

socialist standard



May 2010
Vol. 106 No. 1269
£1.50

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

Public Information: Why children's charities shouldn't go with strange businessmen

Charlie says
we're all sacked...



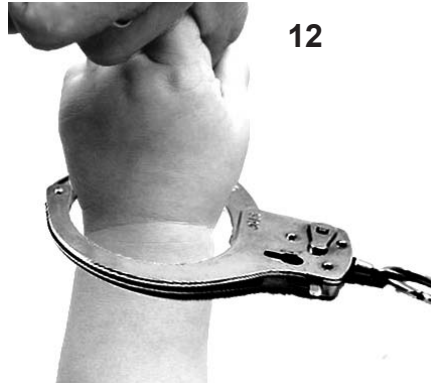
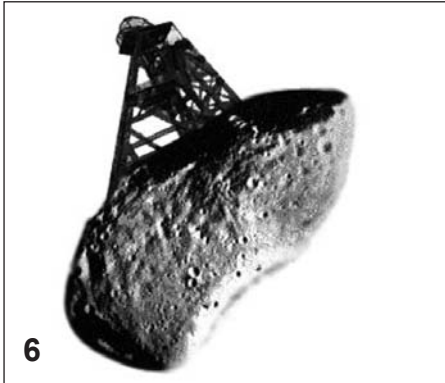
Stopping
short
page 10



Schizophrenic
capital
page 16



Production:
use or profit?
page 23



FEATURES

- 10 The “tesco-isation” of charity**
Some charities, such as the NSPCC, are now run as businesses.
- 12 Suffer, little children**
There really is no reason why society could not provide for, care for and value all children, but capitalist society doesn't.
- 14 Puppets on a string**
Despite women-only lists and quotas for minorities does it matter who the politicians running capitalism are?
- 16 Are you a wage slave?**
Surely having to work for a wage or a salary is a modern form of slavery?
- 18 Capitalist money madness**
Capitalism is basically a big scam that benefits a few at the expense of the many.
- 23 Let's produce for use, not profit**
Socialism will aim to meet human needs, not market-induced wants, producing quality goods, not opulent extravagances.

REGULARS

- 3 Editorial**
- 4 Pathfinders**
Poxy science
- 6 Material World**
Asteroid Wars
- 7 Tiny Tips**
- 8 Pieces Together**
- 8 Contact Details**
- 9 Cooking the Books 1**
Much Ado About Nics
- 13 Cooking the Books 2**
Profit Freedom Day
- 20 Reviews**
Bad Science; Ground Control; Theories of Social Capital; Tracing Your Labour Movement Ancestors.
- 22 Meetings**
- 22 50 Years Ago**
Sharpeville
- 24 Voice from the Back**
- 24 Free Lunch**

SUBSCRIPTION ORDERS

should be sent to The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

RATES

One year subscription (normal rate) £15
 One year subscription (low/unwaged) £10
 Europe rate £20 (Air mail)
 Rest of world £25 (Air mail)
 Voluntary supporters subscription £20 or more.
 Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 1 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

The election: who wins?

BY THE time most read this, the election will be over and our new "leader" will have emerged from the deal-makings that follow it. We cannot predict the exact outcome – whether Tweedledum or Tweedledee won or whether neither of them emerged as the outright winner – but we can say that, unfortunately, the capitalist class will have won.

Elections to national law-making assemblies are ultimately about which class is to control political power. Capitalist political control is essential to the continuation of capitalism as, while this does not give them control over how the capitalist economy works, it does give them control over what laws are made and over the deployment of the armed forces.

In Britain for nearly 150 years now wage and salary workers have formed the majority of the electorate, so the capitalist class have been obliged to win working class assent to their political control and rule. Of course it is not presented in such a crude way. Capitalists do not come before the working-class electorate and say "Vote to hand over political control to us". They have intermediaries, professional politicians, who present the election as a choice of which team of politicians – these days, even which leader – can best further the interests of the "nation" or the "tax-payers" falsely portrayed as a community with a common interest.

While there are historical reasons for the existence of the separate parties into which these career politicians are organised, the differences between them are superficial and often sham. All of them stand for capitalism, its wages system and its production for profit. The capitalist

class are not particularly concerned over which of them wins as long as one of them does (even if they don't like one party to stay in power too long in case the politicians involved overdo the cronyism and the corruption). It doesn't matter to wage and salary workers either, even if many are tempted to choose the "lesser evil" – Tweedledum in preference to Tweedledee – generally perceived by critics of capitalism to be the Labour Party despite its dancing to the tune of capitalism every time it has been in office.


It is true that the Labour Party did not start as the openly capitalist party it is today. It was originally a trade union pressure group seeking improvements within capitalism for trade unionists and workers generally. But, as they began to take more and more votes from the Liberals, it was not too long before it was taken over by professional politicians and became the alternating government party to the Tories. Tweedledee to their Tweedledum.

Here we can venture another prediction: the miserable failure of RMT leader Bob Crow and Militant and the SWP to launch a Labour Party Mark II with their "Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition". We are not disheartened by this since if this ever got off the ground the result would be the same as last time.

Reformism is a dead-end. What is required is an openly socialist, anti-reformist party aiming at socialism and nothing but. In view of yet another capitalist victory at the polls the working class still needs to organise into such a party to challenge the capitalist parties for political control and use it to usher in socialism.

FREE

3-month trial subscription offer



YES, I WOULD LIKE A 3 MONTH FREE TRIAL
SUBSCRIPTION TO *The Socialist Standard*

Name

Address

Postcode

Country

socialist standard

RETURN TO: Socialist Standard, FREEPOST,
London SW4 7BR

Thinking Outside the Pox

The debate continues among Londoners about what to put on the famous Trafalgar Square 'fourth plinth' which has so far hosted a wide range of wacky installations and whose present incumbent, a statue of a certain KR Park, will have most people asking 'Who?' Now the *British Medical Journal* has weighed in with an editorial backing the campaign of the Edward Jenner Museum to have his statue parked in what is apparently the



James Gilray: *The Cow-Pock—or—the Wonderful Effects of the New Inoculation!*—vide. the Publications of ye Anti-Vaccine Society, 1802. Jenner (left) administers cowpox vaccine as cows emerge from different parts of people's bodies.

fourth most visited tourist attraction on Earth. For those with no interest in the history of science, and who don't do pub quizzes, Edward Jenner is acclaimed worldwide as the man who invented the vaccination against smallpox, a disease which has probably killed and maimed more people than all the wars of history combined.

The *BMJ* makes a good case too. It is now 30 years since the World Health Organisation formally announced that smallpox was extinct in the wild. Jenner arguably saved more lives than any other single human being, yet most statues are of professional killers with aristocratic titles and the status of war heroes. It would also be cheap to do, as unlike the Battle of Britain chief cited above, the statue would not cost £100,000 to make because it already exists. Indeed this is the whole point. It was in Trafalgar Square, but was booted out of the square by Jenner-haters and dumped in Kensington Gardens ('Put Edward Jenner's statue back in Trafalgar Square', *BMJ*, 25 March).

The question why is an interesting one. It turns out that, far from being grateful, a gaggle of vested interests, petty jealousies and wild-eyed 'anti-vaccinationists' led a concerted campaign to discredit the greatest discovery in medical science up to that date. To our modern gaze this seems completely

bonkers until we remember the MMR affair, and the fact that some people are quicker to believe a Sun editorial than the considered views of the scientific mainstream. There was also intense religious opposition to the Devil's work of being infected by 'bestial pus', and this also seems somewhat hard to credit until we recall how polio, on the verge of being wiped out like smallpox, has instead resurged in a dozen countries because local imams went around telling parents that the vaccine was a CIA potion to make their daughters sterile. And let us not forget the Pope's own heroic efforts to persuade Africans that condoms can lead to the spread of AIDS.

Another interesting aspect to the story is that were Edward Jenner working today he would undoubtedly be arrested, prosecuted and vilified for recklessly exposing children to health risks and attempting to cover up at least one child death resulting from his experiments. Back in the 1790s they had a spirited, hands-on approach to experimentation (anyone they could get their hands on). Those who vigorously oppose all animal experimentation today might like to ask themselves whether they would be prepared, as Jenner did, to try out new unproven treatments on their own son.

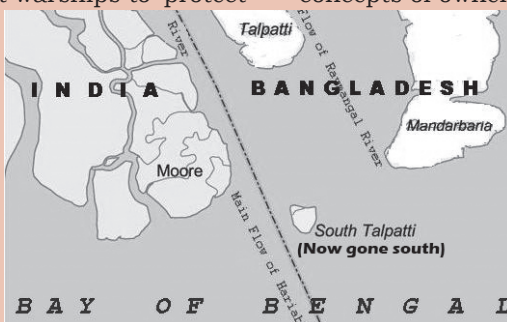
A third aspect is that Jenner arguably got the credit for somebody else's discovery, in this case the Dorset farmer Benjamin Jesty, who had successfully used the technique 20 years earlier in 1774.

Jenner supposedly didn't know about this earlier work, but this seems unlikely given that there were at least 5 other people besides Jesty who had already successfully used cowpox vaccine to achieve smallpox immunity, and given that the technique was common knowledge among many farmers who *did* know about Jesty and who regularly and deliberately exposed their families to cowpox. However, Jenner published and they didn't, or more probably, Jenner published and they couldn't. Jenner, after all, was a member of the Royal Society with powerful friends and the Dorset farmers were just Dorset farmers. So we won't be seeing any statues of them in Trafalgar Square. Even today there are complaints that 'outsiders' are prevented from getting published recognition and have to watch their discoveries being 'discovered' by somebody else (for instance here: 'Should volunteer amateurs get credit in the scientific community for the discoveries they make?', www.scientificblogging.com/rock_whacker, 23 March). Science is a collaborative business, and giving credit where it's due is not always straightforward, but the real problem is that science in capitalism is overwhelmingly elitist and hierarchical, so that not only do you not get on, or in, if your face doesn't fit, neither do your ideas. Of all the challenges facing science, its failure to address the limitations of its own capitalist structure and institutions will one day be recognised as its biggest blind spot.

Farewell forever, South Talpatti, a small island off the coast of Bangladesh which has sunk beneath the rising waves. Unlike the Maldives, where the government meets underwater and the walk to the beach is getting steadily shorter, nobody lived there and almost nobody knew it even existed, so perhaps it's no great loss. It was never more than six feet above sea level anyway but, incredibly, capitalist national governments still

argued about who 'owned' it, and India even sent warships to 'protect' it ('Disputed Bay of Bengal island 'vanishes' say scientists', *BBC Online*, 24 March). This illustrates somewhat elegantly

the inherent stupidity of capitalist concepts of ownership, summed up in a memorable remark in the film *Crocodile Dundee*: 'the aborigines say that people fighting over who owns the land is like fleas fighting over who owns the dog'.



Taxes and the self-employed

Dear Editors,
There's usually something interesting in your magazine and February was no exception, with the article 'Who Bailed Out the Bankers?'. If I understood it, it was suggesting that taxes fall on the employers and not the workers. We never see the money which is deducted from our gross pay and it was never really ours. I was wondering how self-employed people would fit into this. The woman who cuts my hair is self employed and she certainly has to find the money to pay her taxes. Is she exploited? But who by, when she employs herself and no one else employs her. But is she then an exploiter? How could she be when she doesn't employ anyone? There are quite a lot of self employed people around and I'm not sure how they fit into your 'them and us' picture. What do you think?

Tony Trafford (via e-mail)

Reply: We take the view that ultimately taxes come out of profits rather than wages and salaries. This is because wages and salaries are the price received by workers for selling our mental and physical capacities and like other commodities the price of our ability to work is determined by the amount needed to produce and reproduce it (for instance, the training received by an engineer helps to explain why an engineer's salary is invariably higher after qualifying than that of an unskilled worker).

This is not to imply that wage rates are set in stone, but to say as we did in the article that at any point in history they gravitate around a point influenced by such factors and, of course, by trade union action too to ensure they don't sink below even these levels. In effect, this means that while some taxes are paid by workers (such as VAT) the burden of taxation must ultimately fall on profits, which is one of the reasons the owning class – and the various factions within it – find it of such interest and importance. This is what we explained in the article, and if you are interested in exploring this particular issue, how the burden of taxation falls on the owning class in practice is also discussed in the relevant chapter of our pamphlet *The Market System Must Go – Why Reformism Doesn't Work*.

The 'self-employed' are a slightly different case, as you imply, because they do not receive a wage or a salary resulting from a contract of employment. The self-employed (such

as the small shopkeepers, etc) were technically part of the capital-owning class but who, as Marx pointed out, were forever being reduced towards the living standards of the working class through competition from the more successful capitalists and conglomerates. As such, their position has historically been one of the most vulnerable in capitalist society. Indeed, over time, the ranks of the self-employed shrank significantly due to this process of the concentration of capital into ever fewer hands, with smaller firms and the self-employed getting taken over or pushed out in the competitive struggle for profits.

In recent years though, there has been something of a turnaround in the numbers of those who call themselves self-employed. Not in the sense that the types of economic activities traditionally carried out by the self-employed have expanded much (in the main they've continued to shrink) but because a new layer of workers have had their pay and conditions de-regularised or 'contracted out' either by the state sector or by the corporations. This has been done as a way of stimulating efficiency (getting the self-employed to work from home for fees is usually cheaper for businesses than when they were formally employing the same people on salaries, with national insurance and pensions, etc to do the same work 'in-house').

So we have a situation whereby in reality, unless the self-employed are also employing others then they cannot be exploiters, and they are usually living on little more (sometimes less) than the average wage themselves, due to the pressures of commercial competition. They typically pay taxes nominally like workers do, and are, despite their 'self-employed' status, in an economic situation that is little different in most respects to wage and salary earners with contracts of employment. – *Editors*

Cultural diversity

Dear Editors

In my opinion, the obituary written for Vic Brain was well written (*Socialist Standard*, April). I have always thought that people who are enthusiasts of things like the Welsh language, Scottish Gaelic, the Scots language, Irish Gaelic, Cornish language etc, are doing something which even under the uniforming pressures of capitalism is contributing to "cultural diversity" (as described in Vic's obituary). Some might argue, I suppose, that our class position as wage slaves should mean that all other enthusiasms and identities should be subordinated or rubbished. I was glad to see your obituary writer was a bit more generous and thoughtful. I see no contradiction, for example, in having a Scottish identity related to your geographic roots, being interested in the Scots language and history etc, and also seeing a logical case for a world based on voluntary cooperation.

What are you thoughts on the subject of "cultural diversity"?

J. Russell, Glasgow, Scotland

Reply: We have no objection to "cultural diversity". Differences of language, food, music and the like will continue to exist in a united socialist world; indeed would no longer be subjected to "McDonaldisation" as today under capitalism. We would add that different cultures can exist in the same geographical area and that individuals can partake of elements of different cultures (you don't have to come from Scotland to enjoy the bagpipes or from China to enjoy Chinese food). Our objection is to the exploitation of cultural differences for political ends, as for instance to set up or maintain a state or as the basis for a political party – *Editors*

SOCIALISM OR YOUR MONEY BACK

NOW ONLY £1.00

The capitalist century, by a socialist journal. A running commentary of one hundred years of history - as it happened.

- Two World Wars
- Russian Revolution
- General Strike
- The rise of Hitler
- Spanish Civil War
- Hiroshima
- The Silicon Chip
- Pop music
- ...and much more

This collection will revive a jaundiced spirit... Every home should have one.

THE INDEPENDENT
A refreshing read...inspiring...a gem...

UNDERGROUND FOCUS

Available inland for £1.00 (plus £2.00 postage) from the Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'

ON APRIL 15, in a speech at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, President Obama outlined plans for the U.S. space program. He rejected proposals to “return” to the moon in favour of a plan to develop by 2025 new spacecraft for manned missions into deep space. The first destination will be “an asteroid”, followed by Mars in the mid-2030s.

So perhaps I was wrong when I called the moon “the next capitalist frontier” (*Socialist Standard*, December 2008). Why is an asteroid landing being given top priority?

Near-earth asteroids

Obama was certainly referring to one of the “near-earth asteroids” (NEAs). These are asteroids that have been dislodged, usually by the gravitational pull of Jupiter, from the main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter into orbits that approach or intersect the orbit of the earth. About 7,000 NEAs have been discovered so far. Some are known to be fantastically rich in valuable metals and other minerals. In fact, many metals now mined on earth originated in asteroids that rained down on our planet after the crust cooled.

Consider, for instance, the NEA known as 1986 DA. A mile and a half in diameter, it is estimated to contain ten billion tons of iron, one billion tons of nickel, 100,000 tons of platinum and over 10,000 tons of gold. The platinum alone, at the current price of £35 per gram, is worth £3.5 trillion. True, the price would fall rapidly once exploitation was underway, but at first the profits would be truly astronomical.

Given the scale of expected revenues, costs are unlikely to be prohibitive. Mining asteroids may even be more competitive than mining on the moon. Thanks to the very low gravity, a round trip to an NEA passing nearby will require less energy than a round trip to the moon. Processing might be carried out on site and only processed materials brought back to earth. True, a way will have to be found to “tether” machinery to the asteroid so that it does not drift off into space.

Window of opportunity

Another problem with mining an NEA is that operations will have to be confined within a “window of opportunity” – that is, the few weeks or months when it is passing close enough to earth, for it may not return our way for many years to come (if ever).

However, there is a problem. Because most 20 miles nuclear can be used to change their

a way around this NEAs are at in diameter, explosions

course. This might be done if one were on a collision course with earth. (The Russian Space Agency is considering an attempt to deflect the asteroid Apophis, which has a tiny probability of hitting earth in 2036 or 2068.) A resource-rich NEA could be “captured” – that is, transported into earth orbit, where mining could continue for as long as it remained profitable.

Recalling Murphy’s Law (“If anything can go wrong, it will”), I shudder at the thought of the calamities that may descend on us from above as a result of accident or miscalculation.

An asteroid war?

For a socialist world community, mining asteroids might be an attractive option. It would offer not a supplement but an *alternative* to mining on earth, with its attendant ecological and work-related costs (costs in the sense of consequences running counter to communal values, as opposed to financial costs). Of course, a socialist world would have no use for the gold. Under capitalism, however, the approach of a resource-rich NEA might well be an occasion for conflict between the U.S. and another space power (Russia, China or India), precisely because of the enormous profits at stake.

“With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10 per cent. will ensure its employment anywhere; 20 per cent. certain will produce eagerness; 50 per cent., positive audacity; 100 per cent. will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300 per cent., and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged”. (Marx quoting P.J. Dunning, *Capital*, Vol. 1, Ch. 31)

The use of celestial bodies remains unregulated by international law. There is a treaty designed for this purpose (the Moon Treaty of 1979), but it has never come into force because only a few states – not one of them a space power – have ratified it. An attempt in 1980 to get the U.S. Senate to ratify the treaty was defeated following lobbying by activists of the L5 Society, which was formed in 1975 to promote space colonization and manufacturing on the basis of private enterprise.

The danger of war over a resource-rich asteroid may well be greater than the risk of war over lunar resources. First, the moon is large enough to accommodate rival mining, processing and transport operations, but a small asteroid may not be. Second, an NEA will have to be exploited while it is within easy reach, so there will be little time for manoeuvring, negotiations and the application of indirect pressure.

An asteroid war need not be waged openly.

It is more likely to take the form of covert and deniable efforts to sabotage rival operations by various means (laser and other rays, radioelectronic warfare, etc.). Simultaneous attempts by different space/nuclear powers to capture an asteroid may have the unintended consequence of the asteroid hitting the earth.

STEFAN

PUBLICATIONS ORDER FORM

PAMPHLETS

	Price and Qty	
An Inconvenient Question: Socialism and the Environment One of the major problems of capitalism is pollution – as capitalists cause long term damage to the environment for short term gain. This pamphlet outlines the Socialist case for a better, cleaner world run for people, not for profit.	£2.00 x _____	£2.00 x _____
From Capitalism to Socialism...how we live and how we could live Contrasts the present state of life with what a future Socialist world would bring, and then suggests what kind of political action can be taken to bring Socialism about.	£1.00 x _____	£2.00 x _____
Africa: A Marxian Analysis A 30-page pamphlet written by socialists living in Africa consisting mainly of reprints from the <i>Socialist Standard</i> . Marx's materialist conception of history and analysis of society is applied to subjects such as tribalism, religion, race and class, colonialism and capitalism, Sharia Law in Nigeria.	£1.50 x _____	£2.75 x _____
Socialism as a Practical Alternative Sets forth the practical proposition that Socialism entails, and develops further arguments into ways in which a sane society based on social equality and cooperation could operate.	£1.00 x _____	
Some aspects of Marxian Economics A series of articles drawn from the <i>Socialist Standard</i> explaining the real nature of modern economic problems and the failure of 'conventional economics' to solve them.	£2.00 x _____	
How the Gods were Made A classic reprint of a text defending the materialist conception of history. In doing so it explains the Socialist opposition to religion.	£1.50 x _____	
Marxism and Darwinism by Anton Pannekoek A classic reprint of a text that puts in context our origins as an animal species and also our social nature as a key part in the development of society.	£1.50 x _____	
How we Live and How we Might Live by William Morris A clear exposition of what Morris saw as being wrong with society in his time and how a moneyless, tradeless society based on common ownership and democratic control would have to be the basis of any healthy arrangement of affairs.	£1.50 x _____	
The Right to be Lazy and other articles by Paul Lafargue A reprint of Marx's son-in-law's classic text. Makes the clear point that any imaginary right to work under capitalism is just a wage slave's 'right' to be exploited. Includes a collection of other important articles written by Lafargue not easily available in print and an introduction by the Socialist Party.	£2.00 x _____	
Marxism Revisited A lively document of a series of five talks given by the members of the Socialist Party as a part of a weekend seminar in 1998. Titles are as follows: 1) Who the hell was Karl Marx? 2) Was Marx a Leninist? 3) The fetishism of commodities 4) Has the modern market superseded Marxist economics? 5) Is the Socialist Party Marxist? £2.00 x _____		
Socialist Principles Explained This pamphlet is a basic introduction to our case, and ideal for people who have just come across Socialist ideas or who are thinking of joining. It explains in simple language our object and each of the eight principles. £2.00 x _____		
The Market System must Go! Why Reformism doesn't work Explains why the Socialist Party advocates the revolutionary transformation of existing society rather than piecemeal reform, like the Labour Party or Conservatives. It is a detailed backup to our more introductory pamphlets putting the case for genuine revolutionary change. £2.75 x _____		
		All the above pamphlets (25% discount) £15.00 x _____

BOOKS

A Socialist Life by Heather Ball A collection of sort stories by <i>Socialist Standard</i> writer Heather Ball. Many readers liked her distinctive writing style, finding it full of charm, warmth, humanity and humour. Sadly, Heather died before she could complete her writing project. This collection, published by the Socialist Party, presents the case for Socialism on the basis of individual, everyday experience.	£3.75 x _____
Are We Prisoners of our Genes? The argument that our behaviour is determined by our physical inheritance may pose as science, but in reality it is a socially determined prejudice used as part of a crude political ideology. Faced with such objections to socialism, the first thing that needs to be done is to clarify what is going to be meant by the term 'human nature'.	£4.75 x _____
Socialism or your Money Back Articles from the <i>Socialist Standard</i> covering many key events of the last hundred years as they happened. This book will be of interest to those wanting to study the political, economic and social history of the twentieth century, as well as to those committed to the interests of the majority class of wage and salary workers who want a different society to replace the profit-wages-money system that is capitalism.	SPECIAL PRICE: £1.00 x _____

DVD

Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff	£5.75 x _____
Poles Apart? Capitalism or Socialism as the Planet Heats Up	£5.75 x _____

TOTAL£ _____

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

Return this form along with your cheque or money order to:

**The Socialist Party of Great Britain,
 FREEPOST,
 London, SW4 7BR,
 United Kingdom.**
 (No postage necessary if mailed within the UK)

NAME.....
 ADDRESS.....

 County.....
 Postcode.....PHONE (optional).....
 E-MAIL (optional).....



Pieces together

BUSINESS AS USUAL

“German carmaker Daimler has pleaded guilty to corruption in the US and will pay \$185m (£121m) to settle the case. The charges relate to US Justice Department and Securities and Exchange Commission investigations into the company’s global sales practices. Daimler, the owner of Mercedes-Benz, admitted to paying tens of millions of dollars of bribes to foreign government officials in at least 22 countries” (*BBC News*, 1 April).

THIS SPORTING LIFE

“Thousands of homeless people are being forced off the streets of South Africa to hide the scale of poverty there from World Cup fans. More than 800 tramps, beggars and street children have already been removed from Johannesburg and sent to remote settlements hundreds of miles away. And in Cape Town, where England face Algeria on June 18, up to 300 have been moved to Blikkiesdorp camp where 1,450 families are crammed in a settlement of tin huts designed for just 650 people. Johannesburg councillor Siphon Masigo was unrepentant. ‘Homelessness and begging are big problems in the city,’ he said. ‘You have to clean your house before you have guests. There is nothing wrong with that’” (*Daily Mirror*, 28 March).

HOUSING MADNESS

“Charities are demanding an urgent rethink of government housing policy after a *Guardian* investigation found that almost half a million homes are lying empty in the UK enough to put a roof over the heads of a quarter of the families on council house waiting lists. The startling picture of neglect (we estimate that more than 450,000 properties have been empty for at least six months at a time when there is an acute housing shortage) was pieced together using information gathered from local councils under the Freedom of Information Act” (*Guardian*, 4 April).

TAX DODGERS INC.

“As you work on your taxes this month, here’s something to raise your hackles: Some of the world’s biggest, most profitable corporations enjoy a far lower tax rate than you do – that is, if they pay taxes at all. The most egregious example is General Electric. Last year the conglomerate generated \$10.3 billion in pretax income, but ended up owing nothing to Uncle Sam. In fact, it recorded a tax benefit of \$1.1 billion. Avoiding taxes is nothing new for General Electric. In 2008 its effective tax

rate was 5.3%; in 2007 it was 15%. The marginal U.S. corporate rate is 35%” (*Forbes.com*, 1 April),

Contact Details

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

Central London branch. 2nd Weds. 6.30pm. 2nd Wednesday 6.30pm. Coffee Republic, 7-12 City Road, EC1 (nearest Tube and rail stations Old Street and Moorgate).

Enfield and Haringey branch. Thurs May 13 and 27, 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18. Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL.

Email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk

South London branch. 1st Tues. 7.00pm. Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Tel: 020 7622 3811

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

NORTHEAST

Northeast branch. Contact: Brian Barry, 86 Edgmond Ct, Ryhope, Sunderland SR2 0DY. Tel: 0191 521 0690. Email 3491@bbarry.f2s.com

NORTHWEST

Lancaster branch. Meets every Monday 8.30pm. P. Shannon, 10 Green Street, Lancaster LA1 1DZ. Tel: 01524 382380

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

Bolton. Tel: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589

Cumbria. Brendan Cummings, 19

Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG

Carlisle: Robert Whitfield.

Email: rewcb13@yahoo.co.uk

Tel: 07906 373975

Rochdale. Tel: R. Chadwick.

01706 522365

Southeast Manchester. Enquiries:

Blanche Preston, 68 Fountains Road,

M32 9PH

YORKSHIRE

Skipton. R. Cooper, 1 Caxton Garth,

Threshfield, Skipton BD23 5EZ.

Tel: 01756 752621

Todmorden: Keith Scholey, 1 Leeviv

Ct, Windsor Rd, OL14 5LJ.

Tel: 01706 814 149

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

South West Regional branch. Meets

every two months on a Saturday

afternoon (see meetings page for details).

Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol

BS5 6DN. Tel: 0117 9511199

Canterbury. Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope

Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB

Luton. Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive,

LU2 7LP

Redruth. Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence

Villas, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1PB.

Tel: 01209 219293

EAST ANGLIA

East Anglian Regional branch.

Meets every two months on a Saturday

afternoon (see meetings page for details).

Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billericay,

CM12 0EX. n.deutz@btinternet.com

David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive,

Eccles-on-Sea, NR12 0SF.

Tel: 01692 582533.

Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd,

Hethersett, NR9 3JD.

Tel: 01603 814343.

Cambridge. Andrew Westley, 10

Marksby Close, Duxford, Cambridge

CB2 4RS. Tel: 07890343044

IRELAND

Cork: Kevin Cronin, 5 Curragh Woods,

Frankfield, Cork. Tel: 021 4896427.

Email: mariekev@eircom.net

SCOTLAND

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

The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above

Victoria Street), Edinburgh.

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

jmoir29.freereserve.co.uk Branch website:

http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/

Glasgow branch. 3rd Wednesday of

each month at 8pm in Community

Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road,

Glasgow. Richard Donnelly, 112

Napiershall Street, Glasgow G20 6HT.

Tel: 0141 5794109. Email: richard.

donnely1@ntlworld.com

Ayrshire: D. Trainer, 21 Manse Street,

Salcoats, KA21 5AA. Tel: 01294

469994. Email: derricktrainer@freeuk

com

Dundee. Ian Ratcliffe, 16 Birkhall Ave,

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

Tel: 01328 541643

West Lothian. 2nd and 4th Weds in

month, 7.30-9.30. Lanthorn Community

Centre, Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge,

Livingston. Corres: Matt Culbert, 53

Falcon Brae, Ladywell, Livingston, West

Lothian, EH5 6UW. Tel: 01506 462359

Email: matt@wsmweb.fsnet.co.uk

WALES

Swansea branch. 2nd Mon, 7.30pm,

Unitarian Church, High Street. Corres:

Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well

Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB.

Tel: 01792 643624

Cardiff and District. John James, 67

Romilly Park Road, Barry CF62 6RR.

Tel: 01446 405636

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

AFRICA

Kenya. Patrick Ndege, PO Box 78105,

Nairobi.

Swaziland. Mandla Ntshakala, PO Box

981, Manzini.

Zambia. Kephah Mulenga, PO Box

280168, Kitwe.

ASIA

India. World Socialist Group, Vill

Gobardhanpur. PO Amral, Dist.

Bankura, 722122

Japan. Michael. Email:

worldsocialismjapan@hotmail.com.

EUROPE

Denmark. Graham Taylor, Kjaerslund 9,

floor 2 (middle), DK-8260 Viby J

Germany. Norbert. E-mail:

weltsozialismus@gmx.net

Norway. Robert Stafford.

Email: hallblithe@yahoo.com

Italy. Gian Maria Freddi, Casella Postale

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

COMPANION PARTIES

OVERSEAS

World Socialist Party of Australia.

P. O. Box 1266 North Richmond

3121, Victoria, Australia.. Email:

commonownership@yahoo.com.au

Socialist Party of Canada/Parti

Socialiste du Canada. Box 4280,

Victoria B.C. V8X 3X8 Canada.

Email:SPC@iname.com

World Socialist Party (New Zealand)

P.O. Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New

Zealand.

World Socialist Party of the United

States P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA

02144 USA.

Email: wspboston@covad.net



Much ado about nics

Shortly before the election was announced a mock fight broke out between Labour and the Tories over an increase in National Insurance contributions from 2011 announced in the budget. The Tories said that, if elected, they would reduce the increase and wheeled out a number of their business donators to support their position. Labour, unwisely, retorted that these business leaders had been deceived. Which brought protests from more of them. And so the saga went on for weeks.

The employers hadn't been deceived. They knew exactly what they were doing – opposing a measure that would eat into their profits even if only modestly. National Insurance contributions are formally a payment, made by both employers and workers, into a notional fund out of which pensions, incapacity and other benefits are paid. In practice they are a tax, and indeed the “tax on jobs” that employers and the Tories claim, which by increasing labour costs decreases profits. Which is why the employers squealed.

But that's not how things were presented. The *Daily Telegraph* (28 March) wrote:

“Economists say that rises in employer Nics are effectively passed on to workers in the form of lower wages or job cuts.”

Naturally, employers will seek to avoid a decrease in their profits by trying to reduce their labour costs but, if this was that easy, the question arises as to why they hadn't done this before. The answer must be that they can't reduce wages just like that. For a start, it would provoke the active or passive resistance of their workforce leading to a reduction in production and productivity, so turning out to be counter-productive. The pressure will be the other way too. An increase in

the workers' part of Nics means a decrease in their take-home pay, the effective price of their labour-power, what they have to live on to reproduce their working skills.

In the end the matter will be settled by the balance of forces on the labour market. It's called the class struggle.

But what about “job cuts”? In German the word for employer is *Arbeitgeber*, literally “work-giver” (correspondingly, the word for employee is *Arbeitnehmer* or “work-taker”). Counter-intuitive as this is, since it's workers that give their labour and employers who take it, it accurately sums up the position. Jobs belong to employers, not workers, and are for them to give and take away. Employers give workers jobs not because they are philanthropists who recognise that workers need a job to get money to live on, but in the hope of making a profit out of their labour. They can't do without workers as it's the unpaid labour of workers that's the source of their profits..

Their professed concern for jobs in this instance is the height of hypocrisy. They want the government to find the money they accept is necessary to repay their fellow-capitalists who own the National Debt by ... cutting civil service and local government jobs.

The whole episode was a charade because employers are not protesting against the lesser increase proposed by the Tories which, according to their arguments, ought also to have a harmful effect on wages and jobs even if not so much. They are prepared to absorb the Tory increase because they are making profits – those that weren't and had no hope of recovery have gone out of business with their sales passing to their competitors – and so can afford to. They can afford the Labour increase too but, like any interest group, were protesting in the hope they won't come off too badly.

Tiny Tips

The age of austerity is over, as the well-heeled splash out on Porsches and Dom Pérignon champagne, according to retailers of luxury goods....Porsche, the luxury carmaker, said this week that orders for its new Cayenne sports utility vehicle, due to arrive in European showrooms next month with a €55,400 (\$75,000) price tag, were stronger than expected..LVMH, the world's biggest luxury goods group by sales, said sales of its Dom Pérignon champagne and premium Hennessy XO cognac in the first three months of the year had been “much better” than last year:

<http://tinyurl.com/y5q2eo7>

“This man has been sacrificed to propitiate the gods,” said local official Kalyan Mukherjee. “This is a shame for Bengal where the ruling Left coalition claim they have eradicated social evils and combated superstition,” an opposition leader Samir Kumar Ray said:

Have you ever wanted to put yourself in the place of someone detained by KGB officers during Soviet times? Well now you can. While Soviet museums and parks across Central and Eastern Europe have proved popular over the past decade, tourists are now seeking firsthand experiences of life behind the Iron Curtain at Lithuania's newest Soviet attraction. Welcome to Deportation Day, a “live history lesson” based on the accounts given by victims of Stalin's gulags. Complete with KGB guards, doctors barking orders in Russian and muscled interrogations, the four-hour dramatization takes tourists to a replica of one of the camps where millions of residents of the Soviet Union were detained:

<http://tinyurl.com/y2s24td>

Mike Huckabee, a possible Republican presidential candidate in 2012, says the effort to allow gays and lesbians to marry is comparable to legalizing incest, polygamy and drug use:

<http://tinyurl.com/y5ovsxm>

<http://tinyurl.com/y5kvylw>

The Vatican's second-in-command has linked child sex abuse by priests to homosexuality. Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone denied celibacy was to blame for the sex scandals that have rocked the Roman Catholic Church. Instead, homosexuality and paedophilia were inextricably linked, the Vatican's Secretary of State declared:

<http://tinyurl.com/y45I9pe>

The UK too is now more unequal—in incomes, wealth, health, education, and life chances—than at any time since the 1920s. There are more poor children in the UK than in any other country of the European Union. Since 1973, inequality in take-home pay increased more in the UK than anywhere except the US. Most of the new jobs created in Britain in the years 1977–2007 were at either the very high or the very low end of the pay scale:

<http://tinyurl.com/y7bsqgm>

The “tesco-isation” of charity

Some charities, such as the NSPCC, are now run as businesses.

While nineteenth century writers like Charles Dickens and Charles Kingsley were questioning its institutional morality the law held that it was an offence to be cruel to animals but not to children. Indeed, when the law was eventually changed the first prosecution had to be brought by the RSPCA and to describe the victim as “a small animal” because that – as distinct from “a small child” – was the sole description then recognised in law. Contributing to the impetus for change was the foundation in Liverpool in 1883 and later in London of a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children which in 1889 became a National Society, with branches across Great Britain and Ireland. It was in that year that the first Act, commonly known as “the children’s charter”, passed through Parliament, making child cruelty an arrestable offence, establishing guidelines on the employment of children and – perhaps not so welcome – outlawing begging. Since then the NSPCC (although officially it has a royal charter it has kept the “National” in its title to prevent confusion with the RSPCA) has carried on a persistent struggle in one of the more distressing – and persistent – areas of society.

Charity

At present it runs something like 180 local projects working to raise public consciousness about child cruelty, to provide support to families where the stresses of survival may erupt into frustrations which are taken out on the children and to intervene in cases when active abuse has been identified. There is also a telephone helpline and an on-line service offering advice and information. Among its most successful ventures has been the Full Stop campaign, with its harrowing images of neglected and battered children, which raised a total of £250 million during the eight years up to 2007. Overall the NSPCC’s income during 2009 was £150 million of which £116 million came from donations.

But this is 2010; British capitalism is in the throes of an historically damaging slump when the financiers and the manipulators who lurk in advertising and public relations are keen to advise anyone they think is in need of their uniquely brilliant recipe for survival. The Tory MP Gerald Howarth has called the NSPCC “completely incompetent” – although this could be his

response to their pushing too competently for the reduction of the homosexual age of consent to 16. Not surprisingly Fathers4Justice has chimed in, with accusations of promoting a “portrayal of men as violent abusers” – and has emphasised its point by a brief invasion of the Society’s headquarters. Most tellingly, doubts have been expressed

Advert for the NSPCC’s Full Stop campaign



about the Full Stop campaign actually being of benefit to any children. Analysts have been picking over the bones of all this and it seems they have diagnosed a need to go with the swing and so have prescribed a new, exciting Brand NSPCC.

Marketing

The last Chief Executive of the NSPCC was Dame Mary Marsh, who held the job between 2000 and 2009. Before that she was in school headships, including at the then trendy Holland Park in London. During her time at the NSPCC it trebled its income and launched Full Stop. After which, it seemed, she decided to re-invent herself as founding director of the Clore Social Leadership Programme whose name largely speaks for itself and for its intended role in what Dame Mary calls “the third sector”.

In rather different style she also became a non-executive director of the massive HSBC Bank. Coming after her was Andrew Flanagan, whose experience of organisations like the NSPCC was practically nil. But he brought other prospects for he has a definite pedigree in media and marketing, including ten years as chief executive at Scotland’s biggest media firm SMG where he was in charge of the company’s takeover of Virgin radio and of Ginger Productions, owned by the allegedly “talented” Chris Evans. Flanagan says at the time he was (unfortunate phrase) “looking for something to get my teeth into” and he found the offer of the top job at the NSPCC “hard to resist”, the meaning of which he is happy to elaborate on: “...Things are going to be a lot tougher... The board felt someone with business skills might be better able to steer it through...there was great enthusiasm (in the NSPCC) and deep passion for the cause but business had perhaps more to offer in terms of innovation and efficiency”.

Workers who once earned their living at the mothballed Corus steel plant or in the derelict motor factories in the Midlands would have learned the true meaning of that ominous phrase. Those who toil and worry about protecting vulnerable children might not have been so present.

Closures

It did not take long for the meaning of “innovation and efficiency” to become apparent. Something over 40 NSPCC projects will be closed across the country, including the newest treatment and therapeutic facility in Bath. Another victim will be at Barrow, which was established after local people raised £180,000 to fund a branch there, and where a Face Book – Save Safe NSPCC Barrow – attracted well over 1,000 friends. A joint letter by Flanagan and the NSPCC chairman in the *Guardian* of 19 February 2010 asserted that the planned closures will allow for new services which will “focus on priority areas of abuse”. One aspect of this “focus” has resulted in the closure of the Society’s final salary pension fund, with its attendant threat to the living standards of

“...we will not end cruelty to children without ending child poverty”.



Above from left: nineteenth century writers Charles Kingsley; former Chief Executive of the NSPCC Dame Mary Marsh; current boss Andrew Flanagan.

retired workers. It brings to mind the phrase used by Iain Duncan Smith, ex-Tory leader who recovered from his spell as one of John Major's Eurosceptic “bastards” to take charge of David Cameron's Social Justice Policy Group, that there has to be a process of “Tescoisation” of charity organisations. Which will mean running Child Protection Services as a retail business, keeping a strict eye on costs, competition and prices – and getting rid of redundant workers. Except that there will be no Club Card rebates and that every little will *not* count.

Redundancy

Which leads us to the matter of redundancy. The word means superfluous, no longer needed. How does this concept fit in with child cruelty? Has the problem reduced so that children are safe enough not to justify any organised support and observation? In December 2007 a NSPCC statement, based on Home Office information, showed that there is no cause for complacency. Although there is some yearly fluctuation in the figures for known incidence of child homicide, the overall rate in England and Wales has stayed roughly similar since the 1970s. Each week one to two children are killed by another person and each week at least one child dies from cruelty. Every ten days in England and Wales one child is killed at the hands of the parents. Among those figures are some of the most horrifying, sickening examples of children dying after prolonged suffering – of repression, neglect and violence. Like Maria Colwell, beaten to death by her stepfather in 1973 – which enforced the recognition of non-accidental injury of children as major social problem. Which did not save Victoria Climbié, battered and starved, in 2001, Peter Connolly in 2007, savagely beaten over a long period and more recently Khyra Ishaq whose parents starved her and her siblings until her death exposed what was happening in that appalling house. After each such tragedy the gutter press wallow in hypocrisy, ministers roll out meticulously worded statements and appoint an enquiry chaired by some superannuated judge or senior civil servant. There is a bulky report which concludes with assurances that “lessons have been learned ... measures will be put in

place so that this does not happen again“. But “this” does happen again – a fact which suggests that the problem is being viewed from the wrong direction.

Poverty

An article in the *British Journal of General Practice* for 1 September 2008, written by Jane Roberts, a GP in Easington Co. Durham, the “most deprived ward in the (Primary Care) Trust” reviewed some of the evidence that child cruelty, while not exclusive to any socio-economic group (there are examples of some pretty awful treatment to the children of very rich families) has a perceptible link with poverty. Easington has four times as many children on their child protection register as Durham, the richest ward in the Trust. This local example is typical of the wider situation. A 2008 NSPCC report on child abuse commented that “...most children on child protection registers are from low-income families and the most commonly identified stress factors in all registered cases of child abuse are unemployment and debt, which are closely related to poverty”. The report then quoted a conclusion (which must have been deflating for them) of the University of York's (*Living With Hardship* 24/7, November 2007), that “...we will not end cruelty to children without ending child poverty”.

But this conclusion, depressing as it is, needs to be seen in proportion. If poverty is the basis of the maltreatment of children, where and to what effect does poverty originate? We have had too many assurances to deal with it, like Blair's florid pledge to lead a government whose “...historic aim will be for ours to be the first generation to end child poverty” to give any weight to them. A great many motivated people devote themselves to palliating, unrewarding work in this field. But poverty is too complex, too staminal; it is the ground where masses of social sickness flourish – brutality to children, crime, alienation, disease...And so it will remain for as long a society is tolerated which rends its people into two opposing classes, based on the privileges or denial of ownership. Every little helps is not enough. The cure of child abuse has to begin with massive historical change.

IVAN

There really is no reason why society could not provide for, care for and value all children, but capitalist society doesn't.

Suffer, little children

One thing I am certain of is that I would give my life for my children, such is the power of my feelings for them. I did not take to the nappy changing or the enforced insomnia and as they grew older I resigned myself to the fact that during their teens I was embarrassment personified to them; so much so that I had to drop them a few hundred yards from the school gates in case 'someone might think they knew me'. I tried to explain that for the past fourteen years their mother had led me to believe that I was their father, particularly in financial matters, so it was not unreasonable to conclude that I did know them. They have now reached their twenties and, it would be fair to say, have come a full circle and I don't think I would be unduly flattering myself if I say that they are slightly proud of me.

Given the bond between parents and their children why is it, then, that those who have power and control over our society fail to comprehend that the untold damage wrought on our fragile environment will be there as a legacy for their own children as well as ours? Does it not strike them as disturbing that their children are likely to witness irreversible and escalating environmental catastrophes, possibly beyond our imagination?

Even if we give the politicians, the huge corporations and those whose decisions so directly and terrifyingly affect the rest of society, the benefit of the doubt and assume that they genuinely believe that the way we currently order our world society might, eventually, prove capable of solving the manifestly awful aspects of this arrangement, surely they must now be questioning the very safety of their children, when scientists of all disciplines are talking in tens of years when describing the time we have before our seas become too acid to support life, our primary forests disappear along with countless species, glaciers retreat or disappear causing massive water shortages and temperatures rise to levels that would prevent successful pollination of rice, one of the world's staple food crops.

But then why should I feel surprised? After all, this is a society that allows innocent children to die in their thousands every day; If not by allowing them to slowly starve to death or die of easily cured diseases, then by literally blowing them apart. Are the mothers of those children less likely to feel the pain and anguish of losing a child any less than we would?

There really is no reason why a society could not provide for, care for and value all children. But while human beings are prepared to accept a system that values profit and business interests before children then we can expect to go on hearing of dying children all over the world until we become so numb to the awfulness that we begin to believe that it is a natural state of affairs and accept it with no more thought than the sunrise at the start of the day.

Postscript

I occasionally make notes in my diary of odd news reports; for most of us these are heard and quickly forgotten. Here are a few from early last year which perhaps exemplify how children fare under capitalism.

Food companies have started to realise that it might be more profitable to work with groups to encourage children to eat more healthily. At present, within a short

time, 90 percent of children will be obese due to junk food, lack of exercise etc. and will die 10 years earlier. Therefore food companies that produce junk food have realised that killing children is not such a good idea as if they live 10 years longer they will buy more food thus producing more profit for the companies (*BBC Radio 4 news*, 2 January 2009).

The Prince's trust found that 10 percent of children see no reason to live and 25% are depressed. (*BBC Radio 4 news*, 5 January 2009)

1000 people were killed in Gaza; 400 of which were innocent women and children. (*BBC Radio 4 news*, 13 January 2009)

Every year, in Africa, 6,000,000 children die from malnutrition before their fifth birthday (World Bank Statistics).

Unicef's website describes the deaths of millions of children that could easily be averted as 'baffling'.

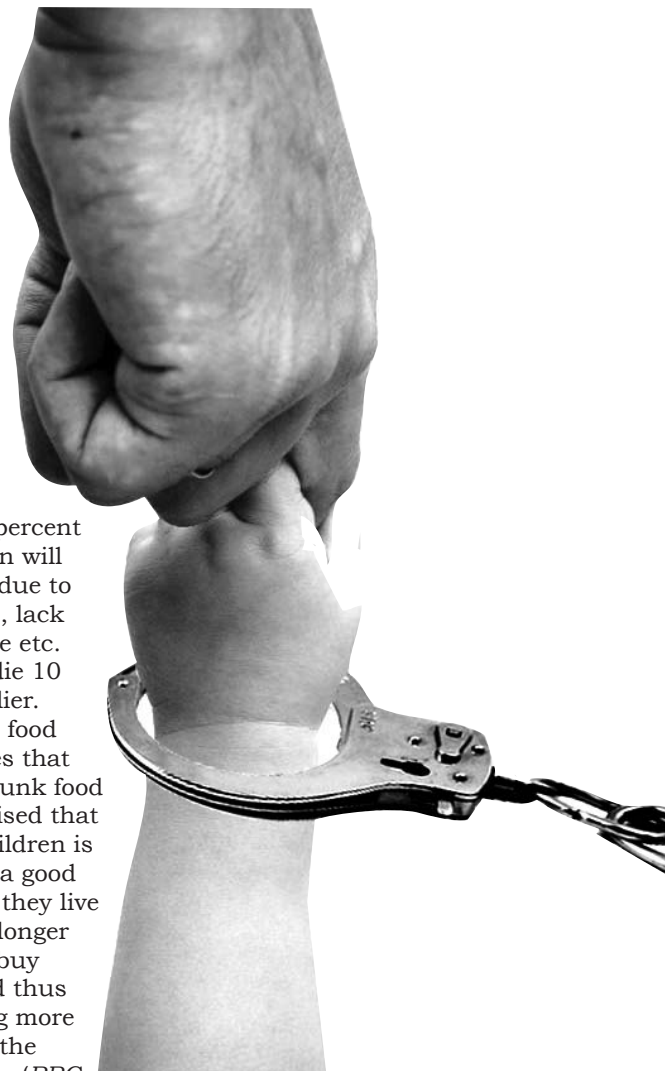
Food giant Nestlé actively promotes artificial infant feeding around the World, breaking the World Health Organisation's code of marketing and, in pursuit of profit, contributes to a child dying every 30 seconds as a result of unsafe bottle feeding (www.babymilkaction.org).

John Simpson reported recently on *BBC Radio 4* that 1,000 children a year in Falluja are being born with deformities. (One baby was born with three heads.) It is thought that they are as a result of depleted uranium left from the bombing of 2004 (when white phosphorous was used). Bombed houses were bulldozed into the river which is used for drinking water.

200,000 child slaves are sold every year in Africa (*source: United Nations*).

This list could go on and on. Anyway, on a brighter note (although it will be of little use to the children of India and sub-Saharan Africa), the British government are introducing 'Personal Financial Management' into the primary school national curriculum this September – may as well get them to understand the importance of profit early on in case they begin to use that innocent logic common to children and ask too many awkward questions.

GLENN MORRIS



Our election manifesto: capitalism must go

THESE ELECTIONS are taking place in the middle of the biggest economic and financial crisis since the 1930s. In a world that has the potential to produce enough food, clothes, housing and the other amenities of life for all, factories are closing down, workers are being laid off, unemployment is growing, houses are being repossessed and people are having to tighten their belts. And for once the main parties are being honest in offering more of the same, competing with each other as to which of them is going to impose the most “savage cuts”.

Capitalism in relatively “good” times is bad enough, but capitalism in an economic crisis makes it plain for all to see that it is not a system geared to meeting people’s needs. It’s a system based on the pursuit of profits, where the harsh economic law of *no profit, no production* prevails. The headlong pursuit of profits has led to a situation where the owners can’t make profits at the same rate as before. The class who own and control the places where wealth is produced have gone on strike – refusing to allow these workplaces to be used to produce what people need, some desperately. So, as in the 1930s, it’s poverty in the midst of potential plenty again. Cutbacks in production and services alongside unmet needs. Why should we put up with this? There is an alternative.

But that’s the way capitalism works, and must work. The politicians in charge of the governments don’t really know what to do, not that they can do much to change the situation anyway. They are just hoping that the panic measures they have taken will work. But the slump won’t end until conditions for profitable production have come about again, and that requires real wages to fall and unprofitable firms to go out of business. So, there’s no way that bankruptcies, cut-backs and lay-offs are going to be avoided, whatever governments do or whichever party is in power.

What can be done? Nothing within the profit system. It can’t be mended, so it must be ended. But this is something we must do ourselves.

The career politicians, with their empty promises and futile measures, can do nothing for us. We need to organise to bring in a new system where goods and services are produced to meet people’s needs. But we can only produce what we need if we own and control the places where this is carried out. So these must be taken out of the hands of the rich individuals, private companies and states that now control them and become the common heritage of all, under our democratic control. In short, socialism in its original sense. This has nothing to do with the failed state capitalism that used to exist in Russia or with what still exists in China and Cuba.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY is putting up one candidate, in Vauxhall in London, to give people there a chance to show that they don’t want capitalism but want instead a society of common ownership, democratic control and production just for use not profit, with goods and services available on the basis of “*from each according to ability, to each according to needs*”. Elsewhere we are advocating that people show this by writing “**WORLD SOCIALISM**” across their ballot paper.

If you agree, you can show this by voting for us. But more importantly get in touch with us to help working towards such a society after the election is over.

Our campaign can be followed on our election blog at <http://spgb.blogspot.com/>



Profit Freedom Day

“YOU COULD have to *work for 134 days* each year just to pay your tax bill” (their emphasis) read the headline of a full page HSBC ad in the *Times* (16 March).

“Income Tax, National Insurance, VAT, car tax . . . it all adds up. In fact, in 2009 the average Briton had to work 134 days before they had earned enough to pay their taxes”.

The source was given in the small print at the bottom of the page as the Mad Marketeers of the Adam Smith Institute who each year calculate a “Tax Freedom Day” as the day when people supposedly begin to keep the income they “earn” instead of it going to the taxman (adamsmith.org/tax-freedom-day). According to the small print, “This is calculated with the total tax paid each year by a taxpayer on average income, including indirect taxes, local taxes and National Insurance contributions.”

Actually it is not calculated in this way at all. What is calculated is total government tax revenue as compared to “net national income”, but instead of presenting this as a percentage – 36.7 percent – it is presented as a number of days out of a year (134/355 is the same as 36.7/100). At no point does a figure for the “average income” of the “average Briton” enter into the calculation. This is merely the tendentious and populist way of expressing the result of calculating government tax revenue to national income.

Even if we leave aside the Marxian contention that taxes on wages and salaries are passed on to employers and so ultimately fall on profits, not all taxes are paid by individuals. There are some two million capitalist firms in Britain and these pay taxes (corporation tax, business rates, etc). The Adam Smith Institute gets round this problem by saying that such taxes “ultimately are paid by the owners of each business”. This is to admit that it is not just the income from work that is involved, so that it is illegitimate to talk, as does the HSBC advertisement, of people having to “work” so many days a year to pay taxes.

The Adam Smith Institute’s expert is more cautious, claiming only that their so-called Tax Freedom Day is “the day when the average Briton earned enough to pay his annual tax bill” This is to play on the ambiguity of the word “earned” as, if challenged, they would no doubt reply that this is not just income earned from work (which is what most people including HSBC’s advertising firm would think is meant) but also income so-called “earned” from owning savings.

Adam Smith himself pointed out, in the opening sentence of *The Wealth of Nations* (he wasn’t as bad as the Institute that’s hi-jacked his name), that labour is the source of the whole of a country’s national income:

“The annual labour of every nation is the fund which originally supplies it with all the necessaries and conveniences of life which it annually consumes, and which consist always either in the immediate produce of that labour, or in what is purchased with that produce from other nations.”

This being so, the share of profits in national income is a product of labour, in fact of the unpaid labour of workers. In 2008 the share of profits in National Income was 24 percent (see economicsonline.co.uk/Managing_the_economy/National_income.html). This is the same as 88/365, so it could be said that the “average worker” works 88 days out of 365 to produce profits for their employer. In which case 29 March would be what might be called Profit Freedom Day. It will be much later than this, except that the concept is misleading in that, as Marx pointed out, workers produce surplus value every minute they work. So there’s no day when they’re not exploited for profit.



Puppets on a string

Despite women-only lists and quotas for minorities does it matter who the politicians running capitalism are?

Capitalism, without a doubt, is unpopular. It would be strange if it were anything else. A system under which a small percentage of the people own just about everything worth owning, while everyone else has to spend his or her time working for the support of this small minority of owners, could hardly expect to win any popularity stakes. That is why everyone trying to seize power, whether in democratic countries or in despotisms, always proclaims that change is desperately needed. (When did you hear of any new leaders taking over a country with the slogan, "Let's keep everything just as it is"?)

It is true that some changes, some reforms, may benefit some groups, though at the same time other groups may be worse off. It is also true that some changes may benefit some groups in some ways, but make those same groups worse off in other ways. One big change certainly is needed – a change from capitalism to socialism, that is to say abandoning a system organised for the advantage of a small minority, and introducing a system that works for the good of all: but since enormous propaganda machines are operating full-time to persuade people that any change like that is not possible, the result is that the reforms introduced with such fanfares are doomed to be futile, or at best merely cosmetic. If most of the people in Parliament, or in the government, are white, then the cry arises – let's have more black people. If most of the people running the country are men – then let's have more women. If most of the top politicians are Christian – then let's have Muslims, or Buddhists, or Hindus, or atheists. Whatever they are now, let's have the opposite. If most people in Parliament were women, the cry would probably arise for more men; if most were black, people might well demand more white faces; if most were Muslim, the cry

would go up for more Christians, and so on.

If we are talking about the future of Britain, or of the world, then a person's skin-colour, sex, religious or cultural background, or any other consideration, is of small importance compared with the question of what that person does. A person's actions, which follow on from their ideas and their attitudes – these are the things that matter.

Take the case which is exercising the government, and the courts, and the newspapers, at the moment: the case of Binyam Mahomed, who is an Ethiopian who lived in Britain from the time he was fifteen. He was arrested in Pakistan in 2002 on suspicion of being a terrorist; he was then smuggled out by the Americans to Morocco and Afghanistan, finally being imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay in 2004, where he stayed for the next five years, without trial. During that time he was tortured by the Americans, or by their allies. Last year a US District Court judge accepted as accurate Mahomed's account of his treatment, which "included being beaten with a leather strap, subjected to a mock execution by shooting, being punched and kicked, listening to other prisoners screaming and being cut on his chest, penis and testicles with a scalpel. He was also deprived of sleep and had drugs put into his food" (*Times*, 11 February).

The UK Court of Appeal has agreed with "Mr Mahomed's assertion that the UK authorities had been involved in and facilitated the ill treatment and torture to which he was subjected while under the control of the US authorities". The Master of the Rolls, presiding at the court, also said in his draft judgment that MI5, the British security service, "operated a culture of suppression and disregard for human rights; that it deliberately misled a Parliamentary committee and

that its assurances could not be trusted". The Foreign Secretary sent high-paid lawyers to the court to get this criticism cut out of the judgment. The British government, indeed, has been trying to keep everything secret, on the grounds that the US government would be annoyed if these things came out – despite the publication of the judgment of the US District Court. The American government would not be so friendly and co-operative, thinks Gordon Brown, if everyone knew how they behaved; which raises the question, how friendly and co-operative do you want to be with a government that tortures its prisoners – and imprisons them without trial?

So we have the unedifying spectacle of a member of the Labour government, the Foreign Secretary David Miliband, defending the collaboration of Britain's "security" services in the torture by the Americans, or their allies, of a "terrorism" suspect. This is justified by officialdom because of the need to preserve our democratic freedoms. In other words, Britain is justified in going along with torture, to make sure we are not overwhelmed by other states, which use completely unacceptable methods such as torture. It is justifiable to use torture in order to save us from – torture. If the Foreign Secretary really believes this, he is in line for a starring role at the next Clowns' Reunion.

There are in Britain numerous racial or religious or cultural minorities: in fact everyone belongs to a minority of one kind or another. David Miliband is from a Jewish background; his forebears came from eastern Europe, with its grim history of racialism, of oppression, of pogroms against minorities. Who, in the past centuries in Europe, has suffered more than the Jews from despotic regimes which think you can justify torture if you look at from the right angle? But David Miliband has become Foreign Secretary by joining a party which in effect appeals for support at election times by declaring it will run capitalism better than the other contenders for the job. If it is thought that the interests of the British capitalist state demand kow-towing to the Americans, then the British government – including Miliband – kow-tows to the Americans, even to the extent of accepting and colluding in the torture of its own residents. Having a Foreign Secretary from one of the many UK minorities makes absolutely no difference to the final result.

Black people, too, have suffered horribly under the private-property system of society, to the extent that many Africans were actually violently seized and forcibly made into private property, slaves who were owned by – for example – the American and West Indian landed gentry. Surely if a black person was running affairs (it was once said), things must improve. Well, the President of the United States is now black – his father was a Kenyan African. Does anyone think American capitalism is now somehow less capitalist? And many African states which were once ruled by

foreign white empires now have black leaders? In South Africa, for example, Nelson Mandela became president, and was succeeded by Thabo Mbeki and then by Jacob Zuma. Numbers of people with black skins appear to have done very well out of the change-over. "Last year South Africa overtook Brazil as the country with the biggest gap between rich and poor" (*Times*, 11 February).

We also used to hear that capitalism would somehow be more tolerable – more kindly, more benign – to the vast majority of non-capitalists if a woman was running it. But in the last few decades we have seen numbers of women running countries – among those who have risen to the top of the political pile have been Isabel Peron in Argentina, Gro Brundtland in Norway, Sirimavo Bandaranaike in Ceylon, Indira Gandhi in India, Golda Meir in Israel, Angela Merkel in Germany, and of course Margaret, now Lady, Thatcher in Britain. What difference did it make?

In 1975 Isabel Peron ordered the Argentine armed forces and its secret services to "annihilate . . . subversive elements", and there followed more than a thousand kidnappings, assassinations, and "disappearances" of people who either opposed the government or who it was thought might oppose it in future. (Isabel Peron's allies abroad included the benign and kindly quartet Ceausescu of Romania, Gaddafi of Libya, Mobutu of Zaire, and the Shah of Iran; she fled to Spain after leaving office, and two years ago the present Argentine authorities tried, but failed, to get her extradited.) The history of Mrs Thatcher alone would explain why the argument – that a woman Prime Minister would somehow make capitalism softer, gentler, more acceptable – has now been exploded. In fact it is the accepted view now that the methods of the Thatcherite cabinet were tougher and harsher than those of most other governments which had men as Prime Ministers.

If you are running capitalism, the fact that you are a Jew or a Gentile, or black or white, or Christian or Muslim, or Hindu or atheist, or male or female, is completely irrelevant. Whoever you are, you can't run a turkey farm for the benefit of the turkeys.

ALWYN EDGAR



Are you a wage slave?

Consume!

Toil!

Surely having to work for a wage or a salary is a modern form of slavery?

We socialists like to refer to wage labour as “wage slavery” and call workers “wage-slaves”. Non-socialists may assume that we use these expressions as figures of speech, for rhetorical effect. No, we use them literally. They reflect our view of capitalist society.

Socialists use the word “slavery” in a broad sense, to encompass both chattel slavery and wage slavery as alternative ways of exploiting labour. We are aware of the differences between them, but we also want to draw attention to their common purpose. Capitalist language conceals this common purpose by equating chattel slavery with slavery as such and by conflating wage labour with free labour. Socialists regard labour as free only where the labourers themselves individually or collectively own and control the means by which they labour (land, tools, machinery, etc.).

Why chattel slavery was abandoned

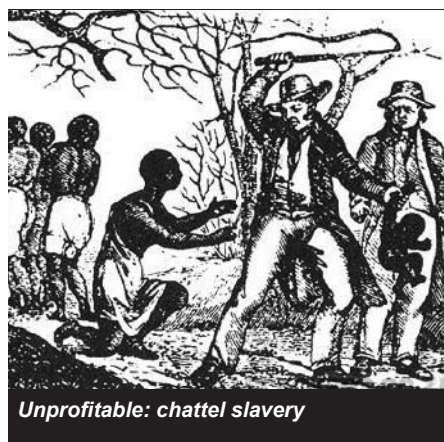
The connection between chattel slavery and wage slavery as alternative modes of exploitation is visible in the debates within the British and American ruling class that led up to the abolition of chattel slavery. While religious abolitionists condemned slave-holding as a moral sin, the clinching argument against chattel slavery was that it was no longer the most effective way of exploiting the labouring population. It was abandoned because it was impeding economic and especially industrial development – that is, the accumulation of capital.

The legal, social and political status of wage-slaves is superior to that of chattel slaves. However, when we compare their position in the labour process itself, we see that here the difference between them is not a fundamental one. They are all compelled to obey the orders of the “boss” who owns the instruments

of production with which they work or who represents those who own them. In a small enterprise the boss may convey his orders directly, while in a large enterprise orders are passed down through a managerial hierarchy. But in all cases it is ultimately the boss who decides what to produce and how to produce it. The products of the labour of the (chattel or wage) slaves do not belong to them. Nor, indeed, does their own activity.

The secret abode

An obvious difference between chattel slavery and wage slavery is that as a chattel slave you are enslaved – totally subjected to another’s will – at every moment from birth to death, in every aspect of your life. As a wage-slave, you are enslaved only at those times



when your labour power is at the disposal of your employer. At other times, in other aspects of your life – as a consumer, a voter, a family member, a gardener perhaps – you enjoy a certain measure of freedom, respect and social equality. Thus, the wage-slave has some scope for self-development and self-realisation that is denied the chattel slave. Limited scope, to be sure, for the wage-slave must regularly return to the cramped world of wage labour, which spread its influence over the rest of life like a

pestilential mist.

As a result of this split, capital confronts the worker in schizophrenic style, like Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The same person whom capital sedulously flatters and courts as a consumer and voter is helplessly exposed to harassment, bullying, yells and insults at the place of employment.

Capitalist ideologists focus on the “public” spheres of life in which people are relative social equals and do their best to ignore what happens inside the “private” sphere of wage slavery. Thus, economists analyse the exchange of resources among “market actors”, while political scientists talk about relations between the state and an imaginary classless community of citizens that they call “civil society”. Even children’s television programmes display the same bias. For instance, most of the human characters in *Sesame Street* earn their living through small individual and family businesses (a corner store, a fix-it shop, a dance studio, a veterinarian clinic, etc.).

So there is a wide gap between superficial appearances and deep reality. The servitude of the wage worker is not visible on the surface of capitalist society; to witness it the investigator must enter “the secret abode of production, on the threshold of which stands: ‘no admittance except on business’” (Marx, *Capital*).

Who is the master?

It may be objected that wage workers are not slaves because they have the legal right to leave a particular employer, even if in practice they may be reluctant to use that right out of fear of not finding another job.

All that this proves, however, is that the wage worker is not the slave of *any particular* employer. According to Marx, the owner of the wage-slave is not the individual capitalist but the capitalist *class* – “capital as a whole”.

Yes, you can leave one employer, but only in order to look for a new one. What you cannot do, lacking as you do all other access to the means of life, is escape from the thrall of employers as a class – that is, cease to be a wage-slave.

Is wage slavery worse?

Some have argued that – at least in the absence of an effective social security “safety net” – wage slavery is even worse than chattel slavery. As the chattel slave is valuable property his master has an interest in preserving his life and strength, while the wage-slave is always at risk of being thrown out of employment and left to starve.

Actually, the severity with which the chattel slave is treated depends on just how valuable he is. Where chattel slaves were in abundant supply and therefore quite cheap – as in San Domingo, where a slave rebellion in 1791 led to the abolition of chattel slavery and the establishment of the state of Haiti (C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*) – they were commonly worked, whipped, or otherwise tortured to death. How the wage-slave is treated similarly depends on the availability of replacements. For instance, capitalists in China see no reason why they should protect young peasant workers in shoe factories from exposure to toxic chemicals in the glue, because plenty of teenage girls are constantly arriving from the countryside to replace those who fall too sick to work (Anita Chan, *China's Workers Under Assault: The Exploitation of Labor in a Globalizing Economy*, M.E. Sharpe 2001).

Intermediate forms

As alternative modes of exploitation, chattel slavery and wage slavery are not separated by a Chinese Wall. Under conditions unfavourable for the working class, wage slavery can easily degenerate into an intermediate form that more closely resembles chattel slavery.

It is common for desperately poor people in underdeveloped countries to be induced to sign a labour contract (which, being illiterate, they cannot read) by lies about the atrocious conditions that await them. By the time they discover the truth it is too late: they are forcibly prevented from running away. Such, for example, is the plight of the half million or more Haitian migrants who toil on plantations in the Dominican Republic (see <http://www.batayouvriye.org/English/Positions1/dr.html>).

Comparable but more formalized

was the system of indentured labour that prevailed in colonial America in the 17th and 18th centuries and was gradually displaced by black chattel slavery. In exchange for passage across the Atlantic, poor Europeans undertook to serve a master for a set number of years (typically seven). Some survived their temporary servitude, others did not.

Slavery and violence

The word “slavery” conjures up the image of the cruel overseer on a plantation in the Caribbean or the old American South, wielding a whip over the heads of his helpless victims. The lash is rightly regarded as a symbol of chattel slavery.

Yet here again no Chinese Wall separates one mode of exploitation from another. The lash has also been widely used against indentured labourers and certain categories of wage-slaves. Only in 1915, for instance, was a law passed in the United States (the La Follette Act) to prohibit the whipping of seamen. Even after that a sailor could still be placed in irons or put on reduced rations for disobeying orders.



Peasant workers in China

Children in the textile mills of 19th-century Britain were hit with leather straps for not working hard enough. In China, abolition of corporal punishment was one of the demands made by Anyuan coal miners in the strike of 1923. As Anita Chan shows in her book, it is in widespread use again today in factories owned by Taiwanese and Korean capitalists.

Even in the developed countries, many people are bullied and tormented at work, usually by a person standing above them in the hierarchy. Some are driven to suicide. Many suffer serious physical or sexual assault. On one of many websites devoted to this problem (www.worktrauma.org) we find the story of a bookkeeper at a power tool company whom a manager kicked in the buttocks with such force that she was lifted off her heels, causing severe back injury as well as shock. While I was at Brown University, a

laboratory assistant was raped in the lab by her supervisor.

Such acts of violence against employees are no longer sanctioned by law, but they happen all the time. The victim is sometimes able to win some compensation, but criminal charges are rarely made against the perpetrator.

It doesn't apply to me

If you are fortunately situated, you may feel that my argument doesn't apply to you. Your boss or manager treats you well, you do not suffer insult or assault, you are satisfied with your working conditions, and the work itself may even give you satisfaction. You at least are not a wage-slave.

Or so you imagine. Some chattel slaves – in particular, the personal servants of kind masters and mistresses – also had the good fortune to be treated well. But they had no guarantee that their good fortune would continue. They might be sold to or inherited by a cruel new master following the old master's death, departure or bankruptcy. You too may suddenly find yourself with a nasty new boss or manager. The matter is out of your hands, precisely because you are only a wage-slave.

If you are a technical specialist, a scientist or analyst of some kind, you may even say: “What sort of slave can I be? I am not ordered about all the time. On the contrary. I was hired for my expertise and I am expected to think for myself, solve problems and offer suggestions. True, I can't make important decisions by myself, but my bosses are always willing to listen to me. And they are always polite to me.”

You are deluding yourself. I know because I have been in a similar situation and deluded myself. Your bosses listen to you *before* they come to a decision. Once they make a decision, they expect you to accept it. But suppose you once forget yourself (which means – forget your place) and continue to argue against a decision that has already been made. Then you are in for a rude shock!

What makes your delusion possible is that you have grown accustomed to analyse problems from your employer's point of view. You are every bit as alienated from your own thinking as the assembly line worker is from his or her physical movements. And if a process that you think up is patented, do you imagine that the patent will belong to you?

STEFAN

Capitalist money madness

Capitalism is basically a big scam that benefits a few at the expense of the many.



Read any newspaper, listen to any radio bulletin, watch any TV news broadcast, and there will be some instance of Capitalist Money Madness – detrimental, shocking or unbelievable thinking and behaviour influenced by money. Trains have been derailed because saving money came before rigorous track maintenance; cows have been ground up and fed to other cows in pursuit of greater profits; companies have been allowed to patent thousands of our own genes in a commodification of humankind's DNA; there has been widespread use of toxic chemicals in fuel, household furnishings, deodorants, plastics used for food storage etc resulting in an increase in previously rare cancers and an asthma epidemic in children; and more recently, global capitalism has descended into economic chaos which will cause additional untold misery for decades to come. Along with such 'big' news stories, there is a never-ending news stream of robberies, burglaries, murders, muggings, scams and scandals involving money in some way or other.

Nothing new, of course. Money has been causing misery and deaths ever since its introduction thousands of years ago. Some time around 30 A.D. a Mr J. Iscariot betrayed a subversive called Jeshua of Nazareth for thirty pieces of silver, whereas more recently, a Mr T. Blair betrayed those who elected him so a huge fortune could be made by American and British companies from oil in Iraq. Times and economies may change, but money systems of assorted ruling classes have been ceaselessly causing

despair and taking lives ever since a medium of exchange was first established.

Today, money is an indispensable part of the capitalist system, but capitalism is merely the most recent economic system where a tiny minority own and control the vital resources that provide food, fuel, transportation, clothing etc which humankind needs. These "means of production and distribution" have increased over the millennia from 'simply' farmland, livestock, woodland, gold mines etc to include mass-producing industrial factories, oil fields, power stations, rail networks etc. Because all of these resources are owned by a tiny proportion of the human race who want to exploit them for profit, they therefore make everyone pay for all of the commodities that these productive and distributive resources provide. If you want a pair of shoes, electricity, clean water, a train journey, a tin of beans or whatever, you have to hand over money. Many people (but by no means all) are able to buy goods and services that they need, because the capitalist system also compels those who are fit and able to work for capitalist employers in return for a wage or salary. Of course, the monetary amount paid to these employees is usually far smaller than the monetary value of the work they carry out, which is how the capitalist minority make their fat profits and get to enjoy far superior living standards. In this respect, capitalism is basically a big scam that benefits a few at the expense of the many.

As money is essential under today's system, and due to it being rationed and restricted according to how much the ruling class and the economy are prepared or able to give to employees, the unemployed, the retired and others, the capitalist society has a great number of people who cannot readily obtain what they need. And because of this, all manner of needless misery, suffering and loss of life is caused. Elderly folk die from the cold every winter because they can't afford or are afraid to heat their homes; those unable to obtain work or with inadequate incomes have to subject themselves to degrading bureaucratic procedures and rules; relationships are put under severe strain or ended by debts or work pressures; our doormats, email inboxes, phones, TV screens and websites we visit are inundated with junk that capitalists want to sell us. It really doesn't have to be this way.

Although we now have a reasonably productive society after a few thousand years of minority ownership of vital resources and money, it was never the minority or money that brought us to where we are. It was those doing the work – not those giving the orders and taking most of the profit. A civilised society in which people's needs are routinely met absolutely does not need money to function: only trade needs money to function. Human beings do not need money and trade to operate combine harvesters, to run power stations, to build houses, to drive delivery trucks, to carry out surgical operations, and do all the other necessary work. We only need to be willing to carry out these jobs with the objective of contributing directly to society as a whole, thereby obtaining a better way of living and working than exists under capitalism, instead of believing the lie that we can only carry out these jobs if we are paid to do so.

We are perfectly capable of working for ourselves, and

“A civilised society in which people’s needs are routinely met absolutely does not need money to function”



producing goods and services for direct use by whoever requires them. A new system where, when you need, say, various food items, a couple of cartons of orange juice and a new radio to replace one you dropped and broke, you go to the nearest 'shop' or 'superstore', take them off the shelves, and leave. No queuing at a checkout. No handing over money or a bank or credit card. You just take what you need and leave with it.

Furthermore, even though today's capitalism is quite productive, it is by no means as productive and efficient as the new moneyless real socialist economy which now needs to replace it. More than half of all work carried out under capitalism is fundamentally useless as far as satisfying human needs goes. Millions of people in Britain are kept occupied in money-related drudgery (banking, retailing, manufacturing of money and credit cards, insurance, taxation, welfare payments, debt recovery etc), kept busy dealing with societal problems and crimes caused by capitalism (social workers, lawyers, police, prison officers etc) and kept engaged in so-called 'defence' activities to protect and advance the ruling class's interests (armed forces, weapons research and manufacturing, intelligence agencies etc). Not forgetting the millions of unemployed people capable of working, but unwanted because capitalists can't make a profit from them, and because they also serve an obscenely useful purpose in the capitalist economy by keeping

wages down (bosses find it hard to resist demands for higher wages if there is no mass of job seekers to replace troublesome employees wanting more).

All of this represents a vast waste of human labour and resources. When all of these people and materials are freed up by capitalism's replacement with moneyless real socialism, there will be no obstacle to producing sufficient goods and services to meet real needs on the basis of "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs". That is, each person works according to how much they choose to contribute, and freely takes whatever they themselves decide they need. And with all of these extra people available to contribute something useful to this new society, the average working week will be far shorter than it is under capitalism.

When people first hear of this new radically different society, with all work being voluntary, and free access to whatever we need, most immediately view this as bizarre and impossible. Unsurprising, given that we have spent our entire lives being brainwashed and conditioned by schools, politicians, employers, the media etc into swallowing capitalism's propaganda that this is the natural way of things. Sadly, we are also mainly influenced into accepting the capitalist employment-wages-money-buying status quo by our own parents. Which is why capitalism is so utterly vile; perpetuating itself by getting the preceding generation of indoctrinated victims to raise the following generation to become victims themselves.

Fortunately, for those who can get beyond the initial shock of first hearing about moneyless real socialism, by simply comparing what both the present and new system offer the majority of us, it should be downright obvious that increasingly-damaging outdated capitalism must be scrapped and replaced with the real socialist alternative. In most parts of the world, the majority have won the right to vote for who they want to lead them. We can use that opportunity to vote to be led by no one person or minority ruling class, and choose instead to vote for a genuine democracy where the people themselves rule and decide what happens. New socialist moneyless co-operation, or more endless capitalist money madness?

MAX HESS

Thought About Joining the Socialist Party?

For further information about membership, return this form to **The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.**

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

.....

.....

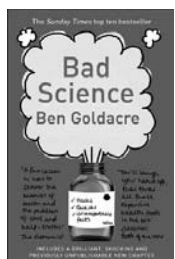
.....

.....

POSTCODE.....

Bullshitters

Bad Science. By Ben Goldacre. Fourth Estate. £8.99.



In 1986 an American philosopher called Harry Frankfurt wrote an essay “On Bullshit” in which, according to Goldacre who writes a “Bad Science” column for the *Guardian*, he drew a distinction

between lying and bullshitting. A liar knows the truth and seeks to disguise it. A bullshitter doesn’t know or even care about the truth but is out to impress.

Most of those Goldacre criticises in this book are bullshitters rather than liars – though not all, there are some genuine fakes and frauds amongst them. He starts with an easy target, homeopathy, which is patently absurd (as if bottles of diluted water shaken in a particular way could cure anything) but relatively innocuous (drinking diluted water won’t harm you). Some homeopathic practitioners, however, are not and, Goldacre reports, can be very nasty towards critics.

Their argument – and that of all the other ‘alternative’ medicines – is that their treatments work. They certainly seem to in some cases. People do get better after taking the pills or whatever. But the question that needs to be answered is why. Is it because of the pills or is there some other reason? There are a number of possible explanations other than the theory of the ‘alternative’ practitioners. Sometimes the body recovers spontaneously. Some ailments go in cycles, so a bad period will be followed by a less bad one. In others, any therapy, no matter what the theory behind it, will work: any therapy or even sympathetic listening will help. Then there is the ‘placebo’ effect (people getting better because they believe they are being given a certain treatment when in fact they haven’t) which Goldacre discusses in interesting detail.

Much of the book is devoted to his criticism of popular TV and other ‘nutritionists’, who he identifies as prize bullshitters. Why? Because there is no verified, or even verifiable, evidence for their claims. Some of them may sincerely believe in what they say but their main aim is to make money. Goldacre is quick to add that the same applies to the pharmaceutical companies who are always inventing new ‘syndromes’ for

which their pills are the best cure.

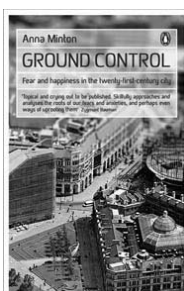
Goldacre also criticises scientifically-illiterate journalists who are more interested in a story that will keep readers or pander to their prejudices, so maintaining newspaper or magazine sales, than with the real situation. This can be dangerous as over the MMR scandal as it was because of them that a number of parents left their kids unprotected against measles which they and others later contracted.

The socialist angle on all this is that under capitalism people are forced to make money, one way or another, in order to live and, given this, some will adopt dubious and even dangerous ways of doing this. And that there’ll be no snake-oil salesmen in socialism.

ALB

Life on Earth

Ground Control. By Anna Minton. Penguin £9.99.



As new shopping malls and blocks of flats are built in city centres, they represent an extension of ownership by investors and private companies at the expense of local councils.

Docklands in London, for instance, is privately-owned, and the flats there are mostly in gated enclaves. The Liverpool One shopping development belongs to Grosvenor, the Duke of Westminster’s property company. These places are patrolled by private security guards and rigidly control what is or is not allowed to be done there (skateboarding, for instance, or selling political journals).

These and similar changes are the focus of Minton’s book, which gives a good overview of the situation, particularly with regard to housing and general control of behaviour in public. Despite the spread of CCTV (Britain has more cameras than the rest of Europe put together), people do not feel safer in the streets; in fact, fear of crime has been increasing as crime rates themselves fall. Stop-and-search powers are used more and more, but overwhelmingly in poorer areas. Breaching an ASBO can lead to a prison sentence for doing something which was not in itself a crime.

As far as housing is concerned, one consequence of gated communities is

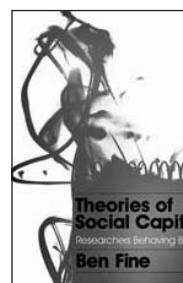
increased control over tenants. For instance, people may be forbidden from hanging out their washing or placing pots on exterior window sills. More seriously, profits for builders and property companies take priority over satisfying people’s housing needs. As Minton says, ‘house builders have greater guarantees of profits if they limit supply and so keep prices high’. The government’s Pathfinder programme is intended to solve problems that the market cannot tackle, but in practice it can mean houses being demolished and replaced by new ones that can be sold at higher prices. If a council declares that an area is due for demolition, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, with residents keen to move away and others unwilling to move in. At the same time, newly-built homes are unsold, as mortgages are much harder to obtain during the credit crunch.

The number of official homeless is nearly 100,000, though councils restrict who counts as ‘homeless’ in order to avoid their rehousing responsibilities. The bottom of the private rented sector includes many, many properties that are damp and overcrowded. In the worst cases, this can lead to ‘buggy babies’, left in their buggy all the time because there is no proper room for them to sit or play. Their heads may get misshapen because they spend so much time lying down. What a comment on the realities of destitution under capitalism!

PB

Social capital?

Theories of Social Capital. By Ben Fine, Pluto Press, 2010



In Marxian economics capital only exists when the appropriate historical and social conditions are present. Specifically, when the means of production are generally used to exploit wage labour

for profit. In capitalist economics capital is one of the ‘factors of production’ along with land and labour (and, in some definitions, entrepreneurship or management). Capital is money invested in production with the expectation of profit, though in capitalist economics capital is primarily a timeless asset. This is why those

who have been exposed to capitalist economics will sometimes express bafflement at the socialist proposal to abolish capital. 'But any society *must* have capital,' they exclaim, as if we propose to physically destroy means of production. No, any modern society must have means of production (land, factories, railways, etc.), but it is only in the capitalist system of society that the means of production takes the form of capital. Socialists want to abolish capital by establishing common ownership of the means of production, replacing production for profit with production solely for use.

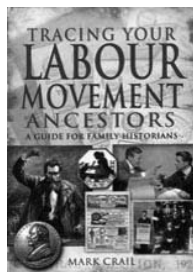
In the last 20 years or so, in an attempt to promote the illusion of the inevitability of capital, the term has been widened to include 'social capital'. Fine defines social capital as 'any aspect of the *social* that cannot be deemed to be economic but which can be deemed to be an asset'. It can be anything from your personal acquaintances, through communal or associational activity, to your identity or culture, and so on. The objective, whether clearly recognised as such or not, is to get the notion of profit into every aspect of our lives. It should come as no surprise that one of the main sponsors of the idea of 'social capital' is the World Bank, though its use is now well-established in certain academic disciplines, such as management studies.

Fine has also written, along with Alfredo Saad-Filho, a highly recommended work on Marxian economics called *Marx's 'Capital'*. Now in its fourth edition (2003) it is a remarkably succinct summary (216 pages) of Marx's multi-volume *Capital*.

LEW

Ancestors

Tracing Your Labour Movement Ancestors. By Mark Crail. Pen & Sword Books. £12.99.



This book is rather badly titled and is actually a guide to archive holdings relating to trade union, 'socialist' and other similar organisations rather than a mere accessory to the family historian and as such is potentially extremely useful to those interested in what is termed 'labour history'.

It could also be used as a pocket

guide to the historic Left (of which, it should be pointed out, the Socialist Party does not claim to be part) as the entry for each organisation includes a potted history. Unfortunately many of these are less than accurate, including that for us. For instance, a couple of minor historical errors: the group which went on to form the SPGB did not simply break "with the Social Democratic Federation over its 'reformist' line and the increasingly erratic leadership of Henry Hyndman" but because of the dallings of the SDF with non-socialist organisations and the anti-democratic (leadership) role of its Executive Committee. Also, the *Socialist Standard* has not been published since the "launch" of the Party in June 1904 but from September of that year.

These are however chickenfeed compared to the ideological bloopers. Following "a tradition known as 'impossibilism'" (mainly by historians), the Socialist Party allegedly holds that "reformism is of limited value in overthrowing capitalism". Not limited value but no value whatsoever. Individual reforms – that is legislation aimed at altering particular aspects of life under capitalism – may be to the advantage or disadvantage of the working class but as a policy such legal alterations are not "stepping stones to socialism" but the road to nowhere. Capitalism reformed is still capitalism. However beneficial (or otherwise as is now usually the case) individual reforms might be, the interest of the working class lies in overthrowing capitalism, not altering its workings.

KAZ

The Socialist Party Summer School



**Fircroft College, Birmingham
23rd - 25th July 2010**

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

OBITUARY

Robert (Bob) Malone

We have received the following sad news from our comrades in New Zealand. "It is with sadness that we have to report the death of Bob Malone. Bob was a worker and a socialist who understood the anti-social nature of the society in which we live and strived to change it with a worldwide civilised system, in which production will be for use and not for sale. Bob had a useful and productive life which is more than can be said of the residents of Buckingham Palace, the Kremlin or the White House. Bob was for many years a valued member of the WSP (NZ), and even when he ceased his membership of the WSP (NZ) in the 1990s, he still supported the World Socialist Movement to the very end. His enthusiasm and innovative ideas were welcome at the many Annual Conferences of the WSP (NZ), and he would always respect the right of others to have alternative views. Our condolences go out to his family." (WSP, New Zealand)

Bob originally came from Glasgow and indeed during a short spell while back in the UK was a member of Glasgow Branch. Bob was born in 1943 and served his apprenticeship as a glazier before immigrating to New Zealand in 1965. He was a well-read conscientious member and many subscribers to the WSM Forum on the website will be aware of his learned contributions there which were always straightforward and very friendly. Bob worked all his life in both Glasgow and Wellington and in the latter part of his life taught Glass Technology at a Wellington college. He was a amusing companion and right good company as many of his comrades can attest to. He will be sadly missed by comrades in two continents. Glasgow branch extend our deepest sympathy to his wife Moira and his children Sarah Jane and Robert. Thanks for everything Bob. (Glasgow Branch)

Picture Credits

Cover: Be the Full Stop - www.number10.gov pp2 and 6: Asteroids - www.solcomhouse.com/asteroids.htm
p4. Gilray cartoon, 1802, Public Domain
p4. Indian ocean map, Public Domain
p11: Andrew Flanagan - www.charities-direct.co.uk
p14. Puppets - Cremedia, 2007, Public Domain
p15. Rice & Miliband, US State Dept, Michael Gross, 2007, Public Domain
p20: *Bad Science* book - www.aidstruth.org.
Ground Control book - housmans.com. *Theories of Social Capital* book - www.plutobooks.com.
p21: *Tracing Your Labour Movement Ancestors* book - www.sog.org.uk.
p24. Dome Mehboob-e-Zaat, Sialkot - Shahrkh syed, 2010, Public Domain

Meetings

East Anglia

Saturday, **15 May**, 12noon to 4.00pm
12noon: informal chat / branch business
1pm - 2pm: meal
2pm - 4pm: continuation / agenda
Venue: Quebec Tavern, 93-97 Quebec Road, Norwich NR1 4HY
(The meeting takes place in a side room separate to the bar).
All welcome.

Glasgow

Wednesday, **19 May**, 8.30pm
THE SCOTTISH NATIONALIST PARTY
Speaker: Vic Vanni
Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road

Edinburgh And Glasgow Branches Joint Day School

Saturday 8 May from 1pm to 5pm
Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow
CAPITALISM ISN'T WORKING FOR YOU - IS THERE AN ALTERNATIVE?
1pm The Basic Cause of Present Day Problems. Speaker Vic Vanni (Glasgow)
Left wingers have blamed the greed of bankers. Right wingers have blamed everything from an act of God to the misjudgements of the Labour Party. In the USA some have blamed the "socialism" of Obama. We analyse the basic economic cause of the boom and bust nature of capitalism.

2.15pm The Failure of Reformist Solutions. Speaker John Cumming (Glasgow)

Over the last hundred years we have heard the claims from Conservative, Liberal, Labour and Communist politicians that they could solve the problems thrown up by capitalism but all have failed miserably. We review this failure and show its cause.

3.35pm The Socialist Alternative. Speaker Paul Bennett (Manchester)

The failure of capitalism to meet the needs of the majority has led many to look for alternatives. We look at two strains of thought on the subject of alternatives. Firstly, the various anarchist movements who see the problem being that of government and so seek an alternative without government. Secondly, the Zeitgeist Movement who see money as the problem and seek a society without money.

All are welcome to this meeting which is free of charge. During the afternoon free light refreshments will be available.

Manchester

Monday **24 May**, 8.30 pm
ALTERNATIVE FUTURES
Unicorn, Church Street, City Centre



Sharpeville



Recent events in South Africa, which began with the shootings at Sharpeville, have brought condemnation of Dr. Verwoerd and the Nationalist Government's policy of apartheid from the press all over the world. The absenteeism of Africans from their work for many days afterwards caused great inconvenience to the Europeans, but, more important, it has cost South African capitalists millions of pounds in lost output. Even the Chairman of the Wool Board, representing an industry dominated by Afrikaans-speaking pro-Nationalist farmers, said the Government must change its policies "... or else."

The opposition (United Party) want to see a complete review of

the Government's policy towards the Africans as soon as the situation simmers down, and 12 "Elders" of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa have spoken out against apartheid, saying there is no justification for it in the Scriptures, as Dr. Verwoerd claims. It seems that even sections of this Church are awakening to the fact that changes are taking place, and that apartheid is an anachronism in a developing capitalist country. But the Nationalists' desire to keep their cheap supply of labour mainly in the country districts is, at the moment, still dominant.

(from 'News in Review', *Socialist Standard*, May 1960).

Declaration of Principles

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

Object

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

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly 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.

Let's produce for **USE**, not **PROFIT**

Socialism will aim to meet human needs, not market-induced wants, producing quality goods, not opulent extravagances.

Capitalism produces commodities for sale and profit, denies human needs to the poor, wastes people and resources. Today most goods and services are produced and distributed as a result of capital buying labour in pursuit of profit. The 'needs' to be met are primarily those of the market, not of people. The owners or controllers of capital are said to 'create' jobs or 'give' employment to workers. There is a link between the production of goods and services and consuming them, but that link is conditional not direct.

Apologists for capitalist enterprises like to say they make cars, foodstuffs, health products, or whatever. But if they are honest they will admit that their aim is to make money. The proof of this is that they stop or curtail the 'business' if they can't sell enough of what is produced. It doesn't matter to them if workers lose their jobs and hence their livelihood. What matters to capital is that it loses its only reason for being invested – to make a profit.

Another way in which capitalism gives priority to market-induced wants over human needs is seen in the dual nature of the market. With some overlap, there is one market for the rich and another for the rest of us. Not many workers can afford £100,000 cars or £1000-a-night hotels. A big profit can be made by supplying such wants. So another market has been created to sell things, often cheap and nasty things, to workers. The profit per item is sometimes razor-thin, but there are many millions of consumers and it all adds up.

In capitalism workers are expected to produce and distribute goods and services as cheaply and efficiently as possible. In practice the system is extremely inefficient and wasteful. Unsold items are rarely given away to people who need but can't afford to buy them – instead they are left to rot or remain unused. There are many occupations and organisations needed only by the profit system and many products useful only for handling or recording money transactions – from accountants to valuers and from armaments to wills.

Unemployment

One of the most tragic consequences of capitalism is unemployment. In the industrialised or 'First World' many people need homes or better homes, yet millions of building workers remain unemployed. In the 'Third World' there is a great need for schools, hospitals, sanitation services, and so on. Again, there is little or no money for the relevant work to be done, but no shortage of men and women able and willing to do it.

Unemployment has dire consequences for those condemned to it, and the longer it goes on the worse it gets. Research shows that the young unemployed are significantly less happy with their health, friendships and family life than those in employment. They are also more likely to feel ashamed, rejected and unloved. Older

workers face retirement with the prospect not only of material poverty but also with the loss of a feeling of making a useful contribution to society.

Socialism

One of the key features of the change from capitalism to socialism will be the removal of money and markets, which stand in the way of directly producing for consuming. In the words of the Socialist Party's object, society will be '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'.

The first step on the road to achieving this object is when people abandon the whole set of ideas promoted by capitalist media and marketed as 'living in the real world'. These anti-socialist ideas take a variety of forms such as 'there is no such thing as a free lunch', 'you only get what you pay for', 'there must be people who provide jobs for others', and similar expressions.

The aim is to convince us that there is no alternative, so that the prophecy that tomorrow will be more

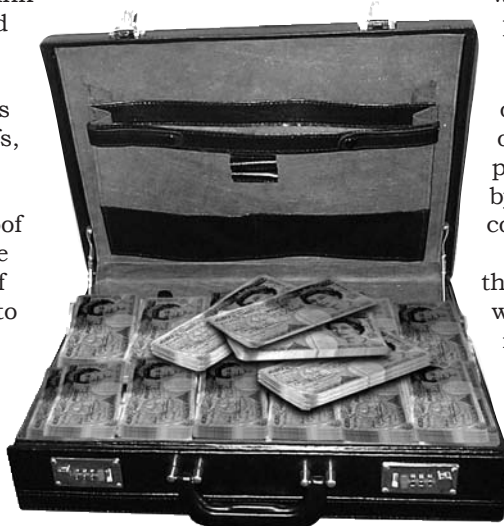
or less like today becomes self-fulfilling. The capitalist system is supported politically by electors who vote for minor variations of the status quo offered by all parties except the Socialist Party.

Neither the Socialist Party, nor the World Socialist Movement of which it is part, offers to redistribute money and wealth. Although we certainly aim to eliminate poverty, we don't imagine that all of today's world poor could live anything like the lives of today's privileged rich tiny minority – that would be materially and environmentally unsustainable.

In the early period of socialism production will no doubt need to be focused on clearing up the mess left by a dying capitalism. After this – who knows? In terms of technology and consumption, some of us may prefer the simple life, others the more complex life.

We have nothing to lose in the short term by working now for revolutionary change. In the medium to long term we have everything to gain.

STAN PARKER



The case for capitalism

Correction

Our apologies for two printer's errors in the April issue which resulted in the end of two articles being left off.

The letter "Not just technical" on page 5 should have ended "I won't. STAN PARKER, London SW8".

The ending of the article on "The poverty of economics" on pages 18 and 19 should have been: "Fortunately, year by year, fewer of us remain quite so willing". The writer was Brian Gardner.



Voice from the Back

Football fortunes

Every day in the newspapers and on television we are told of the fabulous incomes of some of the footballers in the Premier League. Some are reported to be earning £140,000 a week. To most workers this appears a fortune and yet it is chicken-feed compared to the immense wealth of people like the Russian multi-millionaire who at present owns the Chelsea football club. Of course the majority of professional footballers have to struggle by on more ordinary incomes like most workers. At the other end of the scale from the well-heeled Premier footballers and the millionaire owners we have the poor makers of the footballs. "The city of Sialkot in Pakistan produces as many as 60 million hand-stitched footballs in a World Cup year. The firms here are running out of new workers since child labor was abolished. Western buyers may have a clear conscience, but the children of Sialkot now toil in the local brickworks instead. ...Shaukat is a strong, 20-year-old man. He has been working for this independent stitching factory, Danayal, for eight years. Danayal produces handmade footballs for professional leagues. ... At the entrance to the factory there's a notice board showing the current rates of pay. Depending on the model, his employer pays between 55 and 63 Pakistan rupees per ball (\$0.65 to \$0.75). 'On a good day I manage six balls,' says Shaukat. That's eight hours work. 'That's not a lot of money,' he pushes a needle through the thick synthetic stitches together two boss is standing close by so he quickly adds: 'But it's not little either.' He gets



Dome Mehboob-e-Zaat, Sialkot

paid every Saturday and has to feed a family of six with his wages" (*Spiegel on line*, 16 March). That is how capitalism operates – immense wealth for the millionaire owners and penury for the working class.

Cause for celebration?

According to the media the US and Russian leaders have scored a wonderful step forward for world peace. "US President Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, have signed a landmark nuclear arms treaty in the Czech capital, Prague. The treaty commits the former Cold War enemies to each reduce the number of deployed strategic warheads to 1,550 – 30% lower than the previous ceiling. Mr Obama said it was an important milestone, but "just one step on a longer journey" of nuclear disarmament. Mr Medvedev said the deal would create safer conditions throughout the world" (*BBC News*, 8 April). Before we crack open the champagne and engage in dancing in the street it would be worthwhile reflecting on what this really means. 1,550 nuclear warheads is sufficient to destroy the whole world! A more sober analysis of the US/Russia agreement is that it is an attempt to limit arms expenditure and aims to discourage non-US/Russia opponents from entering the nuclear arms race. Our champagne remains uncorked.

Capitalism in action

Defenders of capitalism laud it as a dynamic social system that may produce some problems, but claim that in the long run it is the only possible way to run society. "One of Britain's richest bankers has landed a record pay package of £63.3 million. The extraordinary deal for Barclays president Bob Diamond sparked a major new row over payouts to banking fat cats. The sheer size of his salary, perks and shares package flies in the face of assurances that Barclays and other banks have adopted a culture of restraint" (*Daily Mail*, 20 March). We can understand why the Bob Diamonds

of this world would support capitalism but what about the predicament of the kids reported in the latest WaterAid charity leaflet? "Every 20 seconds a child in the developing world dies from water-related diseases. In around the time it takes you to read the next paragraph, a child somewhere will die. Every day, people in the world's poorest countries face the dilemma of having to trust their health and that of their children to the consequences of drinking water that could kill them. It's a gamble that often carries a high price – seeing children needlessly dying is simply heartbreaking." A dynamic system for bankers maybe but a death sentence for these children.

Prostitutes, pimps and politicians

It is the sort of story that those pimps of Fleet Street love. The French to bring back officially-sanctioned brothels! "More than 60 years after Paris shut its famed *maisons closes*, or brothels, an MP from President Sarkozy's UMP party is campaigning to legalise them again. Chantal Brunel, who was appointed last month to head the national watchdog on sexual equality, is arguing that crime would be cut and sex workers would benefit from 'sexual services centres' similar to those run by most of France's neighbours" (*Times*, 19 March). In advocating a change in French law this MP expressed a long-held but completely fallacious notion. "Ms Brunel, MP for the western Paris suburbs, says that France should follow the example of nearly all its neighbours and allow modern bordels. 'It is true that few women prostitute themselves willingly,' she told *Le Parisien*. 'But we should not be blind. Prostitution has always existed and will always do so.'" Prostitution can only exist in a property based society. For thousands of years before the advent of private property prostitution did not exist, but what is more important in the society based on common ownership of the future affronts to human dignity such as prostitution will be completely impossible.

FREE LUNCH



ISSN 0037 8259

Produced and published by the Socialist Party of Great Britain, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN