

socialist standard



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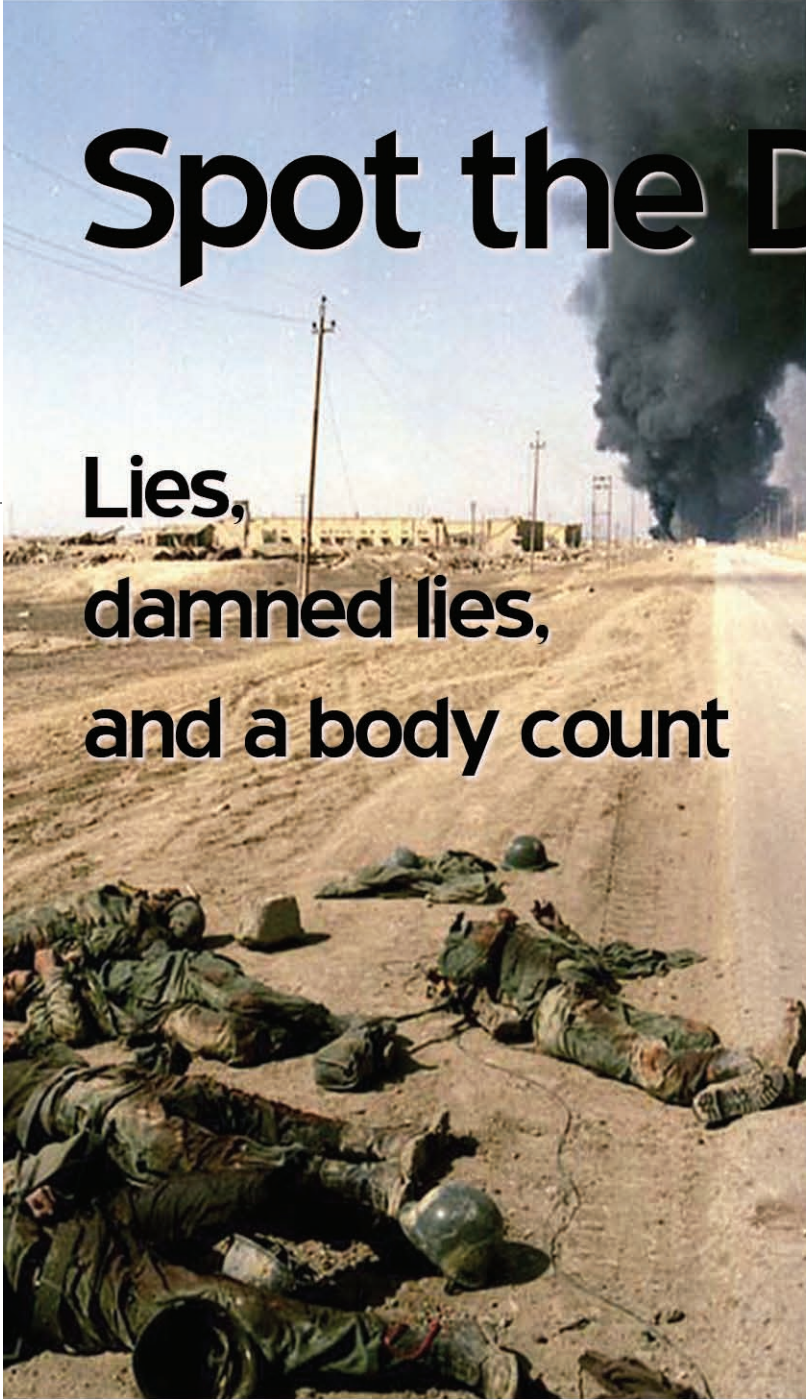
Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

LEGAL WAR

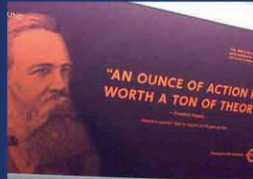
ILLEGAL WAR

Spot the Difference

Lies,
damned lies,
and a body count



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Does it matter whether the Iraq War was legal or illegal?
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In a month or so the people of Britain will be asked once again to decide which representatives of the ruling class will rule over them for the next four or five years.
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SUBSCRIPTION ORDERS

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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 6 May** 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
e-mail: spgb@worldsocialism.org

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

X-Factor

IT WILL have come to the attention of some workers, that the UK franchise for administrating the market system on behalf of the owners of this part of the planet (the capitalist class) will shortly be up for grabs. There is, in other words, an election on. Tenders are invited from political parties devoid of principles and eager to represent the interests of the UK capitalist class, whether in battles with capitalists from other regions, or with the demands of its local working class.

The only problem in this cosy arrangement is that a few centuries back, in order for the capitalists to triumph over the aristocracy who held power previously, the working class had to be brought on-side.

As land gave way to industry as the economic powerhouse of the state, the new boss class (capitalist class) sought liberation from the restrictions that suited the old rulers (landlords). At the same time the new working class – who actually worked in factories producing the wealth that the upper classes fought over – were not lying down. Freed from serfdom they were able to demand – and win – political freedom: the vote.

So the system has a weak link, an Achilles heel: the political authority of capitalism requires to be regularly reinforced by support at the ballot box. Once every four or five years therefore, we all get our 15 seconds of heady power at our fingertips in the form of a stub of pencil and a scrap of paper.

The first shots in the battle between the main parties have been fired. This campaign looks like being the most vac-

uous yet, substituting personalities for policies, and making the 'X-Factor' and 'Britain's Got Talent' look like principled mechanisms for decision-making.

For most of its lifetime Labour at least pretended to have some sort of affinity to working class interests – while expertly shafting us year after year. Thankfully, no pretence at any sort of ideological difference between the parties is maintained by anyone in the know. It used to be said that you couldn't slip a cigarette paper between the policies of the respective parties. Our preferred analogy nowadays would of course refer to a credit card.

The Socialist Party here and our companion parties in the World Socialist Movement do not fetishise parliament. But neither do we see any contradiction in including it – where it exists – as an essential part of the toolkit for making a democratic revolution. The vote in the hands of the working class has only one real use – as a means to unambiguously express majority support (when that happens) for the revolutionary change from production for profit to production for need.

We don't see the vote as the only part of the sort of peaceful and democratic revolution we seek. Far from it, but while it is there we think it should be used. Socialism will only work with the active, informed participation of the many – in stark contrast to the side-show in people's lives that this election will be.

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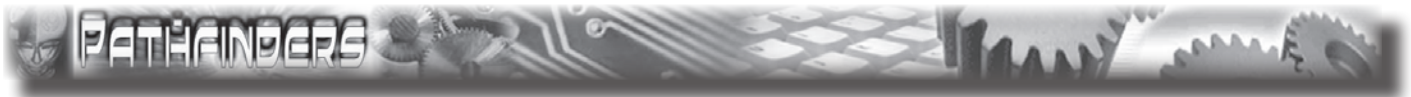
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Brave New Epsilons



Imagine going to a job interview in twenty years time. Chances are, you'll have to take along your ID, your CV, and your personal genomic profile. One of the gene variants an employer might be looking for is Epsilon 4, which is thought to significantly increase your likelihood of developing Alzheimer's disease. Some notable genome self-publishers like Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker are choosing not to publish the Epsilon 4 part of their genome, perhaps understandably. As one researcher remarks, "I wouldn't want to know whether I've got one and I certainly wouldn't want other people to know" (*New Scientist*, 13 February).

The problem for workers is, genome-sequencing is already in the 3-figure dollar range and it won't be long before we will be expected to provide a genome survey in order to get work, just like house sellers will now be required to provide the buyer with a house survey. The more privileged members of this brave new capitalism will no doubt 'do a Pinker', but workers in all probability will not be allowed to keep quiet about Epsilon 4, or anything else for that matter, and will be entirely at the mercy of what the bosses decide they don't like. Unless more workers start inserting copies of this magazine into their jeans, we could all end up as Epsilon-class workers.

Public no longer believes poll findings, poll finds

Two recent polls commissioned by the *Times* newspaper and the BBC suggest that the UK public are becoming more climate sceptical, no doubt because they imagine the unusually heavy snow on their front lawn has blanketed the entire world and heralds a ten thousand year ice age. As the snow piled up, so did the column inches, with journalists speculating about why climate catastrophe has fallen so out of favour (see for instance 'Climate scepticism 'on the rise'', BBC poll shows', *BBC Online*, 7 February).

Favourite theories are the East Anglia email scandal, the hopeless effort at Copenhagen, and most recently the raw wet omelette served on the face of the International Panel on Climate Change by their careless and spectacularly erroneous claim that Himalayan glaciers could disappear by 2035, rather than the original and more accurate date of 2350. Interestingly this error has been traced back to an article in *New Scientist*, which observed that the panel has been 'severely criticised for citing a non-peer-reviewed magazine' (see *New Scientist*, 23 January, p5 – in a very small box).

But wait a moment, isn't everyone getting a bit carried away? Scientists can make mistakes, can't they? In fact the ability to make and identify mistakes forms the basis of all science. There may be some buffoons out there bonkers enough to think that if scientists get one thing wrong then they must have everything else wrong too, but that surely can't apply to the whole population.

In all the journalistic hoo-ha about rising climate scepticism there didn't seem to be a whole lot of poll scepticism, yet are the polls really significant or just a blip? As most people no doubt realise, polls are the journalist's best buddy but make for unreliable real-world guides, especially in areas other than elections where they are unlikely to be corroborated later by hard facts. In the first place, they can be designed to produce the findings the poll-funders are looking for (or else, if they don't, the funders don't publish the findings). Even supposing the funder is genuinely disinterested in the findings (the BBC and Murdoch-owned *Times* are not climate sceptics so presumably weren't hoping for this result, unless the idea was to manufacture some controversial headlines) there is no peer-review or general oversight of the polling methodology employed. What suggests the polls are a blip is the timing. One would, for instance, have to question the wisdom of asking people standing in two feet of snow whether they were especially concerned about global warming at the present time. One further wonders whether the BBC and the *Times* will be doing follow-up polls in flaming June or blue-sky July. Finally there is the question, admittedly a cynic's recourse: do people tell pollsters the truth anyway, or merely make a little devilment out of the business? Why would they lie, you might ask? But equally, why shouldn't they? Anyone who doesn't believe this is possible has clearly never filled in a market survey report on branded products. In view of all this, does anyone apart from material-hungry journalists actually believe in polls? Maybe we should have a poll and find out.

'Just out driving my new Toyota Prius. Text later. Can't stop.'

Possibly last month's best SMS joke. In the midst of the fuss over the large-scale recall of the accursed vehicle, some engineers are doing the predictable thing and, with a knowing stroke of the greying whiskers, remarking that "O'course, they be too damn complicated these days, too much to go wrong. That's their problem right there, I tell 'ee." Although the Prius problem was entirely and mundanely mechanical, speculation also centres round another of Toyota's products, the Lexus. The more that modern car designs move from mechanical to electronic systems the greater the risk of electromagnetic interference (EMI), and designs like the Lexus with electronically-controlled acceleration or 'drive by wire' are now thought to be at risk of EMI-induced 'sudden unintended acceleration' (*New Scientist*, 13 February).

Meanwhile, reports that increasing sunspot activity is likely to interfere with sat-nav systems provide a double-whammy ('Sat-nav devices face big errors as solar activity rises', *BBC Online*, 10 Feb). One

can envisage whole convoys of flashy car drivers all roaring off down arbitrary highways like bats into hell, the blind leading the blindingly fast. Still, it could be worse. At least dodgy cars are being recalled these days. If the free-market capitalists got their way we might return to the unregulated days of the notorious Ford Pinto, whose manufacturers allegedly decided to pay off accident fatalities' families rather than stop selling the dangerous car. All in all it makes you think about oiling that pushbike.

Note to self

Lastly and a propos none of the above, a quick word from our BBC economics advisor Robert Peston: "It's plainly better for banks to make profits, than not (unless you are actively working for the destruction of capitalism)" (*BBC blog entry*, 16th February). Ok Bob, you may have given us an idea...

Inflation and Quantitative Easing

Dear Editors

I have read many of your economics publications and note that your explanation of inflation may be summarised as - the excess issue of an inconvertible paper currency.

Now, I thought that this is exactly what is being done (21st century style) with quantitative easing. However, in the *Socialist Standard* January 2010 in the article 'Financial Alchemy' you appear to be saying that this is not happening and that quantitative easing will not result in inflation. Please could you clarify this point for me and for other readers.

GRAHAM WILDRIDGE (by email)

Reply:

We do indeed argue that the cause of inflation is the excess issue of an inconvertible paper currency, that is, currency that is freely printed and not convertible into an underlying commodity like gold. Currency can be said to be issued in excess when it is above and beyond the amount needed to carry out production and trade, injecting purchasing power into the economy that is not related to real wealth generation. This effectively means a bloating of monetary demand in the economy not sufficiently matched by increased production, which then serves to pull up prices as a whole. Wherever currency has been issued in excess this way, prices have risen and this has been far and away the main reason why the price level now is well over thirty times what it was before the start of the Second World War. The amount of currency in issue has risen far faster than has been warranted by increases in production and trade, with the amount of currency in circulation being £450m in 1938 whereas it is now around £54,000m and still rising.

Quantitative easing (QE) is an interesting phenomenon in that when it was first mooted no-one seemed to be clear on what, precisely, would be involved. Our view has been that if it exacerbates the ongoing excess note issue then it would be inflationary. The way QE has worked in practice, with the Bank of England setting up a separate Asset Purchase Facility (APF), means this does not seem to have happened. Notes and coins are still increasing at the same sort of annual rate they have been the last few years, and there has been no noticeable change to this. What has happened instead is more unusual.

In practice, a massive loan has

been granted by the central bank. This has been loaned by the Bank of England to the Asset Purchase Facility and it has been used to buy financial assets. The vast majority of the APF's purchases appear to have been government gilts with a smaller amount of corporate bonds being bought - in buying these up, their prices have risen, their interest payments (yields) have fallen for investors and so in turn equities have become a more attractive investment (which is what has largely fuelled the recent stock-market recovery).

The effect of all this on the overall price level has been minimal at most though, as it has been a process concentrated specifically on these types of financial assets. In some ways it is a massive, debt-fuelled version of what used to be called 'open-market operations' by the central bank.

As Charles Bean, the Deputy Governor for Monetary Policy at the Bank of England has stated with regard to QE and its effect on financial assets: 'not only does the price of gilts rise as a consequence of the Asset Purchase Facility's initial purchases, but also the prices of a whole spectrum of other assets . . . Also the rise in asset prices increases wealth and improves balance sheets. In this way, Quantitative Easing helps to work around the blockage created by a banking system that is still undergoing a process of balance sheet repair.' It can be added that when the prices of gilts rise and their yields fall, this helps to keep interest rates low too as there is a close connection between government gilt yields and the interest rates charged by the commercial banks.

To make all this happen the initial loan to the APF has been generated by a metaphoric flick of an electronic switch in the only way this can ever occur - through the actions of the central bank itself, the lender of last resort. As we have explained previously private banks are completely unable to expand their balance sheets with a stroke of the pen or flick of a switch, only the central bank can initially do this, just as it can inflate the currency it issues.

The key point is that this loan by the Bank of England to the APF, effectively a massive IOU or series of IOUs, has to be paid back. When the APF sells these assets back into the markets it will have precisely the opposite effect to when it was buying them up, draining away the temporary additional purchasing power that had been created and pumped into the financial system.

So, all in all, this is a central bank financial stimulus aimed at lowering interest rates, increasing economic activity and pushing up the price of financial assets. But it has to be temporary because if the Treasury is not to create another big financial black hole for itself it will at some point have to sell back the assets it has bought through the APF (ideally at the prices it bought them at, or higher), as otherwise it will just have lumbered itself with tens of billions of pounds worth of gilts it had issued earlier to finance its own government debt! So while it is a transitory financial alchemy of a sort, with any profits that accrue from this buying and selling process going to HM Treasury, so the Treasury also has to indemnify any losses incurred.

QE is not inflationary in the traditional sense in that while it can fuel asset price bubbles in certain sectors of the economy it does not cause general price rises and is only temporary. Currency inflation causes more general price rises across the economy as the excess currency circulates throughout it, and of course can - and indeed will - continue for decades if not deliberately halted. -Editors.

WSM FORUM

- Want to talk about what you've just read?
- Can't make it to a meeting?
- Discuss the questions of the day with Party members and non-members online.

Join the forum via www.worldsocialism.org

Party News

Elections

The Socialist Party will be standing a candidate in Vauxhall, in London, in the coming general election. More details next month.

Whatever the date of the general election there will be local elections on Thursday 6 May. The Socialist Party will be standing candidates in these too, in Lambeth and in Camden, in London. Leafleting in Lambeth has been going on since the European Parliament elections last June and is continuing. Offers of help to: 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN or spgb@worldsocialism.org. Thanks.



Dedicated to serving the rich: the reality of aid

“CARE: DEDICATED to serving the poorest of the poor.” So reads a wall poster at the Haiti offices of the “humanitarian” agency CARE International. The offices are housed in a mansion in a wealthy district up in the hills above Port-au-Prince, at a hygienic distance from the poor people they are “dedicated to serve”.

Well, you can’t expect the respectable ladies and gentlemen who administer aid to live and work down in the filth and stench of the shantytowns. Of course, you can’t blame the poor for the lack of sewers, but still...

The aid administrators realise that they need the assistance of people who do know something about the poor and are capable of interacting with them. So they hire specialists called anthropologists, who acquire the requisite knowledge and skill as trainees by living for a time among poor people (formally in order to gather material for their Ph.D. theses).

But some trainees “go native”. They come to sympathise with their temporary neighbours and feel the urge to talk about inconvenient realities that they have discovered. This annoys the administrators, who label them “idealists” and say they have “a negative attitude”. It would be quite unsuitable to appoint them to responsible positions in aid agencies.

An eye-opening book has just appeared, written by just such a chatterbox: Timothy T. Schwartz, *Travesty in Haiti*. No publisher would touch it, so he published it himself.



care®

Charity for the rich

Very little aid ever reaches the poor, let alone the poorest of the poor. This is partly due to the practical difficulty that the poorest areas also have the poorest infrastructure (roads, storage facilities, etc.). But mainly it is because those who are supposed to distribute the aid sell most of it and pocket the proceeds.

In some cases, aid goes directly to the rich. Schwartz describes an “orphanage” run by an American reverend where the “orphans” have parents who could easily afford to provide for them. The place is really an elite boarding school. Meanwhile, naïve churchgoers back in the States, most of them ordinary working people, fork out to support the “poor orphans” they have “adopted”, send them gifts, and even pay for their college education. The poor in rich countries give charity to the rich in poor countries.

The more aid, the more misery

Schwartz’ most important finding is this. When the flow of food aid into Haiti increases, the overall result is that *malnutrition becomes more widespread, not less*. Why? The great majority of Haitians are small farmers, dependent on selling food to meet their non-food needs. Typically, natural disaster prompts the decision to send food aid, but by the time it arrives the emergency is over and the country may well be right in the middle of a bumper harvest. The effect is to drive prices down further, causing enormous misery throughout the rural areas.

It seems commonsense. If you see hungry people on TV, so you give money to buy and send them food. But capitalism has a perverse logic of its own that has nothing to do with commonsense. Reactions that ignore

that logic are liable to do more harm than good.

Some experts and charities – notably, Oxfam – advocate aid in the form of cash transfers. Then food for distribution can be bought locally instead of imported, strengthening rather than undermining the local peasant economy. Local supply would also be quicker and easier to organise.

Nevertheless, most aid agencies, and especially those like CARE that are dependent on Western governments, keep on shipping in food. They even require their national affiliates to cover operating expenses by selling part of the food received locally (“monetised food”).

Expanding export markets

US overseas food aid began in 1954. Until recently it was openly justified as a foreign policy tool and means of promoting American business interests. In particular, it has expanded export markets for US agriculture. Dumping surpluses abroad has helped the US and the EU maintain prices and profits on their domestic markets.

According to the website of the US Agency for

International Development, aid was used to transform Egypt from a food exporter in competition with the US into a net importer of food with a low-wage industrial sector. Since the 1980s Western governments and financial institutions pursued the same strategy in Haiti. The country was turned from an

exporter into an importer of rice, sugar, and other crops, while 100,000 peasants abandoned the land to work for \$2 a day in assembly plants, mostly US-owned, making T-shirts, jeans, and the like for the American market. This new industrial sector has now also largely collapsed, leaving Haiti to depend increasingly on the Columbian drugs trade.

A striking illustration of the commercial interests underlying aid is the fate of the Haitian pig. Farmers used to rely on a small black pig well adapted to conditions in rural Haiti. USAID had these pigs exterminated under the pretext of fighting a swine fever epidemic. The Haitian pig was replaced with a large white pig from Iowa that had to be fed large quantities of imported US corn.

Do they know?

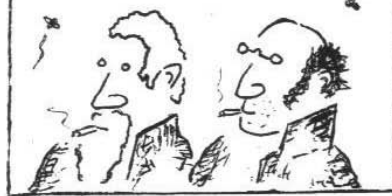
Do the aid administrators understand what they are doing? It is clear from Schwartz that they understand very well. When he “reveals” his sensational findings, they do not argue that he is wrong. They just advise him that if he wants a job he should stop saying things that the US government does not want to hear. They know who they really serve.

STEFAN

In *Material World* February issue we didn’t mean to write that the poll showed that people with high incomes were more likely to be favourable to the word “socialism” than those with low but the opposite, so:

“Women are slightly more likely than men to prefer ‘socialism’; people with low incomes (under \$40,000 per year) more than twice as likely as people with high incomes (over \$75,000); and blacks almost twice as likely as whites, with equal proportions favouring ‘capitalism’ and ‘socialism’ (31 percent each).”

IRE OF THE IRATE ITINERANT



WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT, WE CAN ONLY LIVE BY EATING OTHER THINGS WHICH WERE ONCE ALIVE



LIFE CAN ONLY EXIST BY DESTROYING OTHER LIFE. IT'S THE WAY OF THE WORLD. THIS WORLD, ANYHOW.



BECOME A VEGETARIAN? WELL, PLANTS DON'T REALLY WANT TO BE EATEN ANY MORE THAN ANIMALS DO



THINK OF SPIKES ON CACTUS, ROSEBUSHES, NETTLES, THINK OF POISONOUS BERRIES, GRASS AND LEAVES MAKING THEMSELVES VIRTUALLY INDIGESTABLE



THOUGH OF COURSE FRUITS HAVE TAKEN A RATHER DIFFERENT APPROACH



THEY'VE GIVEN UP! BECOME SUICIDAL. THEY WANT TO BE EATEN. THEY MAKE THEMSELVES TASTY.



...SO THAT WE'LL EAT 'EM, AND, AHM, DEPOSIT THEIR SEEDS, THUS ENSURING THE NEXT GENERATION. THE SACRIFICE IS WORTH IT, YOU SEE. SUCH IS LIFE. WE LIVE MERELY TO REPRODUCE. AND THEN DIE.



WANT A DRINK?

NO, I'M GOING TO THE PARK, TO MUMBLE INCOHERENTLY.



Tiny Tips

Paris police say the mayor of Kiev's daughter was robbed of euro4 million (\$5.5 million) worth of jewelry as she travelled to Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport. An official with the Paris police says a man broke into the luxury car that Kristina Chernovetska was in as it stopped on a highway north of Paris and then stole her purse:
<http://tinyurl.com/y85hxfn>

As trade in the region grows more lucrative, China has been developing port facilities in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar, and it is planning to build railroad lines in Nepal. These projects, analysts say, are part of a concerted effort by Chinese leaders

and companies to open and expand markets for their goods and services in a part of Asia that has lagged behind the rest of the continent in trade and economic development. But these initiatives are irking India, whose government worries that China is expanding its sphere of regional influence by surrounding India with a "string of pearls" that could eventually undermine India's pre-eminence and potentially rise to an economic and security threat:
<http://tinyurl.com/y8fbocu>

Dear Comrade Kim Jong Il,
 This meeting, organised by the Friends of Korea in Britain, would like to convey to you our warmest congratulations on the important occasion of the 68th anniversary of your birth on February 16, and wish you all good health and

a long, long life. We send you our very best wishes for the continued success of your great work... We stand shoulder to shoulder with you and the Korean people under your great leadership, and express our common conviction that humanity will achieve a better world where the people are the masters of their own destiny...

Signed by participating organisations:

- * Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist)
- * European Regional Society for the Study of the Juche Idea
- * UK Korean Friendship Association
- * New Communist Party of Britain
- * Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)
- * Socialist Labour Party

<http://tinyurl.com/ynetnetn>



PEACE PRIZE ?

"President Obama is planning to increase spending on America's nuclear weapons stockpile just days after pledging to try to rid the world of them. In his budget to be announced on Monday, Mr Obama has allocated £4.3 billion to maintain the U.S. arsenal - £370 million more than George Bush spent on nuclear weapons in his final year. The Obama administration also plans to spend a further £3.1 billion over the next five years on nuclear security. The announcement comes despite the American President declaring nuclear weapons were the 'greatest danger' to U.S. people during in his State of the Union address on Wednesday. And it flies in the face of Obama's Nobel Peace Prize, awarded to him in October for 'his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples'." (Daily Mail, 29 January)

DEBT RIDDEN BRITAIN

"There has been a huge rise in the amount of money that banks are writing off as bad debts on their credit cards. Bank of England figures show that the total value of the write-offs doubled to £1.6bn in the third quarter of 2009. In each of the two preceding quarters, the figure had been about £800m. It totalled £3.2bn during 2008. The figures reflect the impact of the recession and are an acknowledgement by the banks that the money will never be repaid by defaulting borrowers. By contrast, the value of mortgages written off in 2008 was just £408m, and has averaged £260m in each of the first three quarters of 2009." (BBC News, 19 January)

THE GAP WIDENS

"The richest 10% of the UK population are now more than 100 times as wealthy as the poorest 10%, according to the Anatomy of Economic Inequality. The study shows that by 2008 Britain had reached the highest level of income inequality since soon after the second world war. Household wealth (including cars and other possessions of the top 10% amounts to £853,000 or more, while the poorest 10% amass £8,800 or less." (Observer, 31 January)

"CARING" CAPITALISM

Lt. Gov. Andre Bauer has compared giving people government assistance to "feeding stray animals." Bauer, who is running for the Republican nomination for governor (of South Carolina), made his remarks during a town hall meeting in Fountain Inn that included state lawmakers and about 115 residents. "My grandmother was not a highly educated woman, but she told me as a small child to quit feeding stray animals. You know why? Because they breed. You're facilitating the problem if you give an animal or a person ample food supply. They will reproduce, especially ones that don't think too much further than that. And so what you've got to do is you've got to curtail that type of behavior. They don't know any better," Bauer said." (Greenville News, 23 January)

Contact Details

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West London branch. 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (Corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY

MIDLANDS

West Midlands branch. Meets every two months on a Sunday afternoon (see meetings page for details). Tel: Tony Gluck 01242 235615. Email: tonygluck111@btinternet.com

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cooking the books

Empty hope

“Fresh blow to hopes of consumer-led recovery as squeeze tightens on pay” ran the headline of an article in the *Times* (21 January) by Gráinne Gilmore, reporting on official figures for wage growth in the three months to November:

“Average pay excluding bonuses rose at an annual rate of 1.1 per cent for the period . . . Private sector staff saw no pay rise at all in November. . . Analysts said that companies were cutting workers’ hours and pay to try to limit redundancies . . . Colin Ellis, European economist at Daiwa Securities, said: ‘The lack of any pay increase in the private sector will weigh on consumption during 2010, much as weak wages have in Germany.’”

She didn’t say who was hoping for a “consumer-led recovery” but this was always an impossible dream. As should be clear from her report, consumer demand depends largely on what people are paid. In other words, it is largely made up of what wage and salary workers have to spend. Which depends on the level of employment; which in turn depends on what those who own and control productive enterprises (or who act for them) decide to produce according to what they think are the prospects of selling it profitably.

The economy, and its ups and downs, is not driven by consumer demand, but by capital accumulation, i.e. by profits being invested in expanding production. The ups and downs of consumer demand in fact reflect, not cause, the ups and downs of the economy. Paul Mattick put it well in his *Marx and Keynes*: “The business cycle is not caused by variations in social consuming power, particularly not that of the workers; rather the cycle determines these variations”.

When production is expanding so is employment and income from employment. Workers have more to spend and, on the basis of the assumption that their employment is secure, are able to borrow against future expected income and so can spend even more. Some economic observers, perhaps influenced by what they were mistaught in college about capitalism being a system of production for consumption, jump to the conclusion that it is this increased consumer spending that is causing the economy to grow. But this is an illusion. Consumer spending is booming because the economy is booming, not vice versa. This becomes clear when the economy stops expanding, as it did in the second quarter of 2008 and in fact began to contract. When this happened consumer spending fell too.

Consumer demand will never recover of its own accord. How could it? Workers can’t simply spontaneously increase their income. It will only revive when production and employment do. And that depends on the prospects of profitable production reviving. Which the squeeze on pay Gilmore reported on will in fact be contributing towards.

Capitalism is a system geared to profit-making, not to meeting needs, not even to restricted, paying needs.

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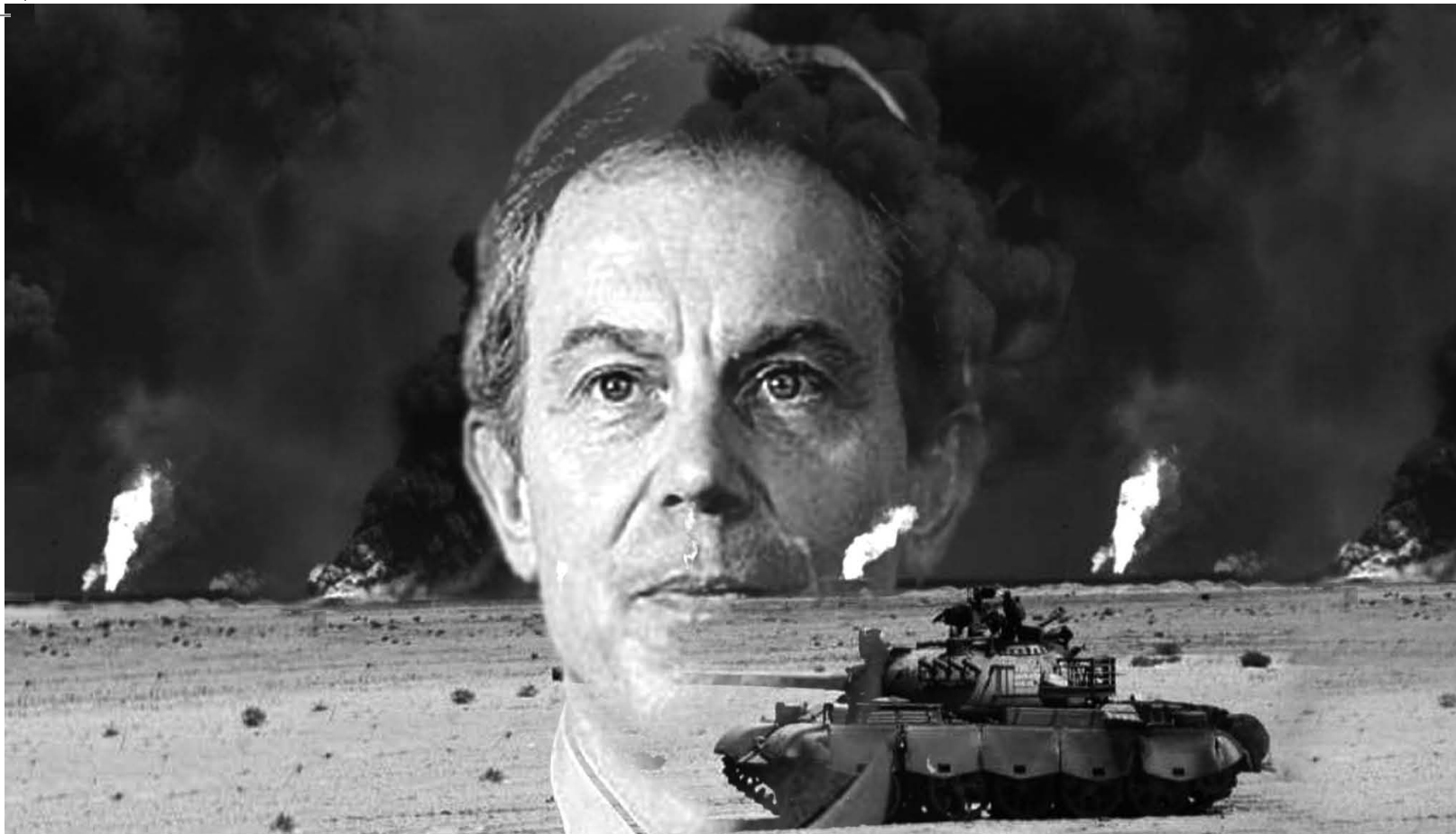
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Tony Blair and the Chilcot inquiry

Does it matter whether the Iraq War was legal or illegal?

Socialists are opposed to war because under capitalism wars are always about capitalist access to sources of raw materials, markets, trade routes, investment outlets or strategic points and places to control these. The Iraq War was clearly about oil, mainly about the threat that the regime there posed to oil supplies to Western capitalism from the nearby Gulf States but also about establishing military bases there to control access to Caspian Sea as well as Gulf oil.

So it was a capitalist war but was it an 'illegal' war? The concept of an illegal war only came in following the defeat of Germany and Japan in the Second World War when it was applied retrospectively to the leaders of the losing side and incorporated into the UN Charter. Before that, states simply went to war whenever some vital capitalist interest was deemed to be at stake.

The UN Charter outlaws all wars unless authorised by its Security Council except wars of self-defence including coming to the defence of an attacked state. Thus the Korean War was a 'legal' war because decided by the Security Council. America declared the Vietnam War legal under the self-defence clause. In fact, the US doesn't really care what the UN Charter says and, as now by far the strongest military power in the world, doesn't need to.

On Iraq, the US government had decided to invade

and topple Saddam whatever the other members of the UN Security might think, putting its allies under pressure to decide whether or not to join in this. The evidence to the Chilcot inquiry has revealed that Blair said in effect to Bush "Britain will go along with whatever America decides".

As the Prime Minister of a Labour government Blair couldn't take the same cavalier attitude to the UN as the Bush administration. After all, the Labour Party had long posed as the champion of the UN. So, once the decision to wage war on Iraq together with America had been taken, the search for a 'legal' basis in international law had to go on alongside the military preparations.

The government's lawyers advised that "regime change" would not be legal as the UN Charter didn't allow this as a reason to go to war (not surprisingly as there are so many unsavoury regimes represented there). That left Iraq's apparent refusal to abide by a previous UN Resolution instructing it to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction. The government's spin-doctors played this for all it was worth. The media went along with this, publishing a map of the Eastern Mediterranean showing the British military base in Cyprus within range of the WMDs Iraq was supposed to possess (just in case the 'self-defence' clause might have to be invoked). It later turned out of course that

no such weapons existed.

Faced with Blair's determination and the ongoing military preparations for invasion, the poor Attorney General had no alternative but to come up with some legal basis, however flimsy. And he duly did (apparently a previous UN Security Council Resolution allowed any State that fancied it to invade Iraq). Blair then used this to get agreement to the war through his Cabinet (only former Foreign Secretary Robin Cook resigned) and Parliament (only 149 voted against, with 412, Tories as well as Labourites, with blood on their hands) in time to fit in with the US military's timetable.. And the war was on.

The whole business of finding a legal basis was a charade. The UN Charter is just a scrap of paper which has never stopped, and never will stop, any war. Its only effect has been to make governments that want to go to war find some loophole somewhere to wage a war they had decided on anyway.

Another interesting, and perhaps surprising, revelation of the Chilcot inquiry has been that the demand for legal cover came not just from those who believed in the illusion of an "ethical" foreign policy, but



also from the chiefs of the armed forces. It was unlikely that they were afraid of ending up before a war crimes tribunal as the war was won before it even started. What it showed was that they had qualms about setting the killing machine in motion illegally, so confirming that in Britain the military is subordinate to the civilian government.

Blair's miscalculation was to lead Britain into a war that had very little popular support. He is on record as justifying this on the grounds that leaders must lead by sometimes taking unpopular decisions. It is quite true that governments must do this. This is because they are governing a class-divided society on behalf of one of the classes – the capitalist class – which often requires them to take action against the interest of the other class – the majority wage and salary working class. Wage restraint is one. Going to war is another.

People were right to oppose the war, but the sound basis on which to oppose it is that it was a capitalist war rather than that it was an 'illegal' war. Even if the UN had provided a legal cover for it, it would still have been a capitalist war and should still have been opposed. No war for capitalist ends can justify the shedding of a single drop of working class blood.

ADAM BUICK

Capitalism and Michael Moore

LIKE MICHAEL Moore's other films, *Capitalism: A Love Story* is brilliant in its way, hard-hitting and funny. He strips away the lies and hypocrisy of "public relations" propaganda to expose the ruthless predators who dominate our society and profit from the misery of working people. And at the same time he makes us laugh. So far so good.

It's fairly clear what Michael Moore is against. But what he is *for*? He doesn't seem to know himself, as he admits in a recent newspaper interview:

"What I'm asking for is a new economic order. I don't know how to construct that. I'm not an economist. All I ask is that it have two organising principles. Number one, that the economy is run democratically. In other words, the people have a say in how its run, not just the [wealthiest] 1 percent. And number two, that it has an ethical and moral core to it. That nothing is done without considering the ethical nature, no business decision is made without first asking the question, is this for the common good?" (*Guardian*, 30 January).

We too want democracy to extend to all spheres of social life.

For us that's what socialism is – the common ownership and democratic control of the means of life by the whole community. But genuine democracy will not be achieved by relying on economists or other supposed experts to design it. By its very nature, democracy must be created by a conscious majority.

Michael Moore seems to be saying

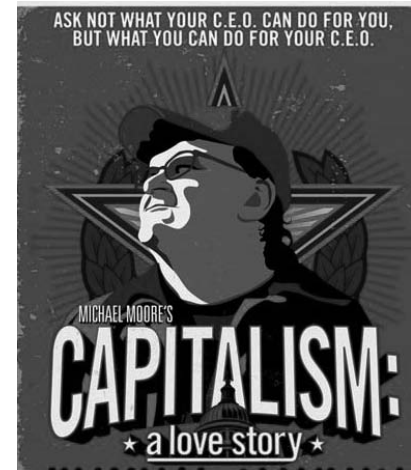
that in his "new economic order" the wealthiest 1 percent will still exist, even though they will no longer have all the say. He also assumes that there are still going to be "business decisions". But business decisions are about making money, not serving the common good. Any firm run by managers who care too much about ethics and morality will soon go bust – unless the managers got sacked first!

He is right. If the situation he exposes so well is to change, it really does require a "new economic order". An end to production for profit. A society in which the means for producing what we need are owned in common and run democratically. A society in which productive activity is no longer "business" but simply cooperation to satisfy human needs.

This is much more than he offers on his website (www.michaelmoore.com). He says nothing there about any kind of "new order". It's all about campaigning for various reforms that could be of benefit to working people but would still leave capitalism in place. Worst of all, and despite Michael Moore's evident disillusionment with Obama, he urges readers to work for change through the Democratic Party – a recipe for endless failure and frustration.

One last point. Michael Moore talks only about changing things in the United States. This national focus makes it impossible even to conceive of a fundamentally new society. That's because nowadays capitalism is a highly integrated *world system* and can only be replaced at the global level.

- leaflet for handing out to those going to see the film.



Tilting at windmills with a banjo

Pete Seeger is now in his 90th year. His songs have always been better than his politics.

It was strangely moving: a frail lanky figure complete with banjo, lurching up on stage proceeded to gasp his valiant way through several of the best-known songs in the American folk pantheon. Pete Seeger at ninety, demonstrating that he can still enthral an audience. The casual onlooker would have difficulty believing that this unthreatening personage came however, ready-stamped with his own unique Government Health Warning.

“The most boycotted, picketed, blacklisted performer in American history”, he had endured a lifetime of threats, assaults, been labelled “traitor”, “Khrushchev’s Songbird” and suffered trial and conviction at the insidious hands of the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Others viewed him differently, observing his enormous contribution to the collection and preservation of traditional music and how almost single-handedly he had rescued the five-string banjo from oblivion. A devout Humanitarian, abstemious, monogamous, unimpeachably principled, he is the trust of his patriots.

Born of well-heeled, musical New England stock in 1919, Seeger’s life compass was pretty much set for him at an early age. His father, in company with folklorists John and Alan Lomax belonged to that 1930s Popular Front “intellectual” coterie who, combining Radicalism and Patriotism, embraced the Folk genre as America’s “true” music and a vehicle for awareness-raising and social change. “Communism in Twentieth Century Americanism” ran its slogan, boldly – if bafflingly.

Seizing the baton, Seeger commenced his own musical and political odyssey presently, in 1940, forming the Almanac Singers, an amorphous, motley, Leftist crew whose proclaimed aim was, nevertheless to “change the World”. Performing such numbers as “Talking Union”, they supported labour rallies and, the Hitler/ Stalin Peace Pact being current, opposed the War with their “Songs for John Doe”.

When, however, Germany attacked Russia the following year, the horrified group found the bulk of its repertoire rendered instantly

obsolete. A massive rethink – and rewrite – ensued. Where once it had been confrontation, strike and “Franklin D. listen to me, You ain’t gonna send me across the sea”, employee and employer alike were now urged to unite behind the Military to “Deliver the Goods” and then skip merrily “Round and round Hitler’s Grave”.

Remaining a “card-carrying Communist”, Seeger was nonetheless sufficiently chastened by this experience to never again identify quite so closely with the Party’s front-line tactics, instead lending his voice to more general issues.

The post-war years were difficult ones for an American Left struggling to radicalise an increasingly affluent, and hostile, Working Class. The Almanacs disbanded and in the prevailing “anti-Red” climate, Seeger encountered not only the FBI’s close scrutiny but also frequent exclusion from union events and marginalisation within the Communist Party itself. Fleeting commercial success with a new



group, the Weavers, failed to salvage his finances and he found himself obliged to scour the continent playing small venues and universities, unwittingly in the process, founding what would eventually become known as the 'College Circuit'.

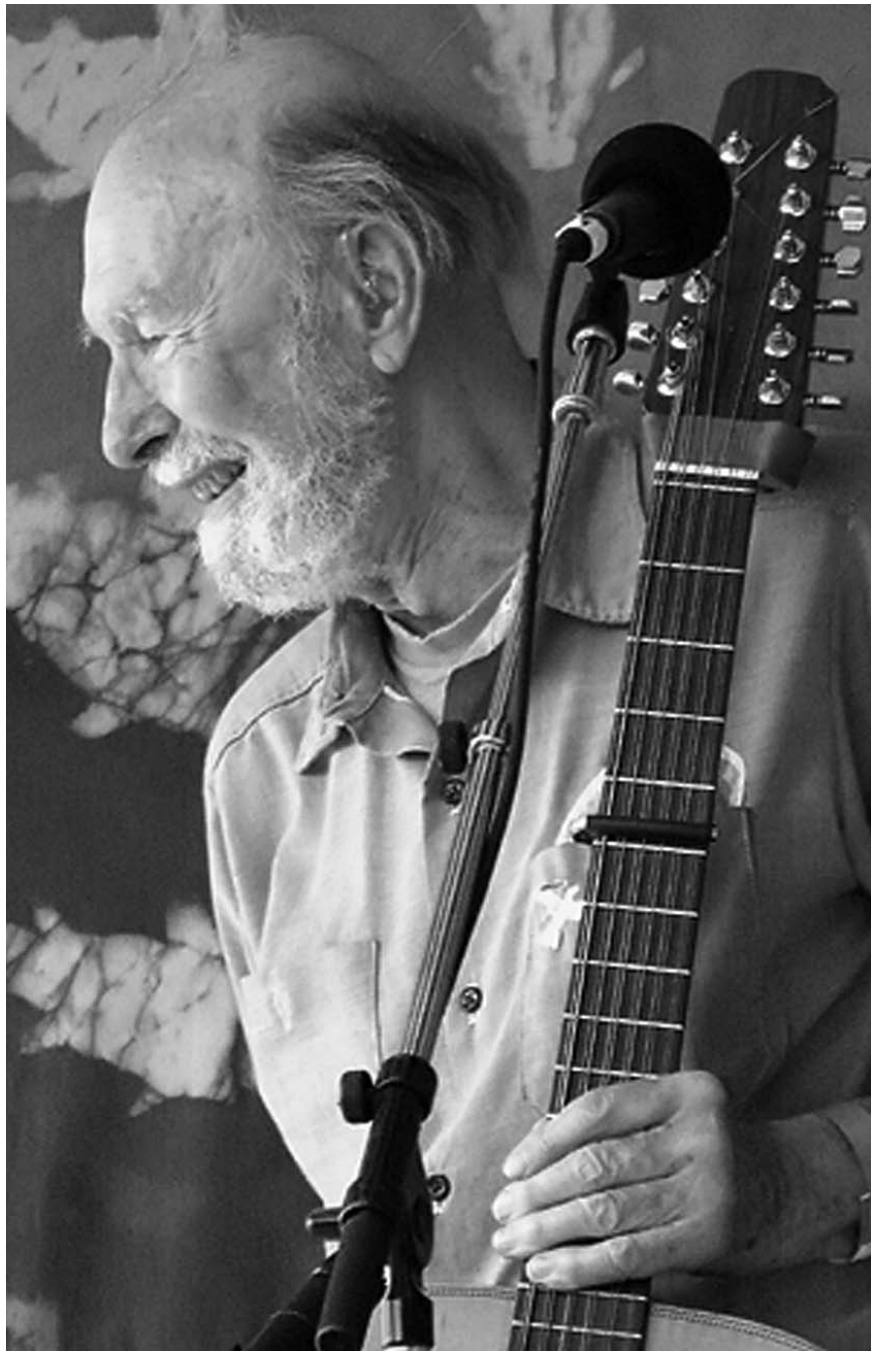
Inevitably subpoenaed by McCarthy's HUAC, he eschewed the usual "Fifth Amendment" route; that no citizen under the Constitution need incriminate themselves, opting instead for a head-on First Amendment plea; that the Committee itself was unconstitutional. For his pains he received a 10-year sentence which although never implemented and eventually overturned, nevertheless seriously blighted his life for several years.

The 1960s saw Seeger affiliating with the current "good causes", plucking his banjo at Civil Rights rallies (an unfortunate instrument given Negro memories of stereotypic minstrel shows) and supporting the anti-Vietnam War movement. He was however becoming perceived as "Middle Aged", "Old Left" rather than "Hippie", "Student Power" and his "acoustic" music upstaged by the strident, electrified offerings of the rising Dylanite generation.

Remarkably too, he continued to adhere to the broad "Soviet World View". Having remained silent over the momentous events of 1956 – the denouncement of Stalin and Russia's brutal intervention in Hungary – he now displayed similar reticence over its intrusions into Czechoslovakia and the obvious tribulations of working-class life in Castro's Cuba. But knavish, duplicitous, surely not? Myopic, naïve, more probably. Increasingly disillusioned, he embraced Environmentalism, focusing particularly, and continuingly, on the campaign to clean up his "Dirty Stream", the Hudson River.

Seeger has persistently overstated the power and value of song in political struggle, citing no less an authority that Plato: "Rulers should be careful about what songs are allowed to be sung." Pursuing the rather Hegelian notion that the *idea* precedes and informs the *action*, he maintains that the "right song at the right time can change history" and whilst, for sure, songs have a certain rallying function, no way can his assertion that they triggered the Civil Rights Movement and shortened the Vietnam War be upheld. Fellow-Almanacers Bess and Butch Hawes were much closer to the truth in pointing out that "songs; ideas can only appear when events provide the material". Perhaps they'd been taking a peek at Marx.

Unable to fully comprehend the nature of the capitalist system he professes to despise, its impersonal, all pervading imperative for profit and the root cause of the multitudinous socio-economic and environmental problems afflicting humanity; lumbered also with a Leftist/Bolshevist mindset he has never managed to transcend, Seeger has sought solution through a whole range of single-issue campaigns and support for assorted pseudo-socialist, state capitalist regimes. A successful lawsuit, for instance, by residents against General Electrics for polluting the Hudson, laudable in itself, was hailed as a great victory for "localism" and "community" rather than an opportunity to ponder the competitive, cost-cutting forces that had brought about the pollution



in the first place. And all the while, the authentic socialist model of a democratic, classless world society of common ownership and free access has awaited his perusal. Painful as it is to criticise a clearly well-intentioned if Quixotic figure, Seeger's political life does serve as vindication of our founding principle of campaigning solely for the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by socialism.

So what is left? Well, laying aside more than a few political stomach-turners, there is a rather wonderful body of song. We can, for example, teach subversive little numbers, "Cindy", "Froggie Went A-Courtin", to our offspring and (in our cups) declaim "the warnings, dangers, love we'd ring out incessantly all over the bloody place – if only we possessed the requisite hammers". Perhaps also, in more sombre (and sober) mood, we'll quietly croon the hauntingly-beautiful "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?", even if, of necessity we think of Pete himself and his ilk at the mournful refrain:

*"When will they ever learn,
When will they ever learn?"*

ANDREW ARMITAGE

What is Real Democracy and How Do We Get It?

In a month or so the people of Britain will be asked once again to decide which representatives of the ruling class will rule over them for the next four or five years.

It is well known that the word 'democracy' originates from Ancient Greece and means 'power of the people'. Such an idea, in its literal sense, encompassing economic, political and social democracy does not exist anywhere in the world. This is primarily because the planet's resources, many of which human beings need in order to live, do not belong to the people as a whole. Instead, they are in the hands of a small, privileged, rich minority. Such extremely limited political 'democracy' as does exist in parts of the modern world, is scarcely even a shadow of what genuine democracy will be like when it is finally put into practice.

For real democracy: imagine a society where all the people would

be of equal status, with equal, free access to resources owned by the community, as a whole (e.g. food, shelter, healthcare, education, transportation, etc.). Imagine a world with no leaders and no elite to lord it over the rest of the population. A society where everyone can have an equal say in the issues that concern them. Above all, a world, in which all the people own and share the wealth that we need in order to live.

People and Politics

Not just socialists, but large numbers of people sense the lack of democracy in present society. Huge and ever increasing sections of the electorate, not only in Britain, but globally, feel, and by now know, that with the prevailing political ideas, the outcome of elections is not going to make any real difference to their way of life.

People have not always felt this way. Those who struggled to gain the franchise in the 19th and early 20th centuries, earnestly believed that this would empower them sufficiently to provide a means of solving many of the social, political and economic problems around them. Even fifty

years or so ago, many thought that their vote could bring about genuine, significant change.

Now, experience has led people to think otherwise and, although most of them will still be casting their votes, few will have any great expectations, whether they vote for Tweedledum (Conservative) or Tweedledee (Labour) or, for Tweedledum-dee-dum (Liberal-“Democrat”). In mainstream politics, apathy has grown. Although this is disconcerting for the activists of the dominant parties, the general forces of capitalism are not overworried by it.

Those who administer capitalism want the electorate to vote for the main parties, which are all thoroughly committed to the capitalist status quo. However, capitalism's leaders have no interest in public involvement in politics, outside of election time. Of course, there are radio phone-ins, programmes such as 'Question Time', 'Any Questions', etc., but these are tightly controlled and the participation of individual members of the audience in studio discussion is very limited, to say

the least. Forums on the Internet have allowed more expression of dissent, but generally in practice to smaller, well-scattered audiences, in spite of the huge potential of this medium. Capitalism's ideology and indoctrination dominates the thinking of the vast majority of participants. If large sections of the electorate, through apathy, do not vote, capitalism remains firmly entrenched, by default.

Why people are powerless

Almost everyone would like at least some degree of control over what shapes their lives. Many know they have not got that now, and probably most of those, if they thought about it, would realise that in the past, they didn't have that degree of control either. Simplistic, misleading explanations are concocted as to why people are powerless. These include: 'greedy bankers', 'corrupt politicians who don't listen to the people', 'fat cats', the 'nanny state' etc.

Capitalism, on the one hand, and genuine democracy, on the other, are completely incompatible with one another. The reason for this is that under capitalism, wealth is concentrated in the hands of a very small minority of the population. This wealth brings its owners huge power, influence and lifestyle opportunities, completely unavailable to the majority.

According to the United Nations Development Programme, more than 1.2 billion people – nearly one in every five people on Earth – survive on less than \$1 a day. More than one billion people in developing countries lack access to clean, safe drinking water. Contrast that with the fact that the net wealth of the 10 richest billionaires is \$133 billion, more than 1.5 times the total national income of the least developed countries.

A study by the World Institute for Development Economics Research at the United Nations University reports that the richest 1 percent of adults owned 40 percent of global assets in the year 2000, and that the richest 10 percent of adults accounted for 85 percent of the world's assets. In contrast to this, the bottom half of the world adult population owned barely 1 percent of global wealth.

If we look at the U.K., it is well known that since Labour has been in power, inequality has grown even greater than it was under the Conservatives. In fact, in January 2010 a government commissioned report by the 'National Equality Panel' revealed that the gap between the rich and the poor was greater than it was 40 years earlier.

In 2004, the top 1,000 people on the *Sunday Times* Rich List were worth a total of £202.4 billion. That's an average of about £200 million each. On the average UK wage in 2004 of £21,000 a year, it would take nearly ten thousand years to earn that much. It should by now be crystal clear that such enormous disparities in wealth ownership which capitalism generates, make any meaningful democracy unattainable, within the present setup. The only effective solution is to get rid of capitalism, the root cause of this problem and replace it by a society, in which the world's resources are shared by the world's population.

Boardroom dictatorship

We are told by the apologists for the status quo that we live in a 'free' society. However, just ask people how 'free' they really feel on their daily commute (slog) to their places of employment (exploitation), as they are crammed together in buses or trains, or face the predictable monotony of the traffic jam. Employment is accurately described as being exploitation since the value of what the workers produce in the form of goods and services is much greater than the value of the wages/salaries which they receive. The surplus value is pocketed by the capitalist class and is a very important source of the wealth of the ruling class.

How 'free' do the working class (vast majority of the population) feel when they arrive at work, where they spend a significant amount of their waking hours. Few dare to criticise their line-managers or conditions

of employment. They are only too well aware of the consequences of doing so: loss of promotion prospects and/or, quite likely, the sack.

Trade unions do not and cannot give the protection which left-wing reformers once hoped they could. The trade cycle of booms and slumps is a natural part of capitalism.

Particularly in a slump, most workers have to keep their mouths shut about their grievances and, even when the economy is stronger, workers still have to be very wary about what they say openly.

The basic reason why the working class majority feel powerless and not really 'free' is because they do not own any significant amount of the means for producing and distributing wealth, which people need in order to live. According to *Social Trends 2003* published by the Office of National Statistics in the UK, the top 5 percent of population own 58 percent of this wealth, while the bottom 95 percent owns only 42 percent. This is a very important statistic since it means that out of every 20 people in Britain, the wealthiest one owns more than all the other 19 put together.

Such enormous inequality, although variable in degree in different parts of the world, is very typical of the global situation. It means that the vast majority are forced by their circumstances, to become economic slaves to the rich minority. The term 'wage slavery' is still very apposite. When people think of slavery, a picture of Ancient Rome and Greece with their slave drivers bearing whips, usually comes to mind. Modern wage slavery is very obviously quite different from



this. The whip is no longer required. Capitalism has something far more subtle and far more productively effective at its disposal. In the Ancient World, slaves were quite often brutally treated by their masters. However, because the slave was the property of the owner, it was in the interests of the owner to keep him or her in a reasonable condition, in order to work.

In contrast to this, when capitalism began to develop further, in Europe in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries and, spread to other parts of the world, the industrial working class (wage slaves) themselves were clearly not the property of the capitalist class. This meant that the capitalists had no economic interest in maintaining those, who worked for them. After all, these workers could always be replaced by others in the queue, looking for work. This was the thinking of the employers in the earlier period of capitalism and, still is today in the less developed parts of the planet. Hence, the grinding poverty of early industrial capitalism in Europe and, still today, in many undeveloped countries.

Modern capitalism, in the more economically advanced countries has been adapted subtly to suit the self-interest of the ruling class. Welfare systems have removed the worst excesses of poverty in such countries and, most importantly from the point of view of the capitalists, have to a considerable extent, removed the threats of instability for the owners of industry, caused by any organised discontent amongst workers. Such is the sophistication of modern wage slavery that, workers can often be persuaded (indoctrinated) into exercising self-discipline at the workplace, which means that line managers (more highly paid workers) often need to spend less time in supervising their subordinates.

Revolution from below

In view of the overall situation of poverty, wars, inequality, pollution etc., how do we get from the dictatorship of capital and the boardroom, to the system of real democracy described earlier? The means to reach such a society must surely reflect the composition of the new society itself.

Since the emergence of agriculture, about 10,000 years ago, private ownership of the means of production has developed, with a ruling class at each stage. Many changes have taken place since then but the key element has been private ownership of resources, by a small minority, right from slave owning societies through

to feudalism and then, to capitalism. Significant political changes have been led by minorities, who have successfully imposed their will and rule on a population, very often by means of violence.

Capitalism, with its ruling class was established and developed by a minority, that is to say by leaders. In complete contrast to this, genuine democracy or real socialism, the two are synonymous, will be a society run by the whole of the people. Since it will be without leaders, this democracy will be set up by a majority of the people, consciously and politically organising themselves for a change, which they both understand and desire.

Even now, many people realise that there is something seriously wrong with the present system (wars, poverty, pollution, inequality etc.). However, it is the awareness of an

“human society will have evolved to the position of being able to tackle effectively the challenges facing the modern world”

alternative to this which is missing. The task of socialists is to get people to think for themselves, without the need for leaders. When more people consider the genuine socialist, democratic alternative to capitalism, those who give it support, will swell the size of the already existing world socialist movement. As the number of socialists grows, the ideas will spread among the people they come into contact with, particularly in a world where those ideas can be communicated so much more quickly than in the past. A series of political, democratic acts will be needed to establish the truly democratic society of socialism. People with a socialist consciousness will unite and upon achieving a majority, measured by voting, will be in a position to establish the new society.

World Socialism

At last, democracy will have real meaning: a society of production of goods and services for human need, with ownership and control of the means of production and distribution by all the people. Since the division into rich and poor will have been abolished, it will be a classless society. The precise, day-to-day details of the running of this future society will be up to the

people at the time, but what we can be sure of is that just as there will be free access to goods and services for everyone, without any need for money, so there will be open access to the administration of society for those interested in particular issues, such as food production, health, education, building of houses, the environment and local matters.

Probably, there will be local administrations, perhaps in the form of councils, which will be reflected at wider levels, such as regional and global. The new democratic society will most likely involve participation of delegates in these councils. The consequence of this is that certain delegates could be subject to recall, if the electorate were dissatisfied with their activities. These factors would emphasise the genuine democracy and choice available to everyone.

Such a society will clearly face challenges in the need to clean up the mess created by capitalism. Swift measures will be required to undo as much as possible of the damage which has already been done to the environment by the previously existing profit system. Adequate food supplies, housing, health services and education will need to be expanded to areas of the planet previously deprived of them under capitalism. The tasks involved will obviously be considerable. However, the numbers of people available to do such work will be much greater than could ever be the case in a market economy since unemployment and the vagaries of the trade cycle will have been abolished. There will be increased automation of some tasks, and further technological development, with consideration for the environment. The scale of human energy available, accompanied by a social concern for creating the best possible working conditions, will make work a far more individually and socially satisfying affair than could ever be the case under capitalist wage slavery.

These will be enormously exciting times because at long last, human society will have evolved to the position of being able to tackle effectively the challenges facing the modern world. Immense satisfaction will be experienced by huge numbers of individuals as, on the one hand they will be able to contribute their mental and physical energies into increasing the commonly held wealth of society, whilst on the other hand, they will satisfy their own self defined needs from the common store.

The new era for humanity will have begun.

VINCENT OTTER

Capitalism breeds inequality

A recent report shows that the reformist actions of the Labour government have not been able to reverse the inequalities that capitalism generates.

Minister for Women and Equality Harriet Harman, who won the Labour Party deputy leadership by talking up left wing and egalitarian credentials, set up a National Equality Panel to look into inequality in UK society, and report back. That the report, *An Anatomy of Economic Equality in the UK* (summary at www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/NEP%20Summary.pdf), has come out in the period of the run up to a general election, at which Labour are desperately

quite markedly as compared to median earnings. What is most startling of all is that the lowest paid workers have barely gained any substantial increased over all that period. So much for the idea propounded by Tories of the 'trickle down effect' of gains for the rich becoming gains for the poor. Likewise, so much for the social democrat notion that growth of the economy overall will abolish poverty. Through most of that period, the British economy has grown, and clearly only

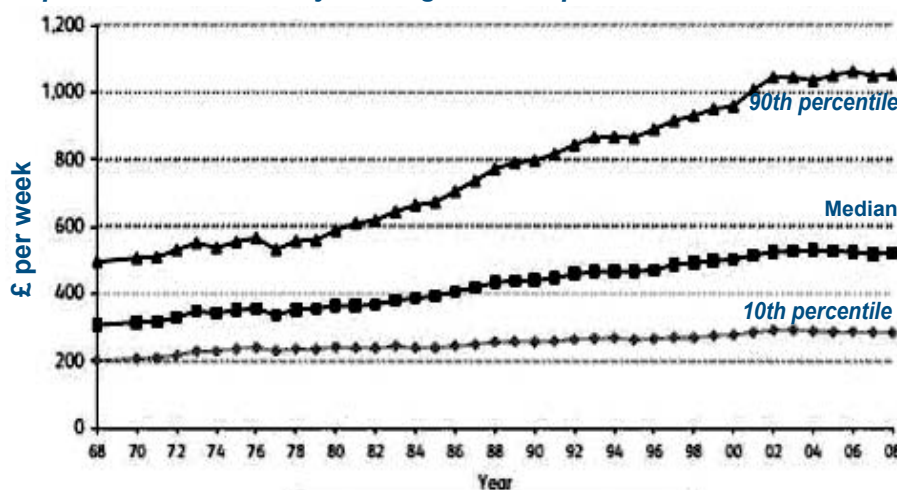
rich and poor. Much of the reason they can do no more than that is down to the changes in the economy since the 1970s, with the transfer of productive industry to the power houses of east Asia. Further, structural unemployment has persistently remained since the late 1970s effectively preventing any remedy through the labour market. As the BBC's Mark Easton notes: "The problem for the politicians is that measures to reduce social or income inequality will always be controversial because they mean neutralising the advantages of wealth – a prospect that those with money and influence will fight hard against." (www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/markeaston/2010/01/is_inequality_iniquitous.html)

Labour has struggled to try and create conditions of social equality, but cannot and will not act against the very structures and systems that create it. It is like someone campaigning to mitigate the effects of slavery without trying to abolish slavery itself.

What the report shows, but does not foreground, is that the top 1 percent of earners earn over £2,000 per week. Indeed, it is notable on the graph of incomes (*Graph 2*), that there is a sudden and noticeable spike at the top end of the graph, reflecting the small number of people who have astronomical incomes.

Graph 3 demonstrates this further – the top 1 percent have more than double the

Graph 1: Full-time weekly earnings at 2008 prices, 1968 to 2008, men



Source: NEP, based on 1968-1996 New Earnings Survey (NES) (GB), 1997-2008 ASHE (UK).

trying to cling onto their heartland support and produce clear red water between themselves and the Tories, is surely purely coincidental.

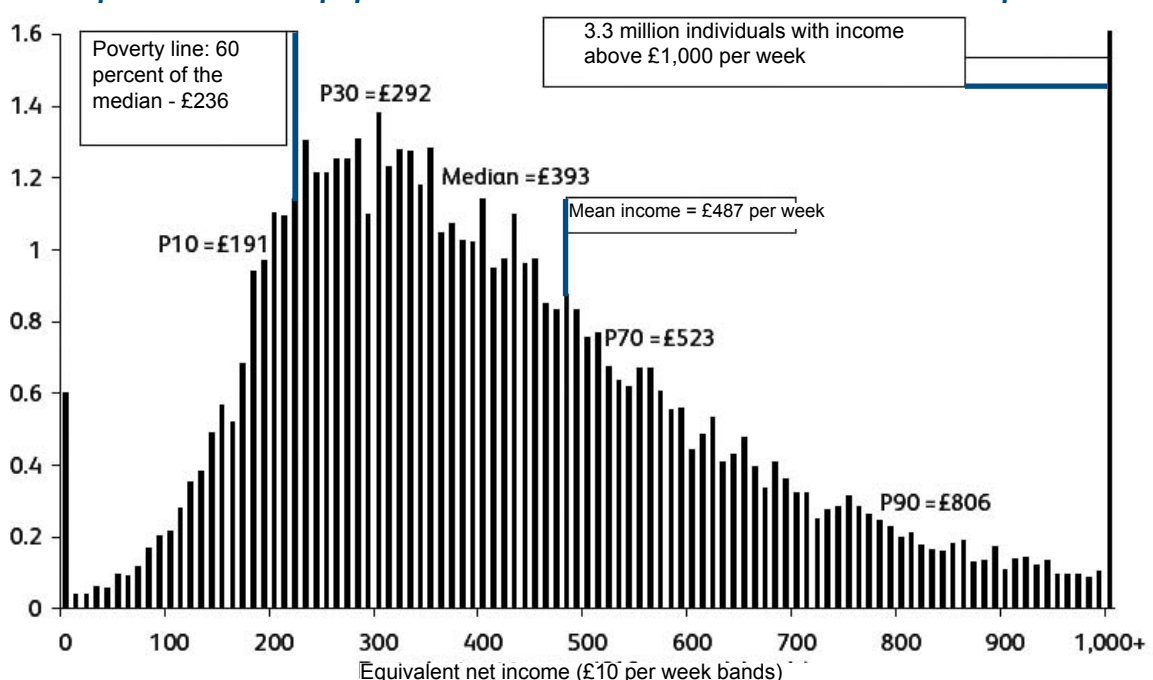
Some of the information this panel has

produced is extremely useful and well worth reading. Although it mostly contains data that has been made available elsewhere, its focus on equality is thoroughly worthwhile and it does draw all of the current knowledge on the state of equality in the UK into one place. *Graph 1* for example, tells a sorry tale. Not only, as the headline writers all noticed, has the gap between the top and bottom earners widened over the last forty years (quite radically) but also it has risen

grown to the benefit of those at the top.

To be fair to Labour – and this has been noted for much of their time in office – what they have achieved is a slight slow down in the growth in the gap between

Graph 2: Half of the population has income below and half above £393 per week



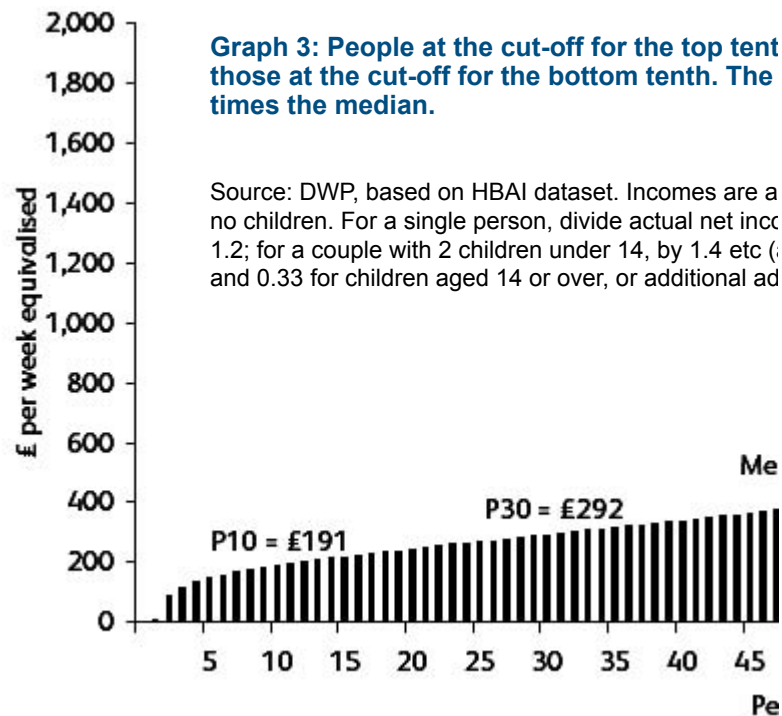
income of those at the start of the top 10 percent of earners. This of course is income; the statistics on total wealth are worth noting as well:

“Median total wealth (including personal possessions, net financial assets, housing and private pension rights) is £205,000. The 90:10 ratio is almost 100, with the top tenth of households having wealth above £853,000, and the bottom tenth having less than £8,800. The 90:10 ratio is so high because the poorest households have such little wealth. However, even looking more narrowly at the top half of the wealth distribution, those in the top tenth have more than 4.2 times as much wealth as those in the middle, twice the corresponding ratios for earnings or household income. 1 per cent of households has total wealth of more than £2.6 million.”

The authors of the report clearly advocate reducing inequality. They address the various philosophies that claim that social inequality is necessary or even just. They maintain, though, that international comparisons of economic output do not correlate to great inequality, and that some much more equal societies than Britain are more productive and successful.

Further, it's clear that the inequalities they discover do not relate to life choices, but in fact reflect the cumulative effects of various advantages and disadvantages produced by background, and yes, class. Although most of the differences they highlight are between different parts of what we would understand as the working class (anyone whose main economic asset is their ability to work) the conclusion that inequality at birth stays through life remains a stark and significant fact.

Most tellingly of all is their revelation that the share of wealth for the top two thousandth of the population (the very, very, very, rich) is back to where it was in the 1930s. This gap narrowed towards the 1960s, but since 1969 their share of 'post tax' income has trebled from 0.5 percent to 2.5



Graph 3: People at the cut-off for the top tenth those at the cut-off for the bottom tenth. The times the median.

Source: DWP, based on HBAI dataset. Incomes are a no children. For a single person, divide actual net income by 1.2; for a couple with 2 children under 14, by 1.4 etc (and 0.33 for children aged 14 or over, or additional ad

percent. For the top 1 percent they have gone from 4.7 percent in 1979 to 10 percent by 2000. Put another way, a century of Labour and Labour governments has not dented the power and wealth of those at the top of society. That, as opposed to any specific failure of the current Labour administration, is the lesson that socialists need to draw from this report's findings.

For those who would deny that inequality is a problem, it must be sufficient to show that inequality in wealth and social



Urban myth or Trotskyist fabrication?

Londoners and visitors to London may have noticed last year a big poster of Engels on the Underground next to a quote, allegedly from him, that “An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory”. No source is given. Which is not surprising since this is not a quote from Engels but a long-standing English-language proverb that has been mistakenly attributed to him. It has also been attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Lenin and Gandhi.

Its first recorded use dates from 1748 when Jared Eliot, a New England clergyman, wrote in *Essays upon Field Husbandry* that “It used to be the Saying of an old

Man, That an Ounce of Experience is better than a Pound of Science.” (www. answers. com/ topic/ an-ounce-of-practice-is-worth-a-pound-of-precept) But it is all over the internet as something Engels said, usually without a source. The more serious collections of quotes give the source as a book published in 1975 by Reg Groves entitled *The Strange Case of Victor Grayson*, which presumably is the earliest attribution their researchers have found. Groves was a pioneer British Trotskyist, expelled from the Communist Party for Trotskyism in 1932.

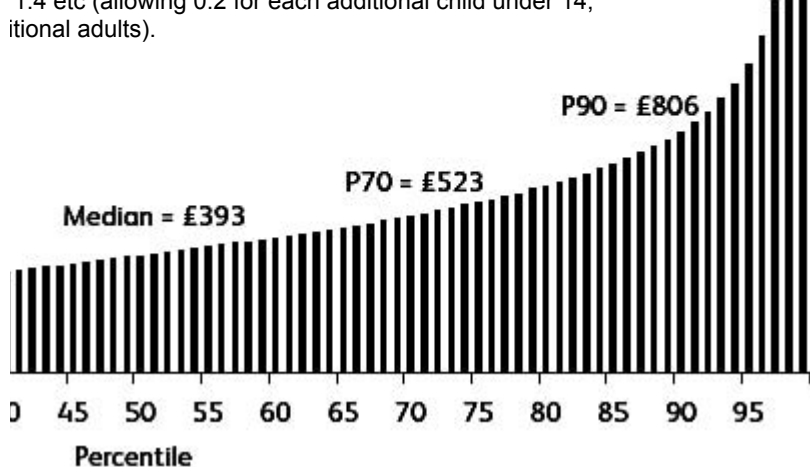
In fact Groves does not actually say that Engels said this but is even slightly interrogative and rhetorical. What he wrote was “and did not wise old Frederick Engels once say: An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory ?” (chapter II, p, 115). He gave no source for his supposition.

Another Trotskyist, Terry Fields, who managed to become a Labour MP, also used this proverb, only he attributed it to Lenin.

“The Red Russian leader, Vladimir Hitch [sic!] Lenin, said that an ounce of experience is worth a ton of theory.” (Hansard House of Commons Debates, 29 April 1987 vol

Top tenth have incomes more than four times the bottom tenth. The top 1 percent has incomes more than five times the bottom 1 percent.

These figures are adjusted to be equivalent to those for a couple with a net income by 0.67; for a couple with child under 14 by 1.4 etc (allowing 0.2 for each additional child under 14, additional adults).



status translates into a shorter, sicker life, with less knowledge and personal development. The findings of this report must not be allowed to lie gathering dust on political correspondents and professional politicians' bookshelves, but must be made a spur to show the rotten truth of our present system of society, and become a weapon in the arsenal of overturning it in its entirety.

PIK SMEET

115 cols 314-8)

"An ounce of experience is worth a ton of theory, as Vladimir Ilyich Lenin once said."

(Hansard 27 November 1989 col 489)

It probably wasn't said by Lenin either but it does appear in an article in the *Weekly Worker*, the paper of the Communist Party of Great Britain, on 13 February 1925 by T. A. Jackson as

"An ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory" (www.marx.org/archive/jackson-ta/1925/02/13.htm)

Jackson (incidentally an SPGB renegade) didn't attribute it to anyone. He was well read and was probably just using an old proverb he felt appropriate to his argument (summed up in the next following sentence: "A successful stand of the workers in any given factory will prepare them more for a united stand of all the factories in an industry than years of theoretical preaching".)

Groves joined the Communist Party in 1927, so this would be where he would have picked up the phrase. Attributing it to Engels would be his own mistake just as attributing it to Lenin was Field's.

It is not surprising that Trotskyists like this saying as it well expresses their theory and tactic that it is not worth trying to put the straight socialist case before the working class (as we do) as this is too theoretical for them; workers, according to the Trotskyist theory of 'transitional demands', can only learn by experience, the experience of fighting for reforms within capitalism and learning that capitalism cannot grant these reforms; at which point they are supposed to turn to the Trotskyist vanguard party and follow it in an armed uprising against the capitalist state. Hence their conclusion that what socialists should be doing is not putting the case for socialism, but proposing attractive reforms for the working class to follow. It is an argument for a reformist practice.



Living without money

The on-line *Guardian* (25 January) put up a video "The No Money Man" about Mark Boyle who has chosen to live without money. Last year the *Times* (24 November) in an article "Living without Money" featured "former teacher Heidemarie Schwermer" who "has lived without money in Germany for 13 years". Both Boyle and Schwermer are associated with schemes which want people to help each other without using money. Boyle calls his "Freeconomy Community"; Schwermer's is called Gib und Nimm ("Give and Take").

Such groups are one way of surviving under capitalism, but they are not the solution to the social problems of poverty and environmental degradation which they are set up to mitigate. Although socialists want a moneyless society, living without money now, under capitalism, is not what we advocate.

Actually, socialists don't want to "abolish" money. What we want is to see established a system of society where money would become redundant, as it would in a society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means for producing wealth. In such a society the principle "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs" could apply. People would cooperate to produce what was needed to live and enjoy life and then have free access to this.

Life without money under capitalism, where most things have to be bought, is pretty austere. Here's how a sympathiser describes Boyle's lifestyle:

"He lives in a small camper, makes or scavenges everything he uses on a day-to-day basis . . . He takes solar showers . . . To eat he practices the fine art of Dumpster diving and cooks on a hyper-efficient rocket stove."

Schwermer "lives - a week at a time - in the spare rooms of members of the Tauschring [the Give and Take scheme], cleaning or working in return for accommodation."

Very few people (in fact, to tell the truth, only a few, eccentric individuals) would be prepared to live like this. In any event, the whole of society could not. However, this is not the only way to live without money and be part of genuine cooperating community where the links between people would be human not commercial. Socialism offers this possibility without involving giving up such amenities as hot and cold running water in a warm, permanent home. But it's a society-wide change not an individual lifestyle choice.

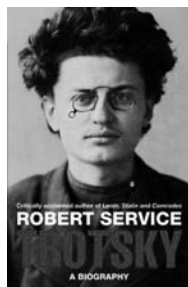
With the elimination of the waste of capitalism, not just in arms production, wars and preparations for war but also in the whole superstructure of buying and selling, socialist society will be able, using modern technology and socially cooperative labour on a world scale, to provide these amenities and comforts for everybody everywhere without over-burdening the environment.

We don't want to be churlish but we must point out that both Boyle and Schwermer, and Boyle in particular, rely on what the cooperative labour of the rest of society is able to provide using modern technology. For instance, Boyle's camper and solar panels (bought before giving up money) and what he scavenges from skips, and the heated and lit houses where Schwermer lodges.

Living without money doesn't have to involve wearing a hair shirt and using old newspapers for toilet paper. And won't in socialism.

The prophet debunked

Trotsky. A Biography. By Robert Service. Macmillan. 624pp. £25.



Were Trotsky alive today, he would have the editors of this book shot. It is riddled with irritating errors. Round brackets close square; names change spelling; weird sentences like

the idea that Russian radicals “took the bits of Marxism they disliked and discarded the rest” slip through; and apparently Oslo and St. Petersburg lie on the same longitude, 59 degrees North. Macmillan should be ashamed to have allowed this slapdash product into print.

This would not matter except that the representatives of Trotsky on Earth have launched a flurry of chaff to attack this biography of their idol. Forensic hair splitting has been their method, and finding faults, such as that Natalya Sederova (Trotsky’s partner) died in 1962 rather than 1960 as the book claims. This is, of course, a distraction tactic. Hardly any of their reviews deal with the meat of the book.

Peter Taaffe, leader of the “Socialist Party” (formerly Militant) performs the usual Trotskyist miracle of simultaneously denying and justifying the repressive tactics and terror of the Bolsheviks. David North of the World Socialist (sic) website cavils over trivialities, and even manages to accuse Service of anti-Semitism. North also has the lack of originality to describe Service’s text as part of the ‘School of historical falsification’ echoing his hero’s riposte to Stalin.

They don’t address Trotsky’s ordering the decimation of a battalion for cowardice. Or Lenin signing an order for 100-1000 leading citizens of a city to be hanged. The book notes Trotsky’s willingness to use authoritarian methods, and suggests that prior to 1917 he never spelled out what he meant by dictatorship, but that during the crisis leading to the Bolshevik coup d’Etat, he would speak in praise of the guillotine that made opponents of the revolution “shorter by a head”.

Service depicts, with accounts from witnesses, Trotsky as an aloof and self-centred man, who lacked political judgement to help him keep friends close. He alienated many by his manner. He was never, contrary to the received wisdom and dogma of the sects, an organised Marxist.

He was a non-aligned member of the Russian Social Democratic Party, who spent the years up to the Great War trying to unify the factions but never joining any. Even when he joined the Bolsheviks, it was as a loose cannon, and that would be part of his undoing.

Service attributes Trotsky’s failure to become the leader of the revolution after Lenin to a lack of will on his part – and claims that any obstacles were surmountable. He suggests that Trotsky was not planning, nor might have been able, to use his position of head of the Red Army to seize power: but that the fear of this motivated his opponents.

What sticks in the craw of the Trots, and threatens the entire ideological edifice of their movement, is Service’s contention that Trotsky did not in policy terms differ from Stalin, and that he had indeed consciously presided over the introduction of a series of show trials of opponents like the ones used by Stalin against Trotsky’s allies. Further, he examines Trotsky’s late claim that the “backwardness” of Russian development was to blame for the “degeneration” of the revolution. In that case, enquires Service, was not the whole enterprise, including all its shed blood, a forlorn waste of time?

Despite the claims of the acolytes, this is not an entire hatchet job, Service freely acknowledges that Trotsky was a great writer and orator, and a brave man in his own personal right. It is, though, a biography, as much a literary form as an historical one, and judgement plays an important part. Service gives his opinion, and is openly critical of Bolshevism and the reader can make up their own mind.

PS

The Philosophy of Money

Money by Eric Lonergan. Acumen, 2009. £9.99



This is an unusual book, written by a hedge fund manager. It verges between conventional orthodoxy and the highly unorthodox. In many respects it is as much a book about philosophy,

thinking and perception as it is about economics, and not unlike recent works by George Soros in that

respect.

Lonergan has read Marx, Hayek and many of the key financial analysts of the contemporary era, from Markowitz to Shiller. He has provided a synthesis of their views about markets and money, underpinned by his philosophical readings from his earlier academic studies. These at times border on the insightful but ultimately disappoint.

His discussion of inflation is an obvious case in point. As early as the first chapter he writes:

‘Many people believe that their money is stored in a safe at the bank, if they think about it at all. Ignorantly, we think of a deposit with a bank as money; indeed, in most of economics deposits are referred to as “money”, and are categorized as such in official statistics, which is misleading. Deposits are not money: they are loans we make to banks’ (pp.11-12).

This is quite true and one of the reasons ‘credit creation’ ideas still peddled by some economists are erroneous, along with theories which try to explain rising prices with reference to the expansion of bank deposits. However, he also says:

‘...the solution to a banking panic is effortless and disconcerting: a central bank merely needs to say that it will create as much money as is needed, and provide this to the banks, and everyone should calm down’(p.12).

Later, he writes of ‘an irrational fear of inflation’ (p.133), but these fears are not necessarily irrational. This magazine has chronicled for decades how an excess issue of inconvertible paper currency (beyond that needed for production and trade) leads to an artificial bloating of monetary demand known as inflation. This has been a consistent phenomenon since the late 1930s/early 1940s and in some periods, such as at times in the 1970s, has been quite significant.

At present, the extent to which a tactic like ‘quantitative easing’ can lead to cost price bubbles and can lead to an excess note issue will be the extent to which underlying inflationary pressures will re-emerge with a vengeance within the capitalist economy. Lonergan clearly missed the relevant chapters in Marx’s *Capital* where the inflationary process – and the explanation for it – is discussed, or has at least failed to apply it to the contemporary situation. It would certainly help explain to him why inflation is a monetary phenomenon created by governments through central banks which cannot, of itself, solve any of the other economic problems

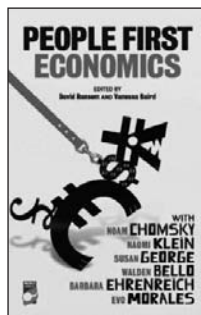
endemic to capitalism.

DAP

People before profits?

People First Economics. Ed. David Ransom and Vanessa Baird, New Internationalist Publications 2009. £9.99

Here is a book with contributions



from twenty or so well-known writers, economists, politicians, activists and professors; inspiration for readers who seek to be part of a 'fairer world'. In one way or another all the contributors succeed in pointing

out major flaws in the capitalist system and all have their ideas on how many things could be improved to work better for more people. Recurring themes include restructuring the tax system, transparency in the tax system, putting an end to corporate tax dodging, closing tax havens, prosecution of the guilty, cancellation of Third World debt, protection of the environment, reducing inequalities, investing in sustainability. I don't recall an example of a call for a non-capitalist alternative, just adjustments although some of them quite major.

A former derivatives trader possibly overcome by guilt or remorse reveals the predator/prey relationships in banks and finance companies. 'Replacing the interest-based money system is the critical struggle of our time. It is not a system we can reform. We must simply defeat it because if we don't it will defeat us.' How it will be possible to defeat the interest-based money system is left open to conjecture but as he reveals in his article no-one was interested in taking up his new 'debt-free' home finance product because debt expansion is more profitable than debt reduction. He is listed as a financial adviser.

Other suggestions are to regulate and control, to put social services back into the hands of communities, away from the market, to use local currencies, to expand the commons and to share the common wealth. The closest we get to a socialist alternative comes from Nicola Bullard, an Australian researcher, campaigner and writer with 'Focus on the Global South' who reminds us that Marxists (and some others) agree that capitalism destroys nature and alienates society but that the

main objective of the G20 is to put it back on its feet again after the recent 'crisis'. Her way forward is three-fold: expand the common good by decommodifying goods and expanding open-source; cool the planet by using appropriate agricultural methods, and share the common wealth – meaning a fairer sharing of profit between labour and capital, tax reforms etc. She ends by proposing that it should be possible for all to live in a system of economic production and consumption where the commons is for all and wealth is shared by all but owned by none.

The chapter 'Equality is better – for Everyone', written by Richard Wilkinson of the University of Nottingham Medical School and University College London and Kate Pickett of the University of York and the National Institute for Health Research and taken as an edited extract from their book *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* is interesting in its focus on various measures of well-being. What they show is that the wider the difference in monetary terms between rich and poor in any society, the greater are the problems within those societies, from rates of mental illness, teenage birth rates, prison populations, distrust of others within society, life expectancy and murder rates, which confirms that socialism (a more equal society will not be found) should be hastened and welcomed by all.

The final three chapters focus on climate change but again largely promote regulation and reform and the final paragraph of the final chapter pretty much sums up the tone of the book, 'The current movement...is an opportunity to be ambitious, to challenge the central precepts of the capitalist system at its roots and replace it with a new set of economic power relations founded on principles of justice, redistribution and collaboration' – as if to say that money can be retained but a new system can be organised around it without the negative aspects that now abound.

There are plenty of optimistic suggestions but you would have to believe that those who currently have the power – corporations, the mega-wealthy and their media and puppets in governments – are actually seeking such a wide-ranging, inclusive solution for it to have any possible chance of success. If this were the case then they would surely have already been working towards it.

JS

OBITUARY

Cyril Evans

We are sad to report the death after a long illness of Comrade Cyril Evans of South London Branch.

Cyril was born in Plumstead, South East London, in 1926. In 1944 while serving as an apprentice he came in contact with the Party which during the Second World War held outdoor meetings in Beresford Square, Woolwich. Struck by the practical nature of the Party case for socialism he joined almost immediately and was active for the following decade in the Woolwich and Dartford area.

As is often the case his Party activity was interrupted by periods of economic hardship and by the need to raise a family and in 1954 he gave up his membership. Although no longer active Cyril never lost his desire to make socialists. While employed in the engineering trades and later as a teacher and later still as an osteopath he seldom lost an opportunity to argue the case for a world based on co-operation rather than competition. Several members and sympathisers have recalled his quiet, patient, and resolute presentation of the sane alternative to the madhouse of capitalism.

In the early nineties he rejoined the Party and again became active in efforts to form a branch of the Party in South East London. Cyril was an inveterate writer of letters to the press. He also wrote on a range of topics for the *Socialist Standard* and addressed Party meetings. His contributions to political discussions invariably contained refreshing insights and his political optimism was infectious. His enthusiasm and commitment stayed with him to the end. Just prior to his last illness he was contemplating a further article on the necessity for Socialism.

Our sincere condolences go out to his widow Pat and their family.

This writer will miss a good friend and the Party will lose an inspiring comrade who was in the opinion of those who met him a really nice guy.

GT

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Meetings

London

Sunday Evening Film Programme
52 Clapham High St, London SW4, 6pm.
14 March - Comrades part 2.

Norwich

Radical Film Forum

Saturday **20 March**, 2-5 pm
Zeitgeist III
The workshop, 53 Earlam Road,
Norwich NR1 3SP
More information: <http://radicalfilmforum.wordpress.com>

Manchester

Monday **22 March**, 8.30pm
The Origins of the Socialist Party's
Declaration of Principles.
Unicorn, Church Street, City Centre.

London

Saturday, **27 March**, 4.00pm
"The Road to Socialism - Kropotkin,
Morris and Marx". Forum with Brian
Morris (Author of "Kropotkin: The Politics
Of Community" and "Bakunin: The
Philosophy Of Freedom") and Adam
Buick (Co-Author of "Marxian Economics
and Globalization" and "State Capitalism:
The Wages System under New
Management").
52 Clapham High St, SW4 (nearest tube:
Clapham North).

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Good Friday **2 April**, 10.30 to 5pm.
Easter Saturday **3 April**, 11am to 5pm.
Open to public. All welcome.
Socialist Party Head Office, 52 Clapham
High St, SW4 7UN.

ADVANCE NOTICE:
ELECTION FORUM
Saturday **17 April**, 6.00pm
CAN POLITICIANS SAVE THE PLANET?
Election Forum with Frank Simkins,
Vincent Otter, Glenn Morris and Danny
Lambert.
The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High St,
London SW4 7UN.

HEAD OFFICE SOCIAL.
Saturday **6 March**, 7.00pm. 52 Clapham
High St, SW4 7UN.

Intermingling



YOU MAY not be interested in boxing, but it could hardly have escaped your attention last summer that a certain Ingemar Johansson had taken the world's heavyweight title from the previous holder, Floyd Patterson. The South African government believes, however, that such knowledge as this would be seditious for all except the white population of South Africa. As it was reported in the *Johannesburg Star* (14/7/59):

"Non-whites are not allowed to see any film containing 'scenes of intermingling of Europeans and non-Europeans.' That is why non-whites have been banned from seeing the film now circulating of the recent

Johannson-Patterson world heavyweight title fight. Johannson is white, but Patterson is a negro. So the film cannot be screened at all in non-white cinemas. And in those where non-whites may sit in the gallery and whites in the stalls, the non-whites have to wait outside until this newsreel ends before taking their seats."

If the South African government really thinks that this will keep the coloured population ignorant of the fact that a black man and a white man fought for the title, they must be well out of touch with reality.

(from African Passing show by Alwyn Edgar, *Socialist Standard*, March 1960



What kind of future do we want? For centuries, people have imagined technological utopias or nightmare dystopias. Meanwhile, how will capitalism adapt to ongoing economic and environmental concerns? And what kind of socialist society can we aim for as an antidote? Residential cost (inc accommodation and all meals) is £130, £80 conc. Non-residential cost (including meals) is £50. Please send a cheque for £10 (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) to flat 2, 24 Tedstone Road, Quinton, Birmingham, B32 2PD. For more information, e-mail Mike Foster at spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk

Declaration of Principles

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

Object

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

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom,

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

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



“...Less Equal Than Others...”

AS THE snowdrops and daffodils signal an approaching spring – and another general election – anyone who has doubts about the government being in a panic should remind themselves that one of Labour’s top electoral strategists, plotting to steer the party to another term of chaotic fumbling across the face of British capitalism, is Harriet Harman. Yes – she who alone survives of those breezy, achingly ambitious Blair Babes who so cheerily arranged themselves for the cameras on that May morning in 1997 when nothing seemed beyond them. There were Margaret Beckett; Ruth Kelly; Patricia Hewitt; Hazel Blears; Caroline Flint...but none of them hung on to a place near the top of the greasy pole. Only Harriet Harman, whose very name once had John Prescott displaying his stock of seaman’s expletives like flags at a ship’s mast, got there. Notwithstanding that while declaring herself an opponent of selective education she took care to get her son into an exclusive grammar school some way from her home saying that “we did it for our son.” Or that she voted in February and March 2003 in favour of attacking Iraq but feebly excused this, when she was campaigning for Labour’s Deputy Leadership in June 2007, as due to her not being in possession of the full facts.

Survivor

Meanwhile, apart from now being Deputy Leader and Chair of the Labour Party, Lord Privy Seal, Leader of the House of Commons and Minister for Women and Equality, Harriet Harman has taken on the monstrously demanding job of trying to dissuade a betrayed electorate from descending into a sense of outraged alienation and political apathy. But perhaps all of this has followed because, reacting to what has befallen her, Harman has become a survivor. In 1998 it seemed to be all over for her when, after just a year in charge at the Department of Social Security – notable for persistent clashes with junior minister Frank Field over Labour’s plans to “reform” the “welfare” system – she was abruptly sacked. Yet three years later she bounced back as Solicitor General since when, if we disregard some typically indiscreet gaffes, her progress has been pretty – although at times bewilderingly – smooth. Which is not to say there may not be trouble ahead; Labour has decided that the class system is a likely vote winning issue in the election and Equality Minister Harman has been chosen to spearhead their campaign.

Class

This was an interesting choice, if only because of her secure family background and social connections – apart from anything else she is the niece of an earl and (according to an “amateur genealogist”) related through her aunt’s marriage to none other than Old Etonian David Cameron. Harman has done her best to re-assure us on this matter, arguing

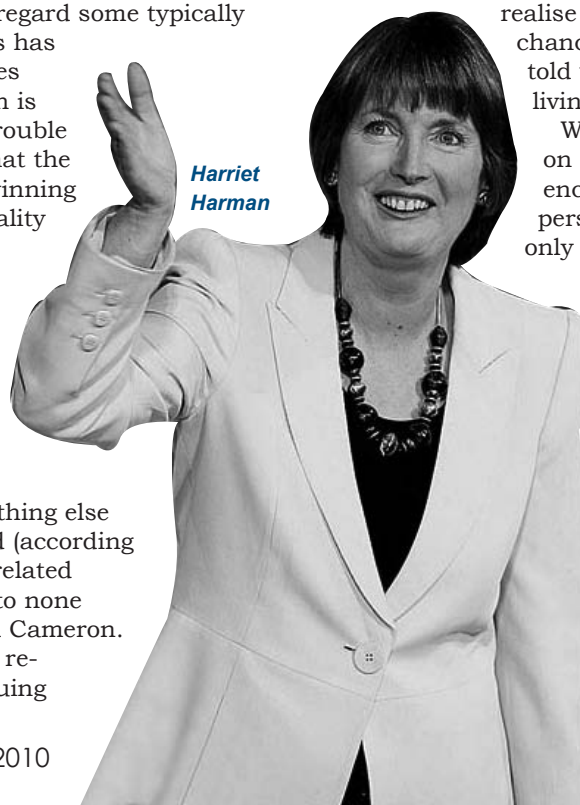
inside the Labour Party against an all-male leadership on the grounds that men “cannot be left to run things on their own” and suggesting that in the next parliament there should be 39 openly gay MPs. More significant are her views on class society, its nature and effects: “Persistent inequality of socio-economic status – of class – overarches the discrimination or disadvantage from your gender, race or disability...The public wants an equal society, one where there is not a yawning and growing gap between the bottom and the top”. While the first part of this statement is valid enough it avoids the question of how “the public” views class society and how susceptible they are to the argument, tirelessly pumped at them by their leaders, that it is the very inequality in the class structure, protective and enhancing, that drives capitalist society to the benefit of everyone whatever their class. This all avoids the vital question of why this Minister with the job of adjusting us into an “equal” society is a member of a government which over 13 years of power has failed to deal with this “overarching” problem – and why it should suddenly be so urgent.

Poverty

There has been no lack of promises, explicit or otherwise, from the Labour government since 1997 but let the most recent, in their 2005 election manifesto, suffice: “Our vision is clear; a country more equal in its opportunities, more secure in its communities, more confident in its future”. That drivel would have impressed only the most impenetrably blinkered; the rest would have preferred to rely on their real experiences of Blair and his government. There is plenty of evidence about this, the most recent being the National Equality Panel report *An Anatomy of Economic Inequality in the UK*. Among the report’s findings are: the richest ten per cent are more than 100 times as wealthy as the poorest; the top one per cent each possess a total household wealth of £2.6 million or more; being born into a disadvantaged class does intensive damage to a person’s chances in education and beyond, affecting whether they realise their potential and so improve their life chances. At the same time Save the Children told us that 13 per cent of UK children are living in severe poverty.

When politicians like Harman hold forth on this situation they offer only confusion, encouraging an assumption that a person’s social situation and prospects can only be judged by reference to insignificant changes in their income. But this does not even approach the heart of the matter, the key to which is the ownership of the means of life by a minority class who live off their privileges while the other class depend on employment with all that means in terms of class misery – insecurity in their livelihood, homes, survival and expectations. This is the authentic meaning of class society and of the inequalities which will endure despite the politicians’ rhetoric.

IVAN



Voice from the Back

Capitalism Is Worldwide

Members of the working class are taught in schools from a very early age that the country they were born in is somehow special. We are taught to be proud of the country wherein for generations our family has been exploited. We wave flags, sing patriotic songs and are taught to mistrust workers from other countries. The owning class suffer from no such xenophobia. They are prepared to exploit workers of any nationality, creed or so-called race. To them profit is much more important than patriotism. Here is a recent example from the Brighton College newspaper. "Workers at a Sussex-based electronics firm were today left "devastated" after being told in a video message that manufacturing at their factories is to end and 220 jobs moved to Korea and the Czech Republic. Unite said Edwards planned to cease all manufacturing at its Burgess Hill and Shoreham factories. The announcement was made to employees via a video message, which the union said was "tactless". (The Argus, 13 January)

Nothing is too good for "our boys" they claim, but the reality is far different. "Britain's military veterans are too often descending into alcoholism, criminality or suicide because of a lack of support from the Government according to the Mental Health Foundation. Veterans under 24 are two to three times more likely to kill themselves than civilians of the same age. An estimated one in five veterans and Service personnel is said to have a drinking problem. The charity said: "More needs to be done to help veterans stay well." (Times, 28 January) Having risked life and limb in pursuing the interests of their masters in these hellish conflicts the heroes of yesterday are thrown on the social scrapheap.

Class Division

Socialists are often pilloried because we look at the world from a class perspective. We are accused of being outdated, old fashioned and living in the 19th Century. All that Marxist stuff about class division has been outdated by the new dynamic capitalism of the 21st Century, we are told by our critics. A

recent government sponsored health review seems to give the lie to that notion. "Healthy living is cut short by 17 years for poorest in Britain. The poor not only die sooner, they also spend more of

average difference in 'disability-free life expectancy' is now 17 years between those at the top and those at the bottom of the economic ladder, the report says." (Guardian, 11 February)

Mother Of The Free

At the last night of the Proms exploited members of the working class like nothing better than to bawl out the words of Land of Hope and Glory. Poor, deluded workers imagine that there is something superior about being born on a piece of dirt thrown up on the Atlantic Ocean. They never realise that it is an accident where you happen to be born, and indeed that it was probably an accident that they were born at all. This misguided nationalism is fostered by governments and the media. Britain is superior to Johnny Foreigner with his deceitful regimes. No underhanded politics in dear old Britain says the patriot critical of foreign powers, but what is the reality? "MI5 faced an unprecedented and damaging crisis last night after one of the country's most senior judges found that the Security Service failed to respect human rights, deliberately misled parliament, and had a 'culture of suspicion' that undermined government assurances about its conduct. The condemnation by Lord Neuberger, the master of rolls, was drafted shortly before the foreign secretary, David Miliband, lost his long legal battle to suppress a seven paragraph court document showing that MI5 officers were involved in the ill-treatment of a British resident, Binyam Mohamed" (Guardian, 11 February). Yet another example of how the quest for markets soon overcomes any ethical scruples. Not so much a case of *Britain Rules The Waves as Britain Waives The Rules*.



A Grateful Nation

Capitalist nations are continually in conflict with their rivals and inside capitalism economic rivalry leads to military action. During these actions the press praise "our boys" in uniform and regale us with tales of heroism.

their lives with a disability, an 'avoidable difference which is unacceptable and unfair', a government-ordered review into Britain's widening health inequalities said yesterday. ... Not only is life expectancy linked to social standing, but so is the time spent in good health: the

Free Lunch

by Rigg

