rand an hour. Improperly

classified as "self-employed", he gets no paid holiday, sick leave or other benefits. By dint of working a 12-hour day, 25 days a month, he manages to earn 3,400 rand a month. Out of this he has to pay 250 rand rent to a friend who allows him to live in a one-room shack in his yard, next to seven others. Their 15 occupants share a single pit-latrine and outside water tap. Tebogo pays his employer 390 rand a month for transport and 98 rand for the uniform he is obliged to wear. Another 350 rand a month goes on maintenance for his six-year-old daughter. He also gives about 800 rand a month to his parents, who have no other source of income. In a good month that leaves Tebogo with about 1,500 rand for himself and his studies:

<http://tinyurl.com/35r545j>

"What do I enjoy? I enjoy the gun."

AWIL SALAH OSMAN, a 12-year-old soldier in Somalia's army:

<http://tinyurl.com/3569yln>

A six-story-tall statue of Jesus Christ with his arms raised along a highway was struck by lightning in a thunderstorm Monday night and burned to the ground, police said:

<http://tinyurl.com/2dba5du>

The axe falls – will anyone take on THE AXEMAN?

The Con Dem coalition government is promising a new “Age of Austerity”. What should workers do about it?

Economic crises are like a universal acid, washing away all bullshit, leaving behind the unvarnished truth. The kind of economic analysis found just yesterday only in obscure academic journals or little-read Marxist periodicals is today on everyone’s lips and is assumed to describe the most elementary and obvious facts. It seems we are again being compelled to face with sober senses our real conditions of life. Only yesterday, for example, we were assured that the economy would be rescued by an injection of newly printed money and by bailing out bankrupt banks. Now, the G20 finance ministers have told us it’s time to sober up and get real. At their meeting held in Busan, South Korea, on 4-5 June, they announced an end to Keynesian illusion, and a return to the law of value. Sure, the rich got their bail-outs – the famed discipline of the markets is not for those with soft hands. But now it’s time to snatch away the buckets and leave ordinary working people to their fate in the sinking ship. Billions of pounds of state handouts for the capitalists; a new round of austerity for the working class.

The new chancellor, George Osborne, took the announcement from the G20 as a vindication of his own outlook and, with the prime minister, David Cameron, promptly embarked on a propaganda campaign to prepare us for the worst. Although Cameron’s speech on 7 June was presented as an exciting opportunity for radical change, with plenty of fine words about strengthening and uniting the country, about consultation and debate and “difficult decisions”, it was actually, as the *Financial Times* admitted, a “softening-up exercise for

the real pain to come” – namely, cuts in state spending that would be “more savage than anything contemplated by even the Thatcher government”. By sleight of hand, the origin of most of the debt, the speculative activity of capitalists, has been hidden. The blame and the bill is instead being laid at the door of the state services relied on by the poorest people in the country and, as unemployment rises, more and more workers. Cameron says that the cuts he is preparing will affect “our whole way of life”. But as trade unionists were quick to point out on the BBC website, what Cameron meant was *your* way of life, not his nor that of the rest of his class. As Unison general secretary Dave Prentis told the BBC: “There was nothing in [Cameron’s] speech that told the rich, the banking and financial sector or the city speculators that their privileged way of life will change.”

Cameron and Osborne are being urged on by the credit ratings agency Fitch, which warned that the result of delay or hand-wringing over the savage cuts, which are not nearly savage enough to please Fitch, would be a downgrade in the country’s credit rating. The pressure is also being piled on by world events. As the *Socialist Standard* was going to press, the global economy looked to be heading into more big trouble – there were question marks hanging over the viability of eurozone banks; the euro continued to edge closer to collapse; US employment took a further nose dive; Germany and Spain announced new austerity measures; Hungary hinted that it might have to default on its debt, sending its stockmarkets and currency plummeting; and market risk and fear indices ticked upwards. The axe is falling, and it’ll be the working





Left: nothing new about austerity for some. Above: Cameron and Clegg inspect their new political weaponry. Right: Cameron again, with George Osborne.



“By sleight of hand, the origin of most of the debt, the speculative activity of capitalists, has been hidden”

class that'll take the worst of the hit. We were told the gory details when the government's 'Emergency Budget' was presented on 22 June.

There was one interesting detail in Cameron's speech that perhaps needs some explanation: Greece. "Greece stands as a warning of what happens to countries that lose their credibility, or whose governments pretend that difficult decisions can be avoided," said Cameron. He was presumably referring for rhetorical effect to the policies of the Greek government in the recent past, which were little different in substance from those pursued by previous Labour and Tory governments before the universal acid of crisis made everyone change their minds. In terms of the current austerity decisions being forced on Cameron's government, the Greek government seemed little slower than he has been in attempting to implement the necessary (for capital) reforms. The Greek prime minister, George Papandreou, accepted bail-out money from the EU and the IMF, then set about softening up the population for the demanded cuts, such as freezing public-sector salaries, raising taxes and slashing pensions, much like Cameron is doing now (although without the immediate threat yet of bankruptcy or IMF intervention).

So why the reference to Greece? There is indeed an important lesson to be learnt from Greece, one that has got Cameron and his class concerned. The lesson is to be taken not so much from the excesses or otherwise of its government, but the famed rebelliousness of its people. Instead of meekly accepting that it must pay the price for capitalism's crisis, and waiting for the austerity measures to be handed on down, the Greek population immediately set about angrily resisting them. There was a general strike in the country on 5 May along with a 100,000-strong demonstration that ended in the death of three people (shamefully, these deaths were not at the hands of the police, but of demonstrators who set a bank building on fire). Anger over the deaths from all sides threatened to derail the protests. But since then, the struggles have continued. There have already

continued on page 18



The highs and lows of capitalism's roller-coaster economic system

They Say: **“We Can't Afford it.”**

The aspirations of the majority of the world's population are being frustrated by capitalism's economic constraints.

In May 2010, the Coalition government in the UK announced cuts of £6.2 billion in an attempt to begin to reduce the budget deficit of £156 billion for 2009/2010. These cuts will very noticeably affect people's lives. For example, it was reported that £780 million would be cut on transport, £836 million on communities and local government and £325 million on education. Devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will have to cut back £704 million. Local authorities will be expected to reduce expenditure by £1.165 billion. Many more expenditure reductions were announced in June emergency budget.

It is vital to realise that this economic crisis is just the latest in a series of slumps which are quite natural to the capitalist system. In the past, supporters of this system have quite mistakenly believed that politicians would be able to rid society of the detrimental effects of the trade cycle. Gordon Brown is particularly infamous for his claims to have “abolished boom and bust”. Past slumps have, of course included the Great Depression of the early 1930s, and recessions of the mid 1970s, the early 1980s and 1990s.

Reforms = Continuation of Capitalism

When confronted with the case for genuine socialism, many apologists for the capitalist monstrosity have maintained that through the introduction of reforms, political leaders would be able to establish a “fairer” and “better” society.

Let's look at aspects of this reform movement. In 1942, the Social Insurance and Allied Services were created by Beveridge in order to aid those who were in need of help, and/or in poverty. The benefits were designed to aid the sick, unemployed, retired or widowed. When state welfare reforms were introduced after the Second World War, they did produce some improvement in working class living conditions in the UK, for example in the areas of education, housing, child employment, work conditions and social security. No doubt, one motive for these reforms was an attempt to distract workers attention away from more radical, left-wing ideas, which claimed to offer an alternative to capitalism. Such motives had been employed in Germany during the 1890s by Bismarck.

The benefits from reforms have, in reality done little more than to keep workers and their families in an efficient condition for employment. In

economically developed countries, such as those in Europe and North America, whilst the worst excesses of poverty have been partially alleviated, most of the social problems of inequality, unemployment (or the threat of it), sub-standard housing etc., remain.

The reforms which are made in capitalist society, have to be reconciled with the profit-making needs of the system. These reforms will often be turned to the benefit of the capitalist class at the expense of any working class gain. This explains the limited nature of reformism as far as the workers (the majority of people) are concerned, and how many of the supposed benefits can be eroded. Take for example social security, housing and education.

Underlying the whole system of the provision of “benefit” to those unable, for various reasons, to take part in the employment process, is the suspicion, encouraged by the ruling class, that many of those in receipt of these benefits “may not deserve them”. The value of the benefits, such as Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support and state pensions frequently declines over periods of time, since the government insists that the previous levels “cannot be afforded”. Pressure is put upon claimants to

“justify” their claims.

As regards social housing, council house building is a minute fraction of what it was 50 or 60 years ago and the cost of having a roof over one’s head has become much greater, causing through mortgages huge levels of indebtedness.

In the sphere of education, tuition fees and student loans have put enormous pressure on the young who are seeking to increase their knowledge and skills, in most cases, in order to make themselves “more employable on the job market”. According to the online student magazine *Push*, in 2009 students faced an average debt of £5,000 for each year of study. Some students in London have debts of around £30,000 by



Above: Beveridge, who created the Social Insurance and Allied Services. Right: Bismarck, who wanted to distract workers’ attention from radical ideas in the 1890’s

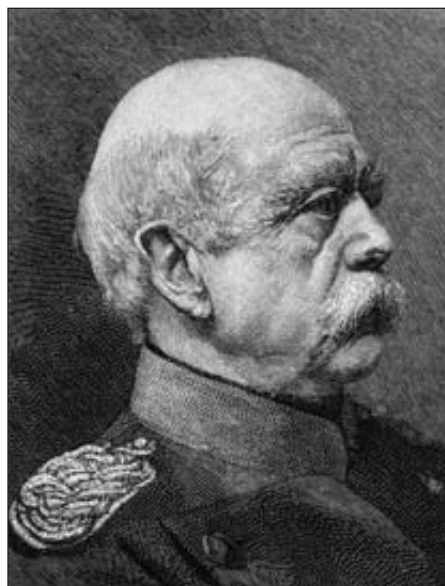
the time they finished their courses. When these students do finish their studies, they will most likely have to find a place to live, on a more permanent basis. Hence, the need for majority to take out a mortgage and build up even more debt for themselves. How much of this was foreseen by the reformist proponents of large-scale higher education and home “ownership” under capitalism?

It’s the Working Class who make the sacrifices

Most economists and political commentators are saying that the UK’s budget deficit and indebtedness will usher in a period of significant austerity. This problem is a global one, as is the economic crisis. To take just one example, the problems of Greece have been well publicised. In order to receive loans from the Euro-zone countries and the Interna-

tional Monetary Fund, wage freezes, pension cuts and tax rises are being introduced.

David Cameron and other apologists for the status quo claim that the whole population will have to make “sacrifices”. What these defenders of capitalism utterly and deliberately fail to tell us is that the overwhelming burden of the sacrifice will have to be made by the working class. The rich will, for the most part, as usual keep their privileges and luxurious lifestyles. Perhaps, the average multi-millionaire or billionaire will only be able to “afford” two yachts in the Caribbean, instead of the more normal, three. Perhaps, some of the wealthy will have to delay refurbishment of their opulent gated homes, for a few



months etc. The reality is that capitalism can never be made to work in any other way. It always works in the interests of the rich minority and against the interests of the majority of the population, no matter how many reforms are introduced.

The socialist answer to all this is firstly to point to the absurd contradictions which capitalism presents. We are being told that many reforms and much social expenditure cannot be afforded. Yet, huge sums of money are squandered on the destructiveness of the armed forces and on the wastefulness of financial services. The society in which we live, possesses immense wealth, on a global scale. Just think of the power of modern technology, compared with the technology of only 40 years ago. Just think of how greatly the processes of automation in industry have been developed in recent decades. Also, bear in mind the huge potential of the world’s labour force which could contribute towards expanding society’s wealth still further. However, under capitalism many of these

productive resources are being and will be underused or abandoned since they cannot be “afforded” (in reality, it is not profitable to employ them). All the reforming of the capitalist monstrosity is not going to make any significant difference. The problem will still be there, unless..., unless people finally realise that there most certainly is an alternative to this austerity madness.

The Socialist Alternative

That alternative consists firstly of people becoming aware that conditions most certainly do *not* have to be as they are at present. The majority needs to come together and to realise that instead of a small, profiteering minority owning nearly all of the planet and its resources, we, as the overwhelming majority must take possession of those resources, manage and use them in the interests of the whole of humanity, with production of goods and services for human need and, not for profit making which benefits only a small minority.

In such a society where the resources of the world are owned and controlled by the people of the world, there will be absolutely no need for the money system and its inherent enormously wasteful financial apparatus. With the democratic introduction of common ownership, will come the abolition of money and all forms of exchange. In their place, each individual will be able to make their own voluntary contribution to the production of society’s wealth and in turn, will be able to draw from the common store, according to their own self-defined needs.

In such a world, notions of “indebtedness” and not “being able to afford” things in monetary terms, will be considered completely archaic and utterly out of place.

Through the pages of this journal and of other socialist literature, and by communicating with socialists, people can become aware of this alternative. So, the next time you hear a politician supporting policies of austerity and talking about there not being enough money to do something worthwhile, think of the socialist alternative where we will not need money in the first place. Instead, the world’s people will be empowered to contribute their knowledge and skills to the common good (that of society as a whole, including themselves, as individuals). In such a system, humanity will also have, at its disposal, technology designed and frequently refined to benefit all of the world’s people.

VINCENT OTTER



Tired, stressed, robbed and alienated

*“The
binge
working culture is
taking its toll.”*

On Sunday, 16 May, the *Observer* published two interesting and informative articles: ‘Sunday Blues are ruining weekends for many Britons’, by Tracy McVeigh, and ‘The binge working culture is taking its toll’, by Denis Campbell.

McVeigh observes: “The recession is raising stress levels so high that a quarter of workers are finding their weekends ruined by the Sunday blues – a dread of going back to the office next day – according to a report.” The report by Mind said that 26 percent of workers felt dread and apprehension the day before they were due back to work after a weekend off.

Other findings include high rates

of illness, and extensive low morale. High rates of unpaid overtime were mentioned.

Many people “are living with constant fear of redundancy, and often taking on extra duties because of a recession – reduced workforce, and downsizing could mean years of uncertainty for workers”, notes the report. Indeed, the numbers of people reported to have left their jobs due to stress rose from 6 percent in 2004 to 8 percent in 2009. Working conditions have deteriorated and people “are struggling to cope with extra demands of working harder, longer hours, and are under more pressure as their employers battle for survival.”

Isolation with longer hours

Denis Campbell, citing research published by the *European Heart Journal*, notes that depressingly familiar picture of Britons – British workers – slaving over their terminals “way beyond their supposed finishing time, sometimes involves a fatal price.” Those working three or more hours of overtime a day are more likely to develop heart trouble and potentially die of a

heart attack than those who work a normal seven-hour day. And, reports the *Heart Journal*: “With increasing stress comes growing isolation from normal non-work activities – friends, family, hobbies.” Marriages come under pressure, tensions rise and personal relationships suffer. “The recession has made all this worse.” Unemployed workers, of whom there are now 2.5m (officially, but actually far more) face different pressures, says Campbell.

Paul Sellars, of the TUC, says that the European Working Time Directive specifies that workers should not work more than 48 hours a week. Anyone working 60 hours is almost certain to suffer harmful effects and ill-health. Research by the Sainsbury

Centre for Mental Health, in 2007, stated that 70m working days were lost to mental stress every year.



Socialist Standard July 2010

Production for profit – not for use

Why do workers accept such long hours, and such conditions of employment?

We live in a capitalist society. Capitalism is not a dirty word, or term of abuse, although it has been used by leftists and others as such. It is worldwide, and now embraces every country. Nothing is just national.

Briefly, capitalism is a social system wherein the means and factors of wealth production – land, factories, officers, the means of transportation – take the form of capital, and are privately owned by a minority of individuals, or the state, to the exclusion of the majority of the population. And capital is nothing more nor less than wealth used to create more wealth through the exploitation (in truth a form of legalised robbery) of a large number of wage and salary earners, employees, of whom most own little or nothing except their ability to work for an employer. In such a society, almost everything is produced primarily for exchange, for a profit, not just for use.

In the main, things are not manufactured and services rendered solely because people need or desire them. If, like millions of people throughout the world, you do not have enough money to buy, say, food or fuel you will almost certainly go without.

Alienated

The increasing concentration of ownership and control by a minority class has tended to restrict individual initiative and responsibility. It has weakened the “self”, and stifled creativity. People have become atomised, mere cogs in a wheel, after rushing hither and thither for no apparent reason other than toiling on behalf of an employer, real or abstract. They have become alienated.

“Freedom from capitalism cannot be attained by a few in a vast sea of alienation.”

Originally, alienation meant insanity. Nowadays, it means estrangement or loss. Isolated. Alienation in production has led to individual powerlessness, and to a general feeling of isolation and frustration. Workers today have become alienated and estranged from their livelihood, from the very things that they have produced, and from their fellow workers; indeed, even from themselves.

Modern capitalism has completely changed our attitude to work. As previously noted, the last thing many of us want to do is get up in the morning (and particularly after a weekend of ‘freedom’) and go to ‘work’. It has destroyed craftsmanship and a joy in work. Often, it has become merely compulsive. Of course, what we really mean is not work at all, but employment. It is not surprising, therefore, that many workers become stressed and/or ill. So-called middle-class managers (who are themselves generally also members of the working class) often suffer the most from mental and physical strain, although they often underestimate the effects they have on other workers (*Observer*, 16 May).

Bureaucratic or Democratic Control?

Generally, our jobs are repetitive, uninteresting and, from our viewpoint, purposeless. We have little or no control over what we do, or what we produce. In fact, the division of labour is now so extreme that none of us ever makes a complete article.

Indeed, many workers never actually see the finished product.

An important aspect of modern society is bureaucratisation. Capitalism has become increasingly bureaucratic. This applies to industry, the state and many other non-state institutions. Capitalism is largely organised by bureaucrats. And the bureaucrat’s relationship to people is one of almost complete alienation. It is largely impersonal. It affects not just industry and employment, but such voluntary organisations as trade unions and reformist political parties (and even revolutionary ones).

Capitalism is not really democratic. At best in a country such as Britain, a certain amount of limited democracy has been achieved over the last 150 years or so. But that is all. Capitalism rules. Money rules.

Unfortunately, however, most people are not aware of the prevailing alienation, domination and lack of real democratic control within capitalism. Most people accept, with reservations, the world as it is. Some reject, and even demonstrate against, certain aspects of present society. Workers struggle against the effects of exploitation and the wages system. But little else. They do not reject capitalism as such.

Freedom?

The last sentence of our principles declares our determination to end, as speedily as possible, the present system, which deprives the working class of the “fruits of their labour”, and “that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality and slavery to freedom.” This is not wishful thinking.

Freedom from capitalism, with its apprehension, stress, illness, reported in the *Observer* cited above, cannot be attained by a few in a vast sea of alienation, and unfreedom. The emancipation of one necessitates the emancipation of all, of society as a whole, and by a majority. It must be the conscious aim of the mass of society; although each person, however, will have to achieve her or his own mental revolution first. Only then will private ownership of the means of life be converted into common ownership and democratic control, and government over people be replaced by an administration of things. It will not be easy. But necessary.

PETER E. NEWELL



Easy Rider

The actor Dennis Hopper died on 29 May. Together with Peter Fonda he wrote the script for the 1969 cult film Easy Rider in which he also played Billy. Here's a couple of short extracts from the film.

GEORGE: You know this used to be a hell of a good country, can't understand what's gone wrong with it.

BILLY: Man, everyone's got chicken that's what happened, man. Hey, we can't even get into a, like, second-rate hotel, a second rate motel, you dig. They think we're going to cut their throats or something, man. Like, they're scared, man.

GEORGE: They're not scared of you. They're scared of what you represent.

BILLY: All we represent to them, man, is someone who needs a haircut.

GEORGE: No. What you represent to them is freedom.

BILLY: What the hell's wrong with freedom! That's what it's all about.

GEORGE: Yeah, that's right. That's what it's all about. But talking it and being it, that's two different things. I mean it's really hard to be free when you're bought and sold in the market place. Don't ever tell anyone that they're not free because they'll get real busy killing and maiming to prove that they are. Oh yeah, they'll talk to you and talk to you and talk to you about individual freedom but they see a free individual it's going to scare them.

BILLY: Man, it don't make them running scared.

GEORGE: No, it makes them dangerous.

BILLY: Oh, wow... what... What's that, man. What the hell was that?

WYATT: Huh?

BILLY: No, man, like, hey man, wow! I was watching this object, man, like the satellite we saw the other night right and it was going across the sky, man, and then it just suddenly, yeah, it just changed direction and went whizzing right off, man. It flashed . . .

WYATT: You're stoned out of your mind, man.

BILLY: Oh yeah, I'm stoned, man. But like, I saw a satellite, man, and it was going

across the sky and it flashed three times at me and zigzagged and whizzed off, man, and I saw it.

GEORGE: That was a UFO beaming back at you. Me and Eric Heisman was down Mexico two weeks ago. We seen forty of them flying in formation. They've got bases all over the world now. They've been coming here ever since 1946 when the scientists started bouncing radar beams off of the moon. And they have been living and working among us in vast quantities ever since. The government knows all about them.

BILLY: What are you talking, man?

GEORGE: Well, you just seen one of them, didn't you?

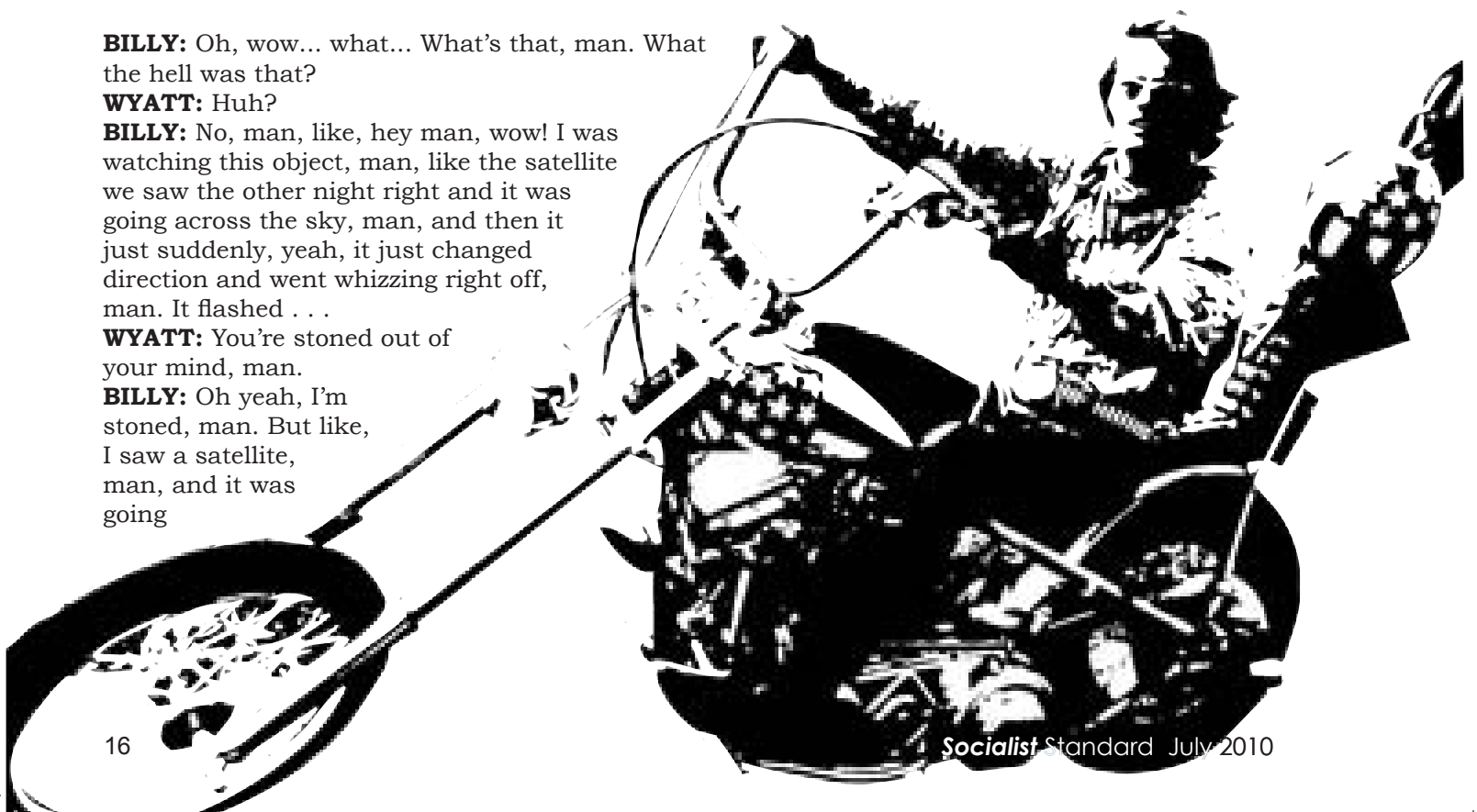
BILLY: Hey man, I saw something, man, but I didn't see it working here, you know what I mean.

GEORGE: Well, they are people just like us, from within our own solar system. Except that their society is more highly evolved. I mean, they don't have no wars, they got no monetary system, they don't have any leaders, because I mean each man is a leader. I mean each man... Because of their technology they are able to feed, clothe, house and transport themselves equally and with no effort.

WYATT: Wow!



People still visit the bike, but do they revisit the sentiments?



German President tells it like it is

On a visit in May to German troops fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan, the German President, Horst Köhler, defended this military action by telling a reporter:

“A country of our size, with its focus on exports and thus reliance on foreign trade, must be aware that . . . military deployments are necessary in an emergency to protect our interests – for example when it comes to trade routes, for example when it comes to preventing regional instabilities that could negatively influence our trade, jobs and incomes” (<http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,697785,00.html>).

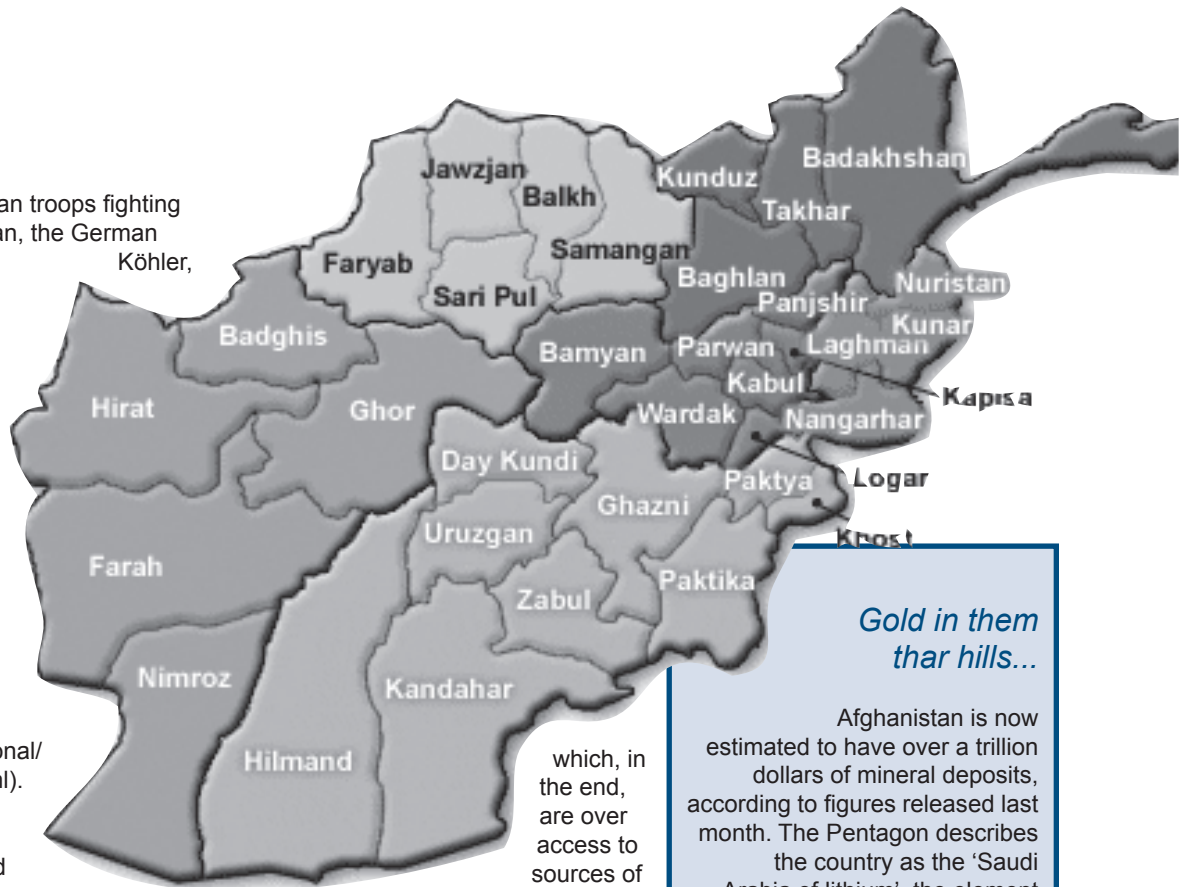
The resulting outcry led to his resignation. But he had only told the truth.

The reason why the various states into which the world is artificially divided equip their armed forces with the most up-to-date weapons they can afford is because, under capitalism, “might is right”.

“Might” does not have to be actually used – in fact it normally isn’t – but a state’s “might” is a factor in the jockeying between states for economic position. This is why a Labour Party shadow foreign secretary once defended the British H-bomb by saying that he didn’t want to go into the conference chamber naked. Neither do Mahmoud Ahmadinejad or Kim Jong Il. The “mightier” a state the more chance it has of getting its point of view taken into account in diplomatic negotiations

Deutschland
über... oops.

Straight from the Horst's mouth



Gold in them thar hills...

Afghanistan is now estimated to have over a trillion dollars of mineral deposits, according to figures released last month. The Pentagon describes the country as the ‘Saudi Arabia of lithium’, the element used in batteries, laptops and in more than 60 percent of mobile phones. There are also important reserves of niobium, which is used in hardened steel

- * Iron: \$421bn
- * Copper: \$274bn
- * Niobium: \$81bn
- * Cobalt: \$51bn
- * Gold: \$25bn

(source: ‘Afghans say US team found huge potential mineral wealth’, *BBC Online*, 14 June)

which, in the end, are over access to sources of raw materials, markets, investment outlets, trade routes and strategic areas to protect these. A fact perfectly expressed by Köhler.

He was trying to justify German military intervention in Afghanistan, which is not popular in Germany, by explaining the economic rationale behind it. Normally this is reserved for internal foreign ministry memorandums or studies by specialist think tanks, while the general public are fed all sorts of more or less specious reasons less likely to put them off. Blurting out the real reason for German military action – and Western intervention generally – in Afghanistan was an error of judgment for a politician and why he had to resign.

Britain is also a country of Germany’s size “with its focus on exports and thus reliance on foreign trade” and has troops fighting in Afghanistan to try to establish stability in the area and prevent it from being used as a base for groups which threaten the West’s supplies of oil from the Middle East. A pipeline through the area is also a possible “trade route” to the sea for oil from central Asia.

The troops are not there to protect workers in Britain from terrorist attacks in London and other cities. In fact their presence there probably increases this risk. But putting the protection of capitalist economic interests before people’s safety is typical of capitalism’s priorities.

from page 11

been further demonstrations and strikes by transport workers, dock workers and journalists, and further strikes were on the cards as the *Socialist Standard* went to press. Indeed, as the *Wall Street Journal* amusingly reported, when a tourism workers' union planned to officially announce strike plans, the union overlooked the fact that Greece's journalists were striking on the same day, so nobody showed up to the planned news conference.

The ruling class has been watching these developments nervously, and the drama is far from played out: "...the main concern," says a report from Reuters, "is whether governments rethink austerity measures as a result." (An astonishing admission on the face of it – that popular opinion might influence the decisions of democratic governments is seen as a "concern".) Further strikes and protests have been planned in Greece, France, Germany, Romania, Spain, Italy, and Portugal – and of course here in Britain, there is the ongoing BA strike, the coming BT strike, and perhaps more to come. The "concern" though is for now muted. As Reuters points out, the strikes in the rest of Europe are expected to be "tamer" than the Greek battles, and Britain's tamer still because there has just been an election – the government can therefore rely on its democratic legitimacy to force through measures. That and unions are weak – membership has fallen since Thatcher fought the unions in the Eighties, and, according to the latest figures, continues to fall today (the influx of new members worried by the crisis has so far been offset by losses due to redundancies and retirements). And the success of Thatcher's anti-trade-union legislation means more and more strikes are being challenged in the courts on highly dubious grounds, threatening to make strikes all but illegal.

But muted concern or not, the ruling class must still be asking itself just how much austerity the working class will be prepared to take. The working class has already lost many of the reforms introduced as part of the social democratic consensus after the Second World War – it traded them for a mortgage and a credit card. Now these too are in danger of being snatched away. The capitalist class and its governments are scrabbling around for the least-worst options to restore profitability without provoking working class unrest. It seems unlikely that the working class and its organisations are strong enough to stop these austerity measures being imposed, let alone imposing their own demands. But we must start from where we are. David Cameron and the new government will be expecting that you'll just take whatever's coming to you. We must try to prove them wrong.

While we're fighting these essential defensive battles, we must also lift our eyes from the present game and consider just what kind of game we're playing, and whether it's a fit one for us and our children and grandchildren. Greek public opinion, as hinted at in our report from the country last month, expresses anger, but also confusion. As Stathis Kouvelakis, a teacher of philosophy at King's College, London, says, in an interview with Esquerda.net (see <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2010/kouvelakis230510.html>), Greek opinion is divided and oscillating: "[T]he oscillation is between anger and resignation, I would say, between the will to act, to protest, to do something about this, and the perception that perhaps there is no credible alternative.... These are the terms of the debate, and it's still open." This is where socialists have their most vital contribution to make – a clear idea about alternatives is not mere utopianism, but an important ingredient in inspiring successful struggle. An upturn in class war, such as we're seeing in Greece, and may perhaps soon be seeing in this country too, is the only basis on which socialism can begin to make sense and seem like a credible and possible alternative to capitalism for the working class as a whole.

STUART WATKINS



A front line service

"VOTERS MUST agree on cuts or the nation will be hit with £70bn a year interest bill," says Cameron", reported the *Times* (8 June). It's part of a government propaganda drive (gleefully supported by the media) to soften us up for the 'new Age of Austerity' and 'years of pain' capitalism is forcing them to implement.

Cameron said that "on current trends, Britain would be paying by 2015 £70 billion a year in interest on the national debt – more than the present budgets for schools, climate change and transport put together."

This calculation is based on nothing being done to cut the present budget deficit – the excess of government spending over income – and covering it by more borrowing, i.e. by increasing the so-called "national" debt (which is more properly called the Government Debt). It's being bandied about to try to get workers to accept that the budget deficit should be reduced mainly by cutting government spending on benefits and services workers have come to accept as part of their standard of living.

Cameron, Clegg, Osborne, Cable and the others are saying we must all make sacrifices to reduce the deficit. But not quite all. Not those capitalists, national and foreign, who lend the government money. Paying interest to them is part of government spending, but servicing the Government Debt is obviously the frontest of "front line services" since the government has no intention of even thinking about cutting these payments.

Payment of interest on the Government Debt is, like welfare benefits, a "transfer payment", that is, a transfer via the government of income generated from production to some other group who don't or can't participate in production. The beneficiaries in this case are those who have lent the government money, mainly various capitalist institutions and corporations. The money transferred to them comes from "the taxpayer" who, in the end, are the recipients of profits and other property incomes.

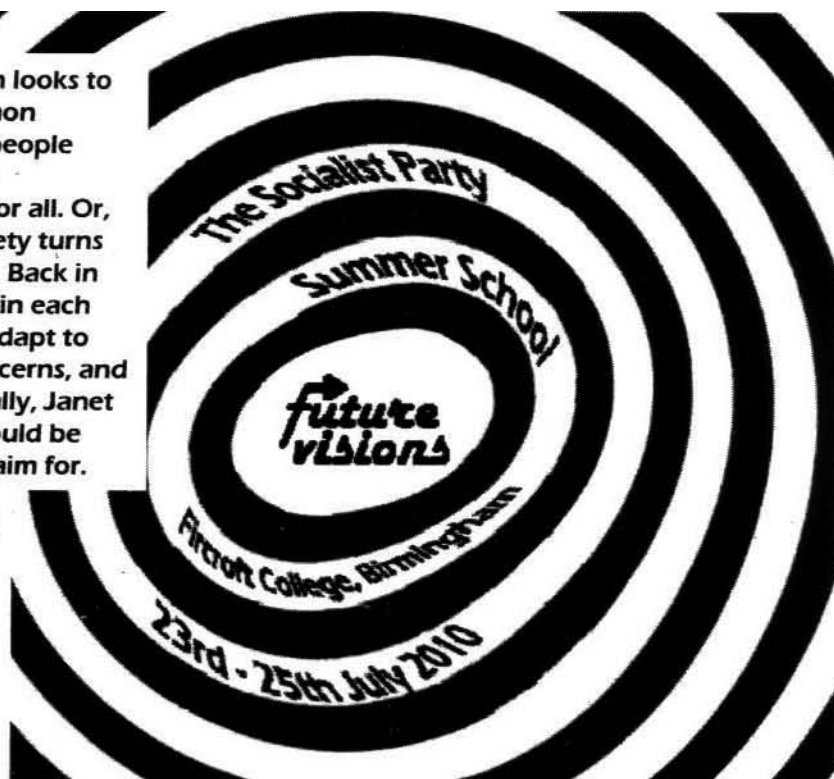
The income of the holders of the Government Debt is sacrosanct because it's part of a contract that can't be broken without dire consequences. A government can renege on its debts but the "international community", i.e. the rest of the international capitalist class, will never forget. They won't lend the government money in future except under more onerous conditions (notably at a higher than normal rate of interest). And they won't forget the debt. So, repudiating paying the contracted rate of interest on the Government Debt either totally or partially or even slightly is just not an option, given the way the world capitalist economy works.

The government could in theory reduce the deficit by increasing taxes. However, given that these ultimately fall on profits and profit is what makes the capitalist world go round, the margin of manoeuvre here isn't much wider than over interest payments on the national debt.

What's left then? Only cutting government expenditure, what in Gladstone's day was called retrenchment (the Liberals are obviously going back to their roots). This can be anything from preparation for war ("defence") to subsidies for particular capitalist industries, but the obvious target will be the total bill for the salaries and pensions the government pays its employees and the various payments that are made to other people or to provide services for them.

What a future capitalism has to offer workers: struggles to try to slow down things getting worse in a world that it technically capable of providing plenty for all.

This year's weekend of talks and discussion looks to the future. But what kind of future? As Simon Wigley discusses in his talk, for centuries, people have imagined utopias where advances in technology and attitudes create freedom for all. Or, they have described dystopias, where society turns into a nightmare, as Mike Foster will cover. Back in the real world, Andy P Davies and Bill Martin each discuss how capitalism could survive and adapt to ongoing environmental and economic concerns, and socialist responses to this. More optimistically, Janet Surman explores what a socialist society could be like and why it's the best kind of future to aim for.



Friday 23rd July

from 17.00 arrival
 18.30 – 19.00 dinner
 19.30 Simon Wigley - *The Curse of Looking Backwards*

Saturday 24th July

7.30 – 9.30 breakfast
 10.00 Mike Foster - *A Pessimist's Guide To The Future* (includes a free copy of Mike's book of the same name)
 12.30 – 13.15 lunch
 14.00 Andy P Davies – *Confounding Catastrophism*
 17.30 discussion about *'Towards 2100 - From Capitalism To Socialism'* by Stan Parker (includes a free copy of Stan's book)
 18.30 – 19.00 dinner
 19.30 Bill Martin - *Socialism And Singularity*

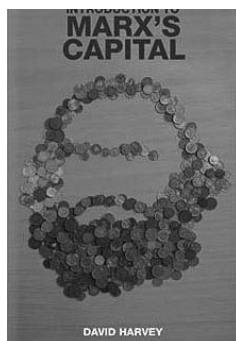
Sunday 25th July

7.30 – 9.30 breakfast
 10.00 Janet Surman - *Imagining A Socialist Society*
 12.30 – 13.15 lunch
 13.30 closing round-up

Fircroft College is a small adult education college within easy reach of Birmingham city centre. The Socialist Party's Summer Schools have been held there for many years because of its excellent facilities and quiet garden surroundings. Single and twin bedroom accommodation is available, with some rooms having en-suite facilities. There is always a choice of evening meals, one of which will be vegetarian. If you have any requirements (ground floor room, special diet etc.), please inform Mike at spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk or by post to flat 2, 24 Tedstone Road, Quinton, Birmingham, B32 2PD

Indispensable guide

A Companion to Marx's Capital.
David Harvey, Verso, 2010, £10.99



Most people who try to read Marx's *Capital* give up before the end of the third chapter. This is a shame because, as David Harvey points out in this companion volume, *Capital* is a rich, multi-

dimensional and "astonishingly good" book, despite the undeniable difficulties. Indeed, it would hardly be going too far to suggest – as the author of a previous introductory guide to *Capital*, Anthony Brewer, did – that reading *Capital* is "indispensable" to anyone who wants to understand the modern world.

Harvey's *Companion* is the book form of his excellent series of lectures teaching *Capital Volume 1*, which you can watch online for free or for a donation at <http://davidharvey.org>. His aim in both the lectures and the book is to get you to read *Capital* all the way through, and in Marx's own terms. He succeeds brilliantly, getting the balance about right between a close focus on Marx's text, and his own commentary to help explain it, and situate it in the modern world.

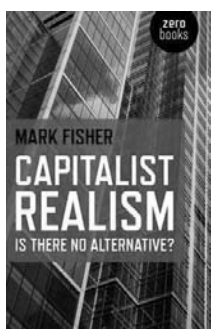
If you follow the lectures online by watching one per week, then reading the prescribed chapters during the week, you can have volume 1 of *Capital*, the absolutely supreme book in the socialist canon, under your belt in just 13 weeks. This schedule is challenging but doable. If you don't have internet access, Harvey's book will do just as well, though obviously you'll have more reading to do. Highly recommended.

SPW

Is there an alternative?

Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative? Mark Fisher, Zero Books, 2010, £7.99

Mark Fisher's very short book is a quick and entertaining read and makes a good companion to David Harvey (see above/last month). Where Harvey focuses mostly on the how and why of the capitalist crisis, exploring its historical, geographical and economic aspects, Fisher instead



looks at how recent developments have impacted on the cultural and psychological spheres. It has led us to a situation where, he argues, "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism".

The deathly legacy of Thatcher's insistence that "there is no alternative" lingers on.

Fisher's insights are drawn partly from the heads of philosophers and partly from his own personal experience. The philosophers he quotes are famous for their obscurity and difficulty, but Fisher does a good job of making their ideas accessible for the general reader. That will put readers in a better position to decide for themselves whether the obscurity is worth penetrating.

Fisher is more interesting and amusing when he turns to his personal experience in Britain's education system. It's hard not to sympathise with him as he does his best to inspire dozing teenagers with learned cultural-studies discourses on *Doctor Who* while they slouch across their desks, plugged into their iPods, snacking on crisps. And that's the most rewarding part of Fisher's job. The rest of it is spent filling out forms trying to convince bureaucrats that what he has just done is of some worth in the capitalist market place.

But I'll counter Fisher's personal experience with my own. I, too, was once a teenage student, dozing on my desk while a professor tried his best to knock some education into me. But outside of the classroom, I was enjoying and making the most of a period of never-to-be-repeated freedom (from parental control, from capitalist work, from the responsibilities of adult and family life), and pursuing my own interests, including educating myself in socialist politics. Of course I'm not suggesting that all Fisher's students are doing likewise. But the point is that he doesn't know what they are doing. At a minimum, you'd have to ask them to find out.

A study of history and the social sciences, particularly anthropology, consistently reveals that things are rarely quite as they seem. Workers are never quite as oppressed and docile as they figure in the imaginations of Marxist professors. Management control is never as total as the managers and bosses dream. We are never as lost in the unrealities of television and the spectacle as French philosophers imagine. There's always

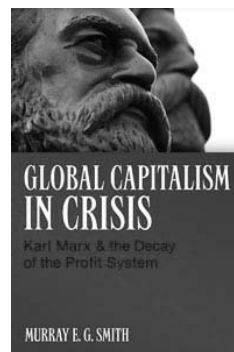
a hidden undercurrent of imaginative engagement and resistance. It's always much more rewarding when an author has gone to the trouble of finding it and encouraging its development than denying its existence and wallowing in gloom.

Fisher concludes with some political proposals that he dresses up as exciting and new, but is mostly old fare – for example, the reinvigoration of the left, the awakening of a 'public' consciousness, more worker control over the labour process, popular control over the state, and so on. But to end on a positive note of agreement, Fisher at least points in vaguely the right direction if you're after a convincing answer to the question in the subtitle of the book. Yes, there is an alternative, he says, but the working class will have to organise politically if it ever wants to see it.

SPW

Non-productive labour

Global capitalism in crisis. Karl Marx and the Decay of the Profit System. By Murray E. G. Smith, Fenwood Publishing, Canada. ISBN 978-1-5526-6353-9



Marx left an ambiguous legacy on "unproductive" labour in that two different theories about it can be found in his writings. The first – which was essentially that of classical political

economy going back to Adam Smith – was that labour exchanged against capital was productive while labour exchanged against revenue was not. The logic behind this was that labour employed by capital not only reproduced its own value but also a surplus value over and above this, and so increased the amount of wealth in existence; labour employed out of income such as rents or profits, as for instance on domestic servants, did not result in this but, on the contrary, used up existing wealth.

But what about labour employed by capital invested in trading and in banking? This also added nothing to the amount of wealth, let alone value, already in existence but still yielded a profit for the capitalist employer of such labour. Marx's explanation was that productive capitalists in effect handed over a part of the surplus

value produced by their workers to these non-productive capitalists who were carrying out an essential function for the capitalist economy (if they didn't do this they would have to lay out some of their own capital to cover these activities). The workers in these non-productive employments produced no surplus value themselves but helped acquire surplus value for their employers. So, (second theory) it was possible even for some labour exchanged against capital to be non-productive.

Murray Smith discusses another category of labour – that employed by the state – which fell into the category of “non-productive” (unless the state itself was involved in production). In Marx's day – or rather in the days of Smith, Ricardo, Malthus and the others whose ideas Marx discusses – the assumption was that this was akin to the labour of domestic servants and so a drag on capital accumulation.

In those days this may well have been true since most government employees then were either concerned with collecting taxes or were place-hunters milking the state. Today, however, this is no longer the case. Most national and local government employees are engaged in activities, such as the education and health care of workers, which are just as essential to capitalism as trading and banking. Can they really still be assimilated to domestic servants, i.e. to more or less frivolous spending by the idle rich?

Murray Smith argues that they should not be. He suggests that expenditure on them should be classified together with the labour of trading and banking workers under the general heading of “socially necessary unproductive labour” (SNUL). He goes further and argues that they and the equipment they use should be assimilated rather to Marx's concept of “constant capital”, i.e. as capital which merely transfers its value to the new product. From this perspective the taxation which pays for it is not a deduction from surplus value but a part of the capital outlay of the capitalist class as a whole (“social capital”).

Smith wants to do this mainly because, by transferring such spending from s to c, it reduces the average of profit $(s/(c+v))$, considerably in fact, so supporting his theory that a fall in the rate of profit caused by c increasing faster than v (expenditure on productive labour) is the main cause of recurring capitalist crises. Quite apart for any decline in the rate of profit for this reason being a long run tendency that would be too slow to

affect cyclical crises, state spending in reality impacts on the crucial rate of profit after tax (rather than before tax), hence the interest of capitalist firms is keeping state spending down if they can.

Smith is a dyed-in-the-wool Trotskyist, a supporter of an organisation called the “International Bolshevik Tendency”, a name calculated to make the hair of genuine socialists stand on end. So you need to ignore all the arguments about China being a “deformed Workers State”, about the Bolshevik coup having been a socialist revolution, about the need for a vanguard party, a transitional programme of reforms, etc. etc to get at his basic argument about SNUL.

ALB

Green capitalism

Green capitalism and the cultural poverty of constructing nature as service provider. By Sian Sullivan, in Radical Anthropology, issue 3, 2009/10.



It would be an exaggeration to say that the writers in *Radical Anthropology* put the case for socialism. But, at least, some of them criticise aspects of capitalism and present evidence for that criticism.

A good example is the article by Sullivan, who discusses green capitalism, also known as market environmentalism and green neo-liberalism. The basic idea is that ‘if we just price the environment correctly—creating new markets for new “environmental products” based on monetised measures of environmental health and degradation—then everyone and the environment will win’.

All that amounts to is the economic rationalisation of nature. Stock exchanges, dealing in new environmental ‘products’ have been set up; for example the Climate exchanges in London and Chicago. Carbon credits are the currency representing the emission of carbon. ‘Once these credits enter the international financial system their future value can be speculated on (as with any other currency or commodity, including derivatives) and significant profits can ensue.’

Capitalist culture has ridden roughshod over biological and cultural diversity and has impoverished

OBITUARY

Harry Hill 1939 - 2010

Glasgow branch with regret record the death of our comrade Harry Hill. No matter what any one may say Harry was “a character”. Even inside a Glasgow branch of the sixties that was full of characters Harry was unique. He had left school at 15 years of age, but long before he had met the Socialist Party he had already seen through the nonsense of religion. In fact the first time we went to Harry's home, just round the corner from my own hovel, we were astonished at his collection of ‘The Thinker's Library’. Harry was a unique person one of his great loves was taking “the piss” out of religion although he once said, “even better is taking the piss out of atheists. They think a world without religion but based on property would work.”

Harry was only officially a member from 1964 until 1974 but long after that he would attend our indoor and outdoor meetings and was a whole hearted supporter of the SPGB. He was particularly adept at arguing the basic party position with new contacts. A measure of Harry's support for the ideas of world socialism can be gathered from the fact that although he was suffering from a long-term fatal illness he attended our joint Edinburgh/Glasgow day school in May a couple of weeks before his death. To his beloved wife Lydia and all his comrades and friends Glasgow branch extend our sympathy. We have lost a good man.

Glasgow branch

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both people and the environment. Pricing something is not the same as *valuing* it. As Sullivan observes, ‘We are critically impoverished as human beings if the best we can come up with is money as the mediator of our relationships with the non-human world.’

SRP

Meetings

London

Saturday evenings 6pm

3 July "Business growth in conflict with the environment" - Glenn Morris

17 July "Feeding the world: profit versus plenty" - Pat Deutz

31 July "Reforming Capitalism or the Socialist alternative" - Vincent Otter.
Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UN (nearest tube: Clapham North)

East Anglia

Saturday, **10 July**, 2pm - 5pm

FILM SHOWING

Theme - "Do You Feel Exploited?"

(2 of 3)

A short (approx. 20 min.) film by Brendan Mcooney will be shown in the basement of The Workshop, 53 Earham Road, Norwich NR1 3SP

East Anglia

Saturday, **24 July**, 12pm - 4pm

12noon: informal chat / branch business

1pm - 2pm: meal

2pm - 4pm: continuation / agenda

Venue: Quebec Tavern, 93-97 Quebec Road, Norwich NR1 4HY.

(The meeting takes place in a side room separate to the bar.)

All welcome.

Manchester

Monday **26 July**, 8.30 pm.

'Slums and Slumps: Housing under Capitalism.'

Unicorn, Church Street, City Centre



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Eichmann: Who is responsible?



IT IS impossible to condemn too strongly the terrible brutality of the killing of millions of people, Jews and others, of which Adolf Eichmann is accused. The majority of people have reacted to the press reports with a demand for his punishment. Learning of Eichmann's deeds, they take the short-sighted view that to deal with him as an individual is enough. But Eichmann is the end product of a vast process; he arose from the inhuman conditions of capitalist society. The very people who condemn him are content to leave those conditions untouched.

The working class, not only in Nazi Germany but in post-war Germany—and throughout the world—blindly support capitalism. None of them can escape responsibility for the consequences. For the power wielded by the rulers of world capitalism is a reflection of the political ignorance of the working class everywhere. It is absurd to blame one man, when he is only the instrument of a policy supported by millions. (...)

War is caused by the struggles between national capitalist

Powers over markets and economic resources. This can only be cured by the abolition of capitalism. As long as workers support this system, so will they be vulnerable to the racial theorist who, on nationalist grounds, gets support for his programme of mass murder. The dictators of yesterday, and the dictators and leaders of today, with their frightening military machines, only reflect the preparedness of their workers to ignore the bloodshed of two world wars and still to die for capitalism.

It is futile to punish an individual whilst ignoring the vicious conditions which made him possible. Eichmann was involved in some terrible things—but the exterminations which he so methodically organised are only a part of the greatest atrocity of all—the capitalist system of society. As the movement for a classless world—for Socialism—takes root and spreads, so will the possibility of inhuman murderers like Adolf Eichmann decline and die.

(from the editorial, *Socialist Standard*, July 1960)

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 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.



Friends (?) in need

WAKING UP on the Seventh of May, the voters might have experienced a measure of confusion. In the polling stations they had done their civic duty, after months of suffering bombardment from the three main political parties on the theme that we are in a mess and unless you do as you are told it will get even worse, to the point of social collapse too horrible even for seasoned politicians and propagandists to contemplate. You must take immediate action to forestall such a disaster by helping to put a new government into power. But it is important that you are careful to support the right party and not vote for one party when you really support another - for example vote Liberal Democrat when you would prefer a Conservative government. Or vice versa. Or, even worse, to complicate the matter by introducing other parties like Labour, Scottish and Welsh Nationalists, UKIP. So that was what the voters did, in their millions.

But on the day after it became clear that no one party would have a majority of elected MPs, which made forming a government rather more complicated than had been intended. British capitalism held its collective breath; the Stock Exchange, traders and bankers twitched and writhed; this was not what popular suffrage was supposed to be all about. But the day was saved when the three big parties announced a change in their attitude. No longer contesting over one of them being in government alone, they were suddenly certain that the best - the only - way out of the crisis would be for two of them to make up a government in alliance. Majority government was, in other words, no longer the smart option; it had become the old, stale politics. In its place was Coalition - the new, resuscitating politics. And if this made the voters confused - well so were the politicians.

Cameron And Clegg

Just over a week before polling day the leaders of the Tories and the Lib Dems had assured us that they were in no doubt about the disastrous consequences of their rival being elected at the head of a new government. On 26 April this is what David Cameron thought about Nick Clegg:

"It's now all becoming clear...he's only interested in one thing and that is changing our electoral system so that we have a permanent hung Parliament, we have a permanent coalition, we never have strong and decisive government... he wants to hold the whole country to ransom just to benefit the Liberal Democrats."

(This view of Clegg - as a ruthless, scheming manipulator - differs from Cameron's previous contempt for him as "a joke", but never mind). Meanwhile Clegg had expressed his own doubts about Cameron's character and political ambitions:

"The Conservatives are so desperate that they have resorted to a crude form of blackmail. David Cameron and George Osborne are stoking up fears in the markets, actively trying to destabilise the pound and reduce the Government's ability to borrow. It's like a protection racket; vote for us or our friends in the City will lay waste to your economy, your savings and your job."

But hard words had to be smoothed away by the prospect of a Coalition. In that teeth-grinding press conference in

the garden at Number Ten, with both leaders behaving like affectionate old school chums, Cameron sniggered when reminded of his sneer that Clegg was a joke. Instead he trumpeted that this Coalition would mark a "historic and seismic shift" in British politics, with Tories and Lib Dems united on the key principles of "freedom, fairness, responsibility". And Clegg, not to be outdone for florid vacuity, announced that the government with him as Deputy Prime Minister would be "a source of reassurance and stability". After which all that was left was for the Lib Dems to explain to their local parties and to their voters why the prospect of being a voice in government



was so seductive as to persuade them to drop so many of the policies which were central to their their appeal for votes. But dishonouring election pledges is the very stuff of government - something Deputy Prime Minister Clegg and his party may become even more familiar with in the near future.

Along with the celebrants of the Lib Dem once-unforeseen elevation into the dangerously dizzy heights of power - like Nick Clegg, David (tragically briefly) Laws, Danny Alexander - were those who were outraged at what they saw as a blatant betrayal of what had comforted them as their party's vital policies.

MacDonald

This is not first time an election has exposed those whose energy has blinded them to the cruel reality of the political system they were immersing themselves in - its brutal cynicism, its ready acceptance that its policies are there to be modified, compromised or if need be wiped out, its leaders ready to accept, indeed revel in, what they had repeatedly said would be unacceptable.

The general election of May 1929 resulted in a hung Parliament with the Labour Party, under Ramsay MacDonald, winning the most seats. Outside Westminster, in the mines, factories and shipyards an historic slump was gathering and unemployment rising. By August 1931, with the situation worsening almost by the day, MacDonald might have done the honourable thing and admitted that his party's government was impotent, confused, disintegrating. Instead he approached the Liberal and Conservative parties with a proposal to form a Coalition. With the other leaders --Baldwin and Samuel - he went to inform the King who, when told that MacDonald had the resignations of his Cabinet ready, replied that he "trusted there was no question" of MacDonald's being among them; it was up to them to "come to some arrangement". A Coalition government, combining Tories and parts of the Labour and Liberal Parties and led by MacDonald, took over.

In the following general election MacDonald's National Labour Party was all but wiped out and the remnant of the Labour Party reduced to a derisory fragment. All this while the slump ground on. There is no reason to believe that now, in the time of Cameron and Clegg, the situation is any different from the 1930s - that the disasters of capitalism are any more curable by two parties in fragile unity than they were by one separately.

IVAN



Voice from the Back

“Modern” Britain

There is a notion about that because in Britain we have a new political situation of parliamentary sharing that something has changed about the class division of society. It is just not true. “At St. James’s club in London, a new toast is overheard: ‘To the Nineteen.’ This refers, as you no



Millionaire’s Row

doubt spotted at once, to the 19 Old Etonians who have become prime ministers. Jolly good.” (*Sunday Times*, 16 May) “Almost four-fifths of the new cabinet are millionaires, according to an analysis by *The Sunday Times*. As the government prepares to wield the axe on public spending, research reveals that 18 of the 23 full-time cabinet members have seven-figure fortunes, collectively worth about £50 million.” (*Sunday Times*, 23 May) So modern Britain looks a lot like old Britain. The people who produce wealth – the working class are exploited by the owning class. Wake up fellow workers we need a new society.

The Chasm Of Class

At a time in the USA when many members of the working class find themselves unemployed and their homes re-possessed it is worthwhile looking at how the American capitalist class are dealing with the economic downturn. Time-share mogul David Siegel and his former beauty queen wife Jacqueline have had to sell their Florida mansion for a mere \$50 million. The 30 bedroom house and estate, named and modelled on the palace of Versailles in France, includes a boat house, a ballroom, an Olympic-size pool, a theatre and a baseball field. “The 23-bathroom house may appeal to a buyer so wealthy they do

not even move in, said local estate agent Kelly Price. ‘Versailles will probably be a house that will appeal to the uber-wealthy who don’t even think about the issue of money,’ she added. ‘It might be a second or third home. For all we know, it could be a seventh or eighth home.’” (*Metro*, 27 May) Useful productive members of the working class are homeless while the useless parasite class have multiple mansions – that is capitalism for you.

Nice Suicides

“Steve Jobs has said the Chinese iPhone factory where

10 workers have killed themselves this year is actually ‘pretty nice’. Speaking at the All Things Digital conference in California, the Apple CEO also brushed aside questions about his relationship with Google ... Taiwanese electronics manufacturer Foxconn makes Dell, Nokia and Apple products at its factory in Shenzhen, China. As reported by



The First Post, the latest suicide came last week, when a 23-year-old worker jumped to his death from a building roof. Jobs denied Foxconn ran a sweatshop and told the conference that Apple was working with the company to get to the bottom of why so many people were killing themselves. ‘You go in this place and it’s a factory but, my gosh, they’ve got restaurants and movie theatres and hospitals and swimming pools. For a

factory, it’s pretty nice,’ said Jobs.” (*First Post*, 2 June) What millionaire Mr Jobs does not mention is that the workforce stand for a 12 hour work day under constant camera surveillance for the princely sum of £90 per month and live in factory-owned dormitories. The factory is considering improving conditions by introducing “soothing” music, dancing instructors and a suicide hotline! The mindless repetitious factory 12 hour slog may seem “pretty nice” to Mr Jobs as he counts the millions of dollars extracted from the exploitation of these Chinese workers, but at least one worker last week decided to end his “pretty nice” servitude.

Class Divide In China

The awful gap between the rich and the poor in modern China was illustrated by two recent news items. A series of industrial disputes leading to strikes has broken out in China. “They began at Honda’s car plant in the south near Hong Kong. Since then, disputes, demonstrations and picketing have broken out at electronic firms, vehicle parts makers and other factories as far away as Shanghai. Even the 8,000 workers who make the balls used in the Fifa world cup in South Africa are reported to have gone on strike after discovering that one football is sold for the equivalent of a fortnight’s salary.” (*Sunday Times*, 13 June) According to the chief executive of Rolls Royce Motor Cars “China is now our second largest market, with about 20 per cent of sales, and is doing very, very well.” “The Phantom model starts at £235,000 and the Ghost, the new baby Rolls launched this year, at £165,000. The Phantom is about presence, about making a statement. That is why it is so popular in China.” (*Times*, 7 June) This immense conspicuous consumption is only possible out of the sweated labour of the Chinese working class toiling for a fortnight for the pittance of the price of a football.



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