

Socialist Standard



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Showbiz and Poverty
The G8
Anti-capitalists
Imperialism and War in Iraq
Suicide Genes
Labour Wins, 1945

Vultures at Gleneagles

The G8 comes to Edinburgh



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Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notice should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.
tel: **020 7622 3811**
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“repeated demonstrations do little more than confirm the continuity of the system. The point is to change society, not to appeal to the doubtful better nature of its power structures.”

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Thieves Kitchen at Gleneagles

This month the world's most powerful politicians are getting together in Gleneagles to discuss how best to exercise their power. Two thousand years ago, in 60 BCE, the three most powerful men in Ancient Rome - Crassus, Caesar and Pompey - met to form a shadow government, one which recognised the reality of their personal power as opposed to the nearly defunct formal constitution of the Republic; in much the same way as the Titanic recognised the iceberg's right of way. Known as the First Triumvirate, it wasn't to last - power cannot work against the logic it's based on; so the rulers of Rome were impelled into a civil war they didn't want because the needs of their camps demanded it.

Now, the G8 has a similar function to this ancient pact: the open and honest rule of the most powerful states beyond the formal international equality and niceties of the United Nations or the World Trade Organisation. The G8, a self-selected club of the richest countries in the world, co-operating together on trade related issues: an open acknowledgement of the golden rule - them as have the gold rule. Unlike the WTO or the UN, it is not an international bureaucracy, but an opportunity for the leaders of the powerful states to meet and discuss policy - a caucus rather than a conference.

It is hopeless to imagine, as some more sappy minded followers of Blair and Brown do, that the G8 can be turned into a force for good in the world. As the most powerful figure in the G8, the President of the United States has shown, the self-

interest of the powerful comes first.

He won't agree to Brown's proposed International Finance Facility, because it doesn't fit with America's plans. Although Blair's Big Idea - for want of a better term - in international politics is that "our"



values can coincide with "our" interests, the reality often is that the values are the garnish to the capitalist feast.

Nor, though, can chanting like plebeians voicing their views in the Forum be of much help. There can be no doubt that in the current world order, the reality is that what these ultra wealthy and ultra powerful states want will happen. They each have the men, the guns and, by Jingo, the money too. Any hope that they will give any attention to the hoi polloi, other than fobbing them off, is a barren one. Business as usual is their god.

Within nation states - where the ruling class is cohesive, their interests similar and where they have to rely on workers administering their interests - political democracy can function and the rule of law have some footing. Politicians and administrators can be and are held to

account. Between nation states though, in the murky wild-west of international law, all these constraints are off.

International diplomacy is clandestine, furtive, removed as far as possible from the democratic gaze. The meetings at Gleneagles will be held behind locked doors, far away from the eyes of anyone interested in proceedings, as the eight colossi dicker and bargain the loot of the whole world. In the ancient world, the definition of a tyrant was a ruler who couldn't walk around without bodyguards: the meetings at Gleneagles will be conducted behind an awesome ring of steel and firepower.

If the G8 were smashed, if its meetings did not happen, the mere practicalities of the existence of these hyper-rich states would mean that they would still have to collaborate and co-ordinate their interests. Simply by being in existence, they have an effect on the politics of the world as irresistible as gravity.

Clearly then, the only way to make progress is to remove the obstacle of these powerful camps and end the interests and powerbases they represent. This can only be done by raising a force adequate to resist them - a movement on a global scale, coherent and co-ordinated, so that one day the rulers of the Earth will wake to find our meeting of the workers, a clique 6 billion strong has settled on their doorstep. Our strength won't be military or financial but creative. We have made the world as it is by our labour, and by the light of our industry and reason we will finally dispel the shadow of privilege and power.

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What will Socialist society do with science?

Most people have no direct experience of science, only of the technology that is an almost incidental by-product of it, yet capitalism pours billions into pure scientific research despite the fact that virtually none of it will ever yield a profit. Why? Because the one per cent that does make a profit will pay for the 99 per cent that doesn't. And what will socialism do with pure research? Carry on the same way? Hardly.

The problem with science in capitalism is that scientists have mortgages to pay, so they need to chase funding because they can't afford to work for free. Much of this funding is from military sources, and weapons systems drive so much research that some have even argued that in socialism we would never have invented the computer! Of course this implies that without military needs no other human needs would surface to take science forward, which is plain nonsense. Valve-

Will Socialism be a Gadget Geek's Paradise?

William Morris's *News From Nowhere* (1890) famously describes a deliberately low-tech socialist society in which people have eschewed the benefits of technology and adopted simple ways of doing things, although arguably he cheats by powering his 'force barges' with some mysterious energy source he never explains, thus hiding his technology rather than really abolishing it. Nonetheless, this is unusual in that most portraits of the future, whether socialist or not, depict a society of advanced technological splendour in which all our needs are met by a range of technical apparatuses only a voice-command away. The amount of electronic appliances in the average household now massively outweighs that of fifty years ago, and half a century from now we may shudder at the poverty of gadgetry suffered in the early 21st century. Whilst it is true that all our digital delights are products of capitalism, it is not necessarily the case that a socialist society will produce an equal amount of high-tech gadgetry. Because socialist production will meet real rather than false needs, it could be that socialism might be a low-gadget society.

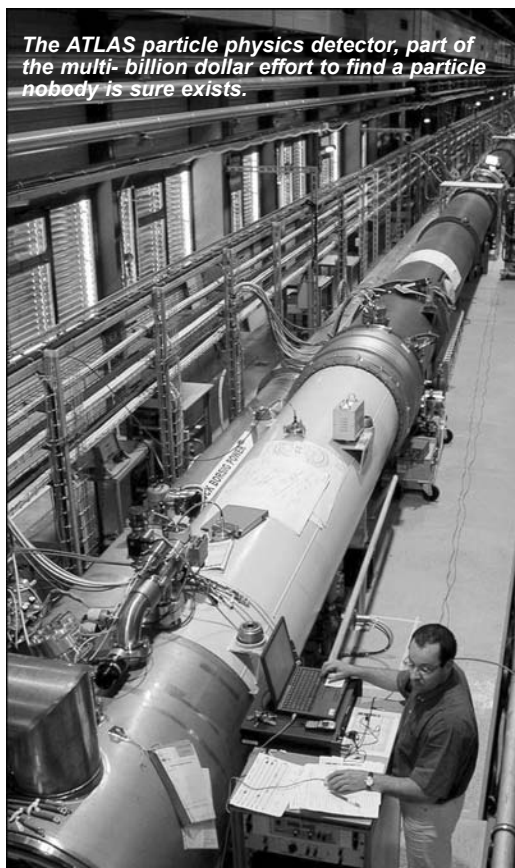
In 1995 few people were demanding a portable telecommunications device small enough to slip into the pocket. Fewer yet desired one that could take still and moving images and transmit them at light-speed around the world. Once the sine qua non of Yuppies



I-Pod - Peer prestige or practical product?

state computing may have arisen because of a desire to calculate ballistics, but Babbage's original 'computer' was developed to calculate navigation for ships, a distinctly unmilitary application. So what approach would socialist society take to the great scientific project?

Priorities would certainly be different. Drug research, for instance, will not occur in capitalism if the estimated \$800m cost is not likely to be recouped, thus diseases rife in poor countries are overlooked while the top three drug groups by global sales are fat reducers (\$26b), anti-ulcerants (\$24b) and anti-depressants (\$20b) (*New Scientist*, Jan 15, p.41). Similarly, science would no longer be prostrate at the feet of the military. Global military spending for 2004 was \$1trillion. The US spends 40% of this, is home to 5 of the top 6 military corporations (the sixth,



The ATLAS particle physics detector, part of the multi-billion dollar effort to find a particle nobody is sure exists.

and then the plaything of the young, mobile phones have achieved phenomenal penetration into our lives and our psychologies to the extent that people now look back to those pre-cellular days and wonder how on earth we managed without them. While the same could be said for many other products, mobile phones are unique due to the speed of their success and saturation of the telecommunications market, and the unparalleled innovativeness of their functions and features.

Much of that innovativeness, however, is market-driven, and if your mobile has a built-in video camera it's probably because profit, not patrons, clamoured for it. People's belief that they need a mobile is a telling example of the phenomenon of an artificially created

BAE Systems, is in the UK), and is the biggest investor in military R&D (\$62.8b in 2004) while the UK is the second biggest (£2.6b in 2003-4). (*New Scientist*, Jan 22, p.19).

While some other lines of research would probably end, for example cosmetics and cosmetic surgery, including most animal testing which is for this purpose, there would be a clear need for continued work in climatology, energy, epidemiology and many others, but it is questionable whether a socialist community would have the same passion as George Bush to send humans to Mars, or to build space hotels.

In capitalism, science is a huge gamble that only occasionally results in a win, but bets are never placed on research that helps people who can't pay. In socialism, science will still be a gamble, but with the difference that no knowledge thus gained can ever be money lost. It may be that the huge time, resource and work investment in such esoteric projects as Atlas and the Large Hadron Collider, the LIGO gravitational wave detector or the AMANDA neutrino telescope will continue in socialism, but if they do it will be because the population understands and respects scientific enquiry for its own sake, and not because they are expecting to get a new groovy gadget out of it.

What we can say for sure is that curiosity is not likely to be dimmed by some inexplicable post-capitalist apathy in a society that releases scientists as well as all other workers from the compulsion to direct their efforts towards only those endeavours that the capitalist class sees an interest in funding. The freedom from patent and copyright restrictions, which are forms of private ownership and will thus be abolished, will almost certainly unlock a tidal wave of new development which may revolutionise areas of science which are currently at a near-standstill, for instance drug research and computing. In addition, the justifiable fear of what corporations, governments and the military might do with horizon science will no longer hold back developments in gene research and nanotechnology. Lastly, the ending of male domination of science, in which men are four times more likely than women to be scientists (*BBC Online Science*, June 16) will produce a vast influx of new talent and new ideas that can only advance scientific effort for the acquisition of knowledge and ultimately the betterment of humanity.

need, that is, the perceived need for a product stimulated not by genuine necessity but by the manipulation of our psychology by a producer battling for financial success in a competitive market. Although mobile phones, i-Pods, palm-top PCs and so on can satisfy some actual needs, it is mainly sociologically- and psychologically-induced perceived needs they actually satisfy, such as the need for conforming to group norms, the desire for prestige, and the belief that a product brings contentment. And because these items are produced to satisfy manipulated needs, they can have little use value.

So if socialism will be a society that relies far less on gadgets, it is only because it will be a more honest society than the present one, without artificial scarcity or artificial needs.

Talk about socialism

Our recent general election campaign in Vauxhall gave us the chance to talk to more people than usual. There was a well-attended hustings meeting at which our candidate and five of the others put their party's case and answered questions from the audience. On most days we had a literature stall outside our Head Office where we handed out leaflets and spoke to passers-by. We also went to other busy spots such as Brixton and outside tube stations. Sixty thousand copies of the candidate's election address were distributed free by Royal Mail.

If we can be said to have had a slogan for our campaign it was "Vote for yourself - for a change!" Of course it takes more than a slogan to persuade people to change their minds. Capitalism teaches consumers to buy brands of political parties like they buy soap powder. So our refreshing message was that our candidate wasn't going to do anything for them. If they wanted to have their problems solved they would have to do it for themselves.

We had less than two thousand pounds to finance our attempt to increase support for socialism. The supporters of capitalism have countless millions to convince us that theirs is the only game in town. You don't have to be an active supporter of capitalism - or even know what it is - to allow it to go on. Passive, resigned, unthinking acceptance will do nicely.

Anti-capitalism may be a start, but it's certainly not a finish. Real change means we have to be consciously working for something, not simply against something. So we talk to people about socialism and

invite them to tell us whether they think it would mean a better life and society than we have now.

Today things are produced only if someone can see a profit in doing so - no profit, no product. Today there are labour markets: we have to find a job to get money or rely on a meagre state handout - or starve. We are told we must support a hugely wasteful and destructive war industry ("defence") to kill or maim men, women and children in other countries with whom we have no quarrel.

What we said in one of our leaflets applies not just at elections but also between elections. We need a new way of running society based on:

1 The common ownership of all resources by the whole community, not just a rich minority.

2 Democratic control of the community by everyone, without distinction of age, race or sex, instead of rule by unelected company directors or state bureaucrats.

3 Production purely to meet people's needs, not profit.

4 Free and equal access to all goods and services - an end to the market and to money.

No one we spoke to thought that what we were proposing is undesirable, not a good idea, worse than what we have now. Instead we were told it had been tried and didn't work, or that for some reason it would never work. That reason usually turned out to be some variant of our old friend "human nature". People are "naturally" lazy - if they can get away with not working they will do so. People are "naturally" greedy - if they can have things without paying for them they will grab the

lot. People are "naturally" aggressive - without the punitive sanctions of law and order there will be chaos.

Funny how all these nasty features of a supposedly unalterable human nature always apply to other people. When challenged, the amateur experts on human nature never admit to showing those features themselves.

Most work in capitalism is unpleasant or boring because it is in the service of making money rather than something useful. Despite being pitted against each other for jobs generously "provided" by employers, workers do co-operate - nothing would be produced if they didn't. It isn't that the world's poor are greedy - considering the plenty that technology and human ingenuity are capable of producing, they aren't greedy enough!

There is a saying that talk is cheap, and in a sense it is. It costs nothing to talk yourself out of supporting capitalism and into helping to build a practical socialist alternative. And it costs nothing to talk others into following your excellent example.

The result of the election in Vauxhall was: Hoey (Lab) 19,744; Anglin (LD) 9,767; Heckels (Con) 5,405; Summers (Green) 1,705; McWhirter (UKIP) 271; Lambert (Socialist) 240; Polenceus (English Democrat) 221.

We also stood a candidate in the county council elections held the same day, in the Deneside ward in Durham, where the result was: Nugent (Lab) 1921; Nicholson (Con) 361; Colborn (Socialist) 288. ■

Contact Details

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

Central London branch.

Corres: Richard Botterill, 21 Ashwell Park, Harpenden, Herts AL5 5SG.

Tel: **01582 764929**

email: richardbotterill@hotmail.com.
2nd & 4th Mon. 7.30. Carpenters Arms, Seymour Place, W1 (near Marble Arch)

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

email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk

South London branch. 1st Mon. 7.45pm. 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

Pimlico. C. Trinder, 24 Greenwood Ct, 155 Cambridge Street, SW1 4VQ.

Tel: **020 7834 8186**

MIDLANDS

Birmingham branch. Thur. 8pm, The Square Peg, Corporation Street.

Tel: Ron Cook, **0121 533 1712**

NORTHEAST

Northeast branch. Corres: John Bissett, 10 Scarborough Parade, Hebburn, Tyne & Wear, NE31 2AL. Tel: **0191 422 6915** email: johnbissett@blueyonder.co.uk

NORTHWEST

Lancaster branch. P. Shannon, 71 Coniston Road, Lancaster LA1 3NW.

email: lorna@kaibosh.freemove.co.uk
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

Rochdale. Tel: R. Chadwick.

01706 522365

Southeast Manchester. Enquiries: Blanche Preston, 68 Fountains Road, M32 9PH

YORKSHIRE

Huddersfield. Richard Rainferd, 28 Armitage Rd, Armitage Bridge, Huddersfield, West Yorks, HD4 7DP

Hull. Keith Scholey. Tel: **01482 44651**

Skipton. R. Cooper, 1 Caxton Garth, Threshfield, Skipton BD23 5EZ.

Tel: **01756 752621**

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Bournemouth and East Dorset. Paul Hannam, 12 Kestrel Close, Upton, Poole BH16 5RP. Tel: **01202 632769**

Brighton. Corres: c/o 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

Bristol. Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol BS5 6DN. Tel: **0117 9511199**

Cambridge. Andrew Westley, 10 Marksby Close, Duxford, Cambridge CB2 4RS. Tel: **01223 570292**

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**

NORTHERN IRELAND

Belfast. R. Montague, 151 Cavehill Road, BT15 1BL. Tel: **02890 586799**

SCOTLAND

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

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

J. Moir. Tel: **0131 440 0995**

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Branch website:

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Glasgow branch. 1st and 3rd

Wednesday of each month at 8pm in

Community Central Halls, 304

Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Richard

Donnelly, 112 Napiershall Street,

Glasgow G20 6HT. Tel: **0141 5794109**

Email:

richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com

Ayrshire: D. Trainer, 21 Manse Street,

Salcoats, KA21 5AA. Tel: **01294**

469994. 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

Quibbert, 53 Falcon Brae, Ladywell,

Livingston, West Lothian, EH5 6UW.

Tel: **01506 462359**

Email: matt@wsweb.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

Gambia. World of Free Access. c/o 21

Dobson St, Banjul.

Kenya. Patrick Ndege, PO Box 56428,

Nairobi

Uganda. Socialist Club, PO Box 217,

Kabale. Email:

wmugyenzi@yahoo.com

Swaziland. Mandia Ntshakala, PO Box

981, Manzini

EUROPE

Denmark. Graham Taylor, Spobjervej

173, DK-8220, Brabrand.

Germany. Norbert. Email:

weltsozialismus@gmx.net

Tristan Miller. Email:

psychonaut@nothingisreal.com

Norway. Robert Stafford. Email:

hallblithe@yahoo.com

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. Email:

wspsz@worldsocialism.org

World Socialist Party of the United

States P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA

02144 USA. Email:

wspboston@mindspring.com

Show Biz Re-visits World Poverty

Can Live 8 and the host of attendant charities campaigning this month really make a difference to world poverty?

Make Poverty History" is an imaginative slogan. Who could disagree with the idea of a society in which all people enjoy good health and material security, with all the miseries of world poverty consigned to the past? Sir Bob Geldof is one who believes in such a world and, as a rock performer with credibility, is trying to mobilise millions of like-minded people in great demonstrations aimed at bringing pressure on the G8 governments to assist the desperately poor in the undeveloped countries. If his plans succeed a million people will go to Edinburgh, and added to these will be many more attending concerts in London, Paris, Rome, Berlin and Philadelphia, all to celebrate their solidarity and to make the point that the people of the richest countries should spend more money to end hunger. The aim is also to persuade world leaders to drop third world debt, reform trade laws and double aid to the undeveloped regions.

It is not for socialists to spoil a good party. On the contrary, we can take some heart from these popular demonstrations of care and concern. It would be even more depressing if millions of people were dying every year from easily preventable causes while those better off never gave it a thought. However, this is not the case, so at least there is something reassuring about the willingness and enthusiasm of many people to join together to focus attention on the tragedies of needless death in a world that could so easily provide the good things of life for all.

However, we are bound to ask some critical questions. The staging of pop concerts aimed at making poverty history is beginning to acquire a history of its own. It is twenty years since the first Live Aid Concert was staged at Wembley in 1985 and was thought to be a great success. The aim was to make a difference but what difference did it make?

Reality behind the hype

No doubt in a very minor way the money raised following concerts and channelled through organisations like OXFAM has done a bit of good. But this should be seen against the scale of the problem and whether the actions led by Live Aid, or as it is now called Live 8, in any way address its causes. Over the years, agencies of the United Nations such as the Food and Agricultural Organisation have posted the numbers suffering poverty. For example, in 1975, 435 million people were seriously undernourished. By the year 2000 this had almost doubled to 820 million.

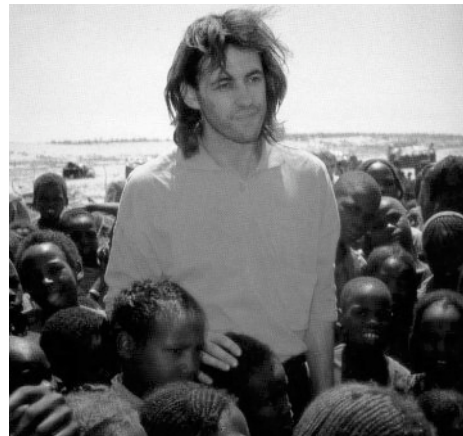
UNICEF states that approximately 40,000 children under five die every day from preventable causes. These figures indicate that since the first Live Aid concert in 1985 the numbers dying from poverty have been increasing horrendously, which leaves little doubt that pop concerts and the charities have made no significant impact on the problem. The grim facts are that the present methods of the "Make Poverty History" campaign stand no chance of ending deaths from hunger. If we are to be serious about stopping this perpetual holocaust, the many thousands of people who support this campaign should have a serious re-think about how best to go about it.

We don't see much by way of analysis, but judged by its methods the "Make Poverty History" campaign appears to think that the fault lies with the developed countries in not cancelling third world debt, not opening up more free trade, and not being more generous in sending money aid to the undeveloped countries, particularly in Africa. However, there is not a shred of evidence that any cancellation of debt will result in improved conditions for workers in Africa. It is claimed that the

"protest tends to set a stage for further protest and further demonstrations"

aim of loans to African states is to improve services such as health and education and build up infrastructures such as communications, port facilities, roads and bridges, etc. In theory these would assist the development of trade with a prospect of raising living standards throughout the continent. A more realistic view is that loans enable Western governments, banks and global corporations to maintain an economic stranglehold on the economies of countries that are rich in resources such as oil, natural gas, gold, diamonds, iron ore, titanium ore, bauxite, timber, rubber, copper and other vital materials.

One example is Nigeria with a population of 135 million, GDP per capita of \$275 per annum, an external debt of \$1.1 billion and producing 750 million barrels of oil per year under the control of global oil companies such as Shell (Anglo Dutch), Exxon Mobil (US), Sasol (South



Africa), AGIP International (Italy), Chevron (US), Total (France), BP (UK), Statoil (Norway).

Angola financed its civil war from profits from the sales of oil and diamonds and also relies on oil-backed loans which now burden the economy with an external debt of \$10.45 billion. Average life expectancy in Angola is 36 years. Its GDP per capita income is \$632 per year. Whilst most of its population suffers the most severe poverty its political rulers benefit from corruption. "The IMF found that between 1997 and 2002 some \$4.22 billion went missing equivalent to some 12 percent of GDP. Angola's wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small elite, who often use government positions for massive personal enrichment" (Guardian, 1 June).

The small country of Equatorial Guinea was recently subject to an escapade involving Sir Mark Thatcher who was accused of being part of an intended takeover. It is immensely rich in resources with oil and gas production expected to reach 150 million barrels a year. It carries an external debt of \$248 million. Some international companies reaping high profits include Marathon Oil (US), Exxon Mobile (US), Energy Africa (South Africa), Chevron (US), British Gas (UK).

Marathon Oil operates in Equatorial Guinea on very good terms which may be associated with the benefits its politicians enjoy. "Teodoro Obiang Nguema, the country's president, and his wife and son, were apparently treating themselves to planes, big houses and shopping sprees. Millions of dollars in cash were being lugged around Washington in suitcases" (Guardian, 2 June).

Taking the continent of Africa as a whole the (British) Prime Minister's Commission for Africa "estimated that the amount stolen and now held in foreign banks is equivalent to more than half the continent's external debt of \$300 billion" (Guardian, 3 June).

There can be little doubt that the world we are now describing is one motivated by greed and pursued through a ruthless exploitation of natural and human resources. The main players are governments, multinational corporations and corrupt local politicians running gangster regimes. It may well be that the governments of the G8 will make a gesture that partially cancels third world debt but the write-off of these dollars will only be a means of continuing their grip on African countries whilst dressing their actions with the phoney rhetoric of care and concern.

There will be no outcome that will



Extreme left: Geldof in the eighties during the campaign to end famine in Africa. **Far left :** twenty years later, the campaigns and the famines continue. **Left: The Commission for Africa**

solve the problems of the desperately poor of Africa, and however well meaning may be their slogans, workers in the developed countries should not become involved in the machinations of interest groups whose basic concern is profit and the economic strategies of ruling elites.

Weakness of mere protest

Whilst the G8 protests may demonstrate great strength of feeling they will also demonstrate a great weakness; this is the lack of control of those who take part and their dependence on the decisions and actions of present power structures. Because of this, protesters can become victims of a seductive but deadly process. The capitalist system constantly throws up issues that demand action amongst those who are concerned and by many people who think of themselves as socialists. As a result, protest tends to become a demand for an "improved" kind of capitalism which leaves the long-term reasons for protest intact. This has been the history of protest.

In this sense, protest tends to set a stage for further protest and further demonstrations. Though the issues may vary the message stays the same: "We

demand that governments do this, that or the other!" The spectacle of thousands demanding that governments act on their behalf is a most reassuring signal to those in power that their positions of control are secure. In this way, repeated demonstrations do little more than confirm the continuity of the system. The point is to change society, not to appeal to the doubtful better nature of its power structures.

With Sir Bob as its high priest, we could also think of the Live 8 concerts as homage to the god of money and the illusion that it has powers of action on its own. But the opposite is true. Money is part of a system that prevents us from using our real powers of production for the benefit of all people. Geldof never stops going on about giving more money and this feeds the illusion that without money we have no way to provide for the things we need. This leaves us separated from our powers of action. It ignores the fact that productive resources are not money but labour, land, industry, manufacture, transport and communications. The problems of world poverty require that these should be liberated from the

economic constraints of money and the profit system.

Given that the number of people suffering and dying from the effects of world poverty have doubled over the past 25 years and on any realistic forecast will continue to increase, it should be obvious that we must go far beyond mere protests, organise to abolish the profit system and replace it with a world of common ownership, democratic control and production solely for needs. Such a socialist world would be able to stop people dying from hunger immediately and rapidly increase world food production to reach a point where every person on the planet would have free access to sufficient good quality food to maintain good health. ■

PIETER LAWRENCE



Cooking the Books (1)

The Right to Work All Hours

In 1993 the European Commission proposed that the maximum time that employers could legally make their

employees work should be limited, on average and including overtime, to 48 hours a week.

A quick calculation will show that, for a six-day week, this is the Eight Hour Day, a long-time trade union demand. In *Capital* (chapter 10 on "The Working Day") Marx quotes a declaration from a General Congress of Labor that met in Baltimore in August 1866 that "The first and great necessity of the present, to free the labour of this country from capitalistic slavery, is the passing of a law by which eight hours shall be the normal working day in all States of the American Union". In fact, May Day was instituted in 1889 precisely to demonstrate for this in all countries.

The Council of Ministers of the Member States of the European Union (the body that makes European laws) did not accept this proposal. While still retaining

48 hours as the maximum that employers could legally require their workers to work, they amended the draft Working Time Directive to allow countries to provide for individual workers to voluntarily waive their legal right not to work more than this. This loophole, inserted at the insistence of the UK minister, came to be known as the "UK opt-out". Which the then Tory government immediately took advantage of.

Since the bargaining strength of workers and employers are by no means equal this made the Directive virtually a dead letter in Britain, with employers making "voluntary" agreement to work longer a condition for being employed or promoted. As Paul Routledge explained in his column in the *Daily Mirror* (13 May):

"Forty per cent of UK firms exploit the opt-out - by 'asking' workers to sign away their rights. Many bosses require staff to accept employment contracts containing an opt-out clause, even though this is illegal. No clause, no job".

When the Directive came up for review in May this year, the European Parliament (which is not a real parliament, more a consultative committee) voted to end the "UK opt-out". Immediately a huge hue and cry was raised by employers' organisations in Britain. "Freedom of

choice" was at issue, said the Director General of the CBI, echoing what employers had said in the 1840s when a timid bill to limit the working day to ten hours had been introduced. It would undermine "competitiveness", said the Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce, expressing employers' dislike of restrictions on how long they can get their workers to work, since any limitation could mean they might have to take on more workers, so increasing their labour costs and undermining their competitive position vis-à-vis capitalist enterprises in other countries - such as China, Brazil and India where no such restrictions apply.

And what did the newly-elected Labour government have to say on this? Yes, yes, it would undermine competitiveness, we'll fight to ensure that a maximum 48-hour week is not introduced into Britain, grovelled Industry Secretary Alan Johnston and Employment Minister Gerry Sutcliffe (both of whom had climbed the greasy pole via the trade union movement).

True to their word, they did and won. The Council of Ministers retained the opt-out. Proof if any more were needed (which it isn't) that Labour is not even a "Labour" party.



Clockwise, from left: Edinburgh, site of this month's G8 meeting; 3 of the 8; the fab 2, and Oxfam.

Making Poverty History or Helping Capitalists Exploit Africa?

Is Brown and Blair's noble talk of 100 per cent debt cancellation for the poorest countries more a case of noblesse oblige?

Who is the G8? In a nutshell, it is a clique of the 8 leading industrial States who have appointed themselves rulers of the world. The G8 leaders are actually the executive of the capitalist class of their respective countries and are the staunchest defenders of neoliberal corporate globalisation, the custodians of privilege and corporate power and the guardians of world capitalism. They help rule the world and maintain the playing field for profit-hungry western corporations. Together they have the power to dictate who eats and who starves, who lives and who dies, to declare war regardless of the wishes of the people who elected them. Their policies have resulted in global poverty and environmental destruction. They are meeting in Edinburgh this July to decide on which international strategies they can commonly pursue, allegedly in the interests of the people of the world and the natural environment.

Lined up against the G8 leaders this July in Edinburgh is the campaign group Make Poverty History, a loose coalition of some 450 NGOs, unions and charitable organisations, united in the demand for fairer trading conditions for developing States, debt cancellation and increased and improved aid.

Oxfam's role

By far the biggest development organisation within Make Poverty History is Oxfam, which has been widely accused of pandering to the whims of New Labour and propagating objectives which are identical to those of a Blair government frantic, in the face of the Iraq fiasco, to implement a foreign policy that campaign movements

can stomach. Indeed, there are individuals and groups associated with Make Poverty History who identify with the objectives of Messrs Blair and Brown. The celebrity Bono, for instance, referred to the smiling duo at the last Labour Party conference as the "Lennon and McCartney" of poverty reduction.

Loud-mouthed celebrity Bob Geldof, a week after Bono's remark, revealed he was backing Tony Blair and Gordon Brown's attempts to deliver development to Africa because of their Christian values. Geldof can well support New Labour and obsessively promote the agenda of the MPH campaign, but you have to begin asking questions when even Blair has been spotted wearing a white Make Poverty History wristband.

The praise is of course reciprocal. On 3 June, Gordon Brown expressed his support for Sir Bob the Gob's Live8 concerts and encouraged demonstrations at the G8 summit, as long as they take the form of a "peaceful march". Any other government would have feared a march by one million demonstrators, but not New Labour. Blair and Brown are so happy with the convergence of their own overseas agenda and the demands of the Make Poverty History campaign that they rather see a million person march as being a rally in support of Labour Party policies.

Chancellor Gordon Brown is nowadays advised on international development by former Oxfam trustee and former director at the US bank UBS Warburg, Shriti Vadera, and Blair has the backing of Justin Forsyth - one time Director of Policy and Campaigns at Oxfam - on the Downing Street Policy Unit. Said

the latter back in 2002: "When you speak to Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, they really understand [the] issues. They are easily some of the best leaders when it comes to talking about development and dismantling subsidy, and they are making the right arguments time and again."

Of course there are some within Making Poverty History that see through the scam. War on Want is dismayed at the way New Labour's overseas policies are winning widespread acceptance and undermining their own campaigning efforts. And neither is Christian Aid happy at Oxfam's over-cosy, less critical relationship with the government. Friends of the Earth likewise believe there are disadvantages to the privileged position Oxfam enjoys with the government, believing the demands of campaign movements are becoming diluted and generalised.

They have a point. Blair sees himself as somewhat spearheading the MPH campaign at Gleneagles and queries why the MPH are heading for Edinburgh when he speaks their jargon. In Dundee, in March of this year, he commented: "It would be very odd if people came to protest against this G8, as we're focusing on poverty in Africa and climate change. I don't quite know what they'll be protesting against."

Making Poverty History has been so linked to the government as to be rendered toothless. When the main players in the coalition demanded a meeting with the government, Whitehall couldn't accede fast enough. So closely have Blair and Brown been identified with the objectives of the coalition that they have been criticised by other EU member states for softening their pro-liberalisation stance.

And who is it that rallied to the defence of the government to counter the claims of Blair's cynics in Europe? None other than Oxfam who issued a statement criticising Blair's detractors for trying to hamper Britain's attempt to help the world's poor. It is no secret that Oxfam has informed other developmental groups linked to Make Poverty History that it is important not to be perceived as being confrontational with the government now that Blair and Brown are singing from the same hymn sheet as them.

Opening up Africa

Meanwhile, John Hilary, Director of Campaigns and Policy at War on Want, says that the British contingent at the WTO told him to "get real. The development agenda does not go very far. We have to be pro-business and pro-trade" (New Statesman, 30 May).

Hilary appears to have been well-informed when one considers the agenda emerging from the much praised Commission for Africa Report. This report, which was published on 11 March is the showpiece of the Blair government's strategy for the G8, responding to its launch, the BBC, (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4337239.stm>) listed eight areas necessitating action by the West, inclusive of doubling or trebling aid, cancelling debt, spending more on HIV/AIDS, financing African universities and the removal of trade barriers to African exports in the West. (The report can be downloaded in full or in sections at: <http://www.commissionforafrica.org/english/report/introduction.html>)

There is much in the report to whet the appetite of the anti-poverty campaigner. But, you need only read the précis of the various chapters to suss out what is in fact the real schema. In chapter 7, for instance, objectives for fiscal growth in Africa are alleged to be possible "only if the obstacles of... a discouraging investment climate are overcome". And it proposes the "public and private sector working together to identify the obstacles to a favourable investment climate". How else can this be interpreted other than in suggesting more liberalisation and privatisation and more opportunities for western corporations to exploit African resources and labour?

The summary of Chapter 8 says: "Investments in infrastructure and the enabling climate for the private sector are at the top of the agenda." Is this not the government spearheading neoliberal reform in Africa on behalf of big business?

Business Action for Africa has been in cahoots with the Commission for Africa. This coalition of 250 business representatives met with the Commission in February following formal dialogue between the Commission and the private sector on the continents of Africa, North America and Europe - a meeting arranged via the Business Contact Group, itself set up to provide private sector input to the Commission for Africa, and the result of a meeting co-chaired by Gordon Brown and Reuter's chairman, Niall Fitzgerald.

Referring to the Business Contact Group, Corporate Watch observed:

"Its 16 or so corporate members read like a roll call of the most exploitative and despised companies currently operating on

the continent including Anglo American, Shell, De Beers, Rio Tinto and...Diageo, who also own the Gleneagles hotel where the G8 Summit will take place. Its programme was managed by Shell International's Senior Business Development Advisor for Africa. Also managing the Contact Group is the Commonwealth Business Council (CBC). The Corporate Council on Africa and the Canadian Council on Africa also gave input, thus allowing oil corporations, ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco, a say." (http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/?lid_1535)

Dave Miller, writing for *Znet* in an article entitled *Spinning the G8*, commented:

"The corporations involved can barely contain their excitement. The 'outlook' of the business community is a 'positive one' says one of the CFA commissioners. 'It believes Africa is the next frontier for investment'. James Smith, the UK chair of Shell, which co-hosted the meeting, noted that progress 'requires that the private sector has a bigger role'. The chair of the Commonwealth Business Council, the business lobby group co-hosting the meeting, read out the concluding statement. Dr Mohan Kaul affirmed that 'getting the

"The protesters at the G8 are united in supporting capitalism"

conditions right for doing business in Africa is the biggest single investment for the future well-being of its citizens'. A 'vibrant and successful private sector... is required' he noted.

(http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cf?ItemID_7852)

EU states may well be critical of Britain's new pro-Africa stance as being influenced by celebrities and NGOs, but the truth is that affiliates to Make Poverty History, in applauding Brown and Blair, are the unwitting accomplices of a government which forms the vanguard of the latest corporate drive to open up markets throughout the developing world.

World-wide reaction

Increasingly, in the last decade, there has been a worldwide reaction against neoliberal globalisation, corporate power and the injustices associated with modern-day capitalism. Everywhere where the world's ruling elite have assembled to decide their next step they have been met with protests and demonstrations that have attracted hundreds of thousands. Demonstrations at Seattle, Gothenburg, Cologne, Evian, Birmingham, Prague, Genoa and Quebec, have stimulated debate on the nature of modern day capitalism. Thousands of articles have been written on the subject and hundreds of books have been published that explore the aims, objectives and the alternatives offered by the anti-globalisation movement.

What is now clear is that the anti-globalisation/pro-development movement, however well-meaning, does not seek to replace capitalism with any real alternative social system. At best it attracts a myriad of groups, all pursuing their own reformist

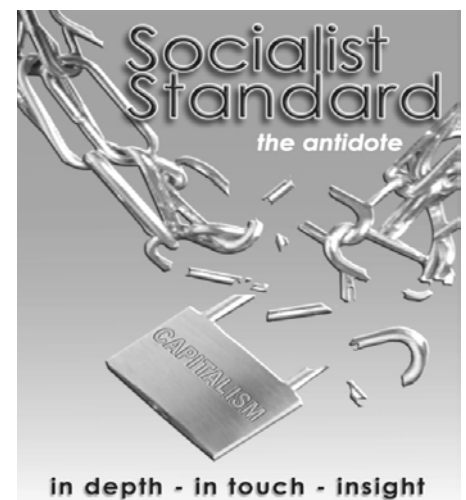
agenda. Some call for greater corporate responsibility. Some demand the restructuring of international institutions like the IMF, World Bank and the WTO. Others call for the expansion of democracy and fairer trading conditions, debt cancellation and more aid. All, however, fail to address the root cause of the problems of capitalism and promote the damnable system they are critical of by applauding any meagre reform.

One thing is certain: no amount of high table reform is going to legislate poverty out of existence as the MHP coalition believes. Capitalism cannot be reformed in the interests of the world's suffering billions, because reform does not address the basic contradiction between profit and need. Moreover, reform can be so packaged and camouflaged as to be acceptable to protestors whilst leaving their real grievances unaddressed. The world's leaders simply cannot be depended upon to implement real change because they can only ever act as the executive of corporate capitalism.

The protesters at the G8 might think they are united in common cause, but in truth they are only united in supporting capitalism and in their mistaken belief that poverty can be legislated out of existence. They have no blueprint for change other than the three demands put forward by the Make Poverty History campaign - Fair trade, more aid and debt cancellation - and this is about as radical as it gets. In mirroring in their objectives the overseas goals of Blair and Brown they are anything but the modern day revolutionaries they claim to be.

It is now no utopian fantasy - but a practical, revolutionary proposition - to suggest we can live in a world without waste or want or war, in which each person has free access to the benefits of civilisation. That much is assured. We certainly have the science, the technology and the know-how. All that is missing is the will - the global desire for change that can make that next great historical advance possible; a belief in ourselves as masters of our own destiny; a belief that it is possible to free production from the artificial constraints of profit and to fashion a world in our own interests. And how soon this happens depends upon us all - each and every one of us. ■

JOHN BISSETT



The magazine for the post-capitalist age

Who Are the Anti-Capitalists?

Does the anti-capitalist movement really want "another world" as it claims, or just another form of capitalism?

In December 1999 a meeting of the World Trade Organisation took place in America, in Seattle. Delegates were met by a large demonstration which ended in a riot both by some of the demonstrators and by the police. So was born an international protest movement that has come to be known as the "anti-capitalist" or "anti-globalisation" movement.

"Anti-globalisation" was not a very good choice of name since you can't be against globalisation. Well you can, but it doesn't make sense. Globalisation - in the sense of the world becoming more integrated, of the emergence of "one world" - is basically a good thing, part of the preparation of the material basis for a world socialist society. In the end, most in the movement itself came to realise this and adopted the slogan "Another World is Possible", i.e. another sort of globalisation is possible. It is actually quite a good slogan, which we socialists can endorse - and use - too.

But what do they envisage by "another world"? We know what we mean: a world without frontiers in which all the resources of the planet, both natural and industrial, have become the common heritage of all humanity and are used, under democratic control, to turn out what is needed by people to live and to enjoy life. As far as we are concerned, that is the only framework within which can be solved the problems facing humanity, not only obviously world problems such as global warming, wars and the threat of war, but also more "local" problems such as in the fields of healthcare, education, transport and the like but which are basically the same in all countries.

That's what we mean by "another world" but what do they mean by it? Some (a handful) may agree with us. But most don't. Most would, however, be prepared to accept being described as "anti-capitalist".

But what is capitalism? To most people, capitalism is associated, rightly or wrongly, with three things: private ownership, production for profit, and laissez-faire economics.

Corporate capitalism

Private ownership originally meant the ownership of industry by private individuals. But, while this may have been the case in the days of Adam Smith (in the 1770s), this hasn't been the predominant form of ownership since the introduction and rapid spread in the second half of the 19th century of what in England was called a "limited company" and in America a "corporation". A limited company is a separate legal entity in its own right. It is the company, the corporation, that owns the assets, the shareholders owning as a collective group not as individuals. This means that they are only personally liable, if the company goes bankrupt, for the amount



of their shareholding, not their total wealth. Hence the name "limited liability company".

So, as well as private ownership it would be more accurate to speak of capitalism as nowadays involving company or corporate ownership. And, indeed, some in the anti-capitalist movement take this into account by talking of "corporate capitalism". Which is OK as far as it goes. Only it doesn't go far enough - because it doesn't take into account state ownership. State ownership is still a form of "private" ownership in the broader sense in that it is still a form of ownership (by those who benefit from it) that excludes - deprives - other people; it is not at all the same as common ownership, which is ownership by everybody - or nobody, since with common ownership no individual or group of

Anti-globalisation protesters in Washington, 1999.

individuals can say "this is my property, you can't use it". With state ownership, those who control the state can, and do, say this.

So, we would say that capitalism is based on the individual, corporate or state ownership of the means of production whereas, for most in the anti-capitalist movement, it means only individual or corporate ownership. Which makes a difference of course, as to what you are going to regard as "anti" or "non" capitalism.

Production for profit

But there is no dispute, not even with avowed supporters of capitalism, that one of the key features of capitalism is production

for profit. The motive for producing things under capitalism is to make a profit, as the difference in money terms between the cost of producing them and the money received when they're sold. Differences arise of course over the origin and justification of profits, but all are agreed that seeking to make a monetary profit is what motivates production under capitalism. In fact, the "Profit System" is another - very good - name for capitalism, which we often use ourselves.

From another angle, capitalism could also be called the Wages System since most people under it get a living by working for a wage or salary. But employers are not philanthropists. They don't employ people simply to provide them with an income to buy what they need to live. They only employ people when they calculate that they can get something out of it - profit, which is the difference between the value of what employees produce compared with what they are paid as wages and salaries. But profits are not all used up in riotous living by employers and their hangers-on. Some is of course but any employer or company that consumed all its profits in this way wouldn't last too long. Under the pressure of competition on the market, firms are compelled to re-invest most of the profits they make in keeping the productive apparatus they control as up-to-date as possible, so that they can produce as cheaply as possible and sell their products at a price equal to or below that of their rivals. Failure to do this will lead to falling sales and lower profits and eventually either to bankruptcy or to being taken over by some rival.

So, capitalism is an economic system where, under pressure from the market, profits are accumulated as further capital, i.e. as money invested in production with a view to making further profits. This is not a matter of the individual choice of those in control of capitalist production - it's not due to their personal greed or inhumanity - it's something forced on them by the operation of the system. And which operates irrespective of whether a particular economic unit is the property of an individual, a limited company, the state or even of a workers' cooperative.

Neo-liberalism

The third popular idea of capitalism - laissez-faire economics - is more controversial as a defining feature of capitalism. Laissez-faire - from the French for "let it take place" or "leave it alone" - is basically a call for governments not to interfere in the operation of the market, to let market forces operate unhindered. It was first coined by some 18th century French economists opposed to the restrictions on trade and industry inherited from feudal times that then still existed. And was taken up by Adam Smith and in the 19th century by the mill-owners of Lancashire - hence its one-time other name of "Manchesterism". It has also been called "liberalism", associated as it was with the policy of Free Trade advocated and defended by the British Liberal Party in its hey-day. But it has never really existed in anything like a pure form.

For as long as capitalism has existed (and Marx and others date the beginning of capitalism to the middle of the 16th century) state "interference", or to use a neutral word state "intervention", in the



James Burnham

economy has always existed. So laissez-faire is more a policy, advocated by certain interest groups within capitalism at certain times and in certain places. As such it can't be said to be a defining feature of capitalism.

With the Great Slump of the 1930s, state intervention grew continuously. Economic teachings were changed to take this into account and to justify it - the so-called Keynesian Revolution. In fact state intervention was growing to such an extent that, in the 1940s, many thought that the trend was towards a completely statized economy. Witness books such as James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution* and George Orwell's *1984*. There were also optimists who thought that the gradual extension of nationalisation and the Welfare State would eventually end in socialism. But this was not to be: neither full state capitalism nor socialism resulted. Except in places like Russia (and later China) and its

"The anti-capitalist movement is doomed to failure"

satellites where there already existed more or less full state capitalism, this process stopped at a so-called mixed economy of individual, corporate and state enterprises.

Then came the crisis that broke out in the early 1970s, from which the world economy has still not fully recovered (growth rates are nothing like they were in the 40s, 50s and 60s). But the political reaction to this prolonged period of relative stagnation was the opposite to what it had been in the 1930s. Unproductive state spending had to be cut back in order for a country's industries to remain competitive on world markets. It resulted in a retreat, not an extension of state intervention. In the 80s under Reagan in America and Thatcher in Britain and others in other countries, privatisation, deregulation, cuts in the Welfare State, were the order of the day. Keynesian economics was dethroned and replaced by Monetarism. Opponents called these policies "neo-liberalism", by which they mean a return to the laissez-faire policies advocated by Adam Smith, the Manchester cotton-lords and the 19th century British Liberal Party.

In the literature of the anti-capitalist movement this word "neo-liberalism" occurs again and again. In fact, so often

that it gives a very strong hint that this is what the movement is really opposed to, that this is what it means by "anti-capitalism". Not opposition to capitalism as such (as we would understand it: the economic mechanism of production for sale with a view to profit) but opposition only to the policies currently pursued by nearly every country in the world and imposed by the IMF and the WTO on those who might be tempted not to.

Another policy

The alternative they offer to neo-liberalism is not anti-capitalism, at least only insofar as capitalism is identified with liberalism (which as we saw is wrong). It is basically a return to the State interventionism of the 1950s and 1960s. The argument is that the State could, if it so chose (or if enough popular pressure was brought to bear on it), abandon neo-liberal, laissez-faire policies and again adopt interventionist ones (import controls, currency controls, restore and extend the Welfare State, regulate corporations, even re-nationalise industries). More that "Another Policy" than "Another World" is possible. But there's nothing anti-capitalist about import controls, currency controls, etc. In fact they were practised before the 1980s by openly pro-capitalist governments just as much as by pseudo-socialist Labour governments.

There is some parallel between the old Labour movement and the new anti-capitalist movement. For the old Labour movement too, capitalism was essentially private capitalism. In its declarations it was "private profit" and "profiteering" (i.e. making too much profit) rather than profit as such that was denounced; the alternative promised was state capitalism (nationalisation and state control). It, too, set out to tame and humanise capitalism - and failed utterly, so utterly in fact that Labour and similar parties now openly embrace the market, competition and profit-making, the whole "enterprise culture" package. Instead of them changing capitalism, capitalism has changed them into a mere alternative team of managers of the capitalist system. The anti-capitalist movement is not likely to be any more successful in taming capitalism. In fact, following this road, it is doomed to failure.

The economic mechanism that is capitalism is just too strong and can't be overcome either by government action or by lobbying or by political pressure in the streets. Capitalism just cannot be reformed to work in any other way than it does and always has done. An effective anti-capitalist movement will have to be one that works for ending the impersonal economic mechanism that is capitalism by restoring control of production to society; which can only be done on the basis of the Earth's natural and industrial resources having become the common heritage of all Humanity. ■

ADAM BUICK

Iraq, imperialism and the anti- war campaign

The anti-war campaign agitates for withdrawal of all Australian and US troops from Iraq, but this is not a demand for no war in Iraq (although the campaign organisers seem to think that it is), it is a demand that the existing civil war be allowed to continue without the US and Australia backing one side or the other. The fact that the civil war started because of the US invasion does not change this.

It is wildly unlikely, but just possible, that the US would indeed withdraw. They have done something loosely similar in Vietnam, Somalia and Lebanon. Conceivably, it could happen in Iraq. However, Iraqi oil is an enormously rich prize, and the strategic leverage that it would grant to the US over the EU, China and Japan is an even richer prize.

The US invaded Iraq to gain control of the most cheaply accessible large oilfields in the world. It will withdraw only if the insurgency makes the military costs of controlling Iraq (which increase the effective cost of producing the oil) so great that these costs become an intolerable burden on the US capitalist class as a whole, or if popular resistance in the US and throughout their allies produces the same effect.

Almost certainly, the insurgency would have to get much, much worse or popular resistance massively increase, before that point was reached, because the US does not want the oil of Iraq only for the sake of the profits to be gained from it.

They also want it because having control over the two largest oil producers in OPEC (Saudi Arabia and Iraq) would mean that the US would have something approaching a veto over the industrial development of their three main world rivals; China, Japan and the EU.

The justifications for the invasion are entirely hypocritical, both the pre-invasion claims about the weapons of mass destruction, and the post-invasion ones based on the blood-soaked repressiveness of Saddam Hussein's regime and the story that "We did it to bring democracy to the Iraqis". We may begin to take Iraqi democracy and sovereignty seriously when the US government is willing to accept an order from an elected Iraqi government that US forces leave Iraq.

The Ba'athist regime was, indeed, one of the world's worst tyrannies, but that didn't bother

the US while Iraq was a US ally, during, for example, the Iran-Iraq war. The US has no objection to blood-soaked tyrannies, provided that they are useful (meaning profitable, directly or indirectly) to the US ruling class. The chemical and biological WMD, or the facilities for making them, were originally supplied by the US and Western European governments, at a time when there were certainly terrorist outfits headquartered in Baghdad; Abu Nidal's, for one. So, the possibility that Iraq would pass WMD to terrorists (a possibility that the US and other Western governments helped create), only became a threat when the US needed an excuse for an invasion. Andrew Wilkie, who was in a position to know, developed the real point:

"Superimposed over specifics like oil, however, was a much bigger issue - the US's determination to safeguard and enhance its global ideological, economic and military hegemony. This is the big one: the grand strategy of the US to reign supreme permanently, as espoused by the so-called 'neo-conservatives' and articulated bluntly in September 2002 in The National Security Strategy of the United States of America. In this quest, Iraq was as much a demonstration as a consequence - an almost theatrical

performance against a country consequent enough for people to notice, for reasons alarming enough for people to care, on terms lopsided enough to guarantee a crushing demonstration of US military muscle. Or at least that was the idea."

However, even if the US did withdraw, then almost certainly, Iraq would not be left to its own blood-letting; there would very probably be other invasions, Turkey and Iran being the obvious candidates, Syria and Saudi Arabia other possibilities.

Even if, through some miracle, there was no further foreign interference in Iraq after a US withdrawal, there is no reason for confidence that the civil war would stop anytime soon or even that it would be less bloody in the absence of US and Australian troops. One of the bloodiest civil wars of the twentieth century occurred only a little over ten years ago, without any obvious interference from the West, except for a French intervention to protect the perpetrators of the genocide; we refer, of course, to Rwanda.

That civil war fed directly into what must be the worst war in the world; in the Congo there have been an estimated 3 million dead and it's still going on. Almost certainly, the riches that can be looted from

"We may begin to take Iraqi democracy and sovereignty seriously when the US government is willing to accept an order from an elected Iraqi government that US forces leave Iraq."

Iraq, and the strategic advantage that can be gained from that looting, exceed those that can be had by looting from the Congo; which is one reason why the West is not directly involved in the Congo. (Although all the states surrounding Congo, plus Zimbabwe, are) It is also why Iraq will not be left alone; any state that can see an opportunity to interfere, will.

No one, least of all anti-war demonstrators in Australia, should pretend that any of these possibilities are in any way in the interests of the people of Iraq.

Virtually all the left-wing agitation about Australian foreign policy, and US imperial policy, is based on the underlying assumption (or rather, fantasy), that the natural order of capitalism is a world of independent, sovereign, mutually-respectful nations. What is thought to be necessary to achieve this is that the US stop acting as an imperialist thug, and that Australia stop helping them do it. Nice idea, but capitalism just ain't like that.

It's a world system of interdependent, not a worldwide collection of independent ones.

If the US declines as an imperialist power, others will take their place, China being an obvious candidate and, given the Chinese government's record of racist, genocidal colonialism in



Waiting in the wings?

Tibet, they may even make the US look moderate by comparison. An obvious target for the first major Chinese imperialist adventure is the group of oil-and-natural-gas-rich states between

the Chinese Western border and the Caspian Sea.

Capitalist states (of which China is one) are not moral entities, and their ruling classes do not react to attempts at moral persuasion. They perpetually seek profit and react to what could loosely be called profit-and-loss calculations. If profit requires that they dominate other countries (to the extent that they can), so be it.

The consent of the ruled (us!) is essential to the continued functioning of capitalism (in both its state-capitalist and private-capitalist forms). Our consent, or our resistance, is part of our rulers' profit-and-loss estimates.

We can make this particular imperialist adventure too difficult or too expensive for the rulers of Australia, which is, after all, a junior partner of US capitalism.

The people of the US and the rest of the world, by huge efforts, could make the Iraq occupation too difficult or too expensive, even for the dominant capitalist power. But as long as we, all of us, consent to the capitalist system as a whole, in other words, so long as we resist only this particular imperialist adventure, then there will be more imperialist adventures, by the US and others, more bloodshed, and more terrorist atrocities.

There will also be more poverty, ecological devastation, and more lives spent on mostly-meaningless work and totally meaningless consumerism.

All that the protest organisers can offer, fundamentally, is the prospect of more problems within capitalism, including more wars caused by imperialist adventures, and by rulers using "ethnic tensions" to grab territory, etc., and more protests against those problems and wars. And so on, and on, and on.

There's got to be a better way, and there is; abolish capitalism. That's what we are working for.

The only solution is to work for a world system based on common ownership, and moneyless, free access to wealth. Only then can we have genuinely democratic economies, and therefore genuinely democratic societies. We call this socialism. (which has nothing to do with the deeply repressive and now-failed variant of capitalism invented in the former Soviet Union, and adapted in China, Vietnam, etc.)

The precondition for this society is a majority who understand and want socialism, and understand and reject capitalism. Nothing less than this can give us socialism. Leaders certainly can't.

Huge efforts are required. Let's make sure that they are directed towards getting off the treadmill that is capitalism, not towards trying to turn it into something it can't be. ■

World Socialist Party of Australia leaflet.



Cooking the Books (2)

Wages, prices and profits

Mervyn King, as Governor of the Bank of England, is supposed to know all about inflation. After all, his remit, now that the

Bank no longer takes direct orders from the government, is to keep inflation below 2 per cent a year.

Inflation proper, as the name suggests, is not just any rise in the general price level but a rise caused by over-issuing the currency, something which is entirely under the Bank's control. However, the word has come to mean, even to the Bank's Governor, any rise in the general price level whatever the cause.

Judging by his comments in a speech he gave in Bradford on 13 June, King also subscribes to the view that wage increases cause inflation. The Guardian (14 June) reported his speech under the headline "Migrants hold down inflation says governor":

"Mr King said that the 120,000 eastern Europeans who had arrived in Britain since 10 more countries joined the European Union in May 2004 had kept the lid on wages and prevented inflation from rising . . . "Without this influx to fill the skill gaps in a tight labour market it is likely that earnings would have risen at a faster rate, putting upward pressure on the costs of employers and,

ultimately, inflation," he said."

At least King had the honesty to make it clear that employers (whatever vote-catching politicians might say) welcome immigration of workers from other countries to help both ease skills shortages and keep wages down, but he seemed to be suggesting that, faced with a wage increase, employers can simply pass this on as increased prices.

Later on in his speech, however, he had to admit that employers are not at liberty to raise prices at will:

"May's figures for producer prices showed the cost of the fuel and raw materials used by manufacturers still growing strongly but the increases being largely absorbed in lower profit margins. According to the Office for National Statistics, input prices increased by 7.8% last month compared with a year ago and increased by 0.2% compared with April. In contrast, the weakness of demand and the strength of competitive pressures meant the price of goods leaving factory prices fell by 0.2% last month."

But why, if employers couldn't pass on increases in energy and materials costs, why could they have done so if wages had

increased? The answer is that they can only increase their prices, when their costs increase, if the market will allow this. Otherwise the cost increase, including wages, has to be "absorbed in lower profit margins".

Marx made the same point 140 years ago in a speech he gave to British Trade Unionists. "A general rise of wages would", he said, "result in a fall in the general rate of profit, but not affect values" (*Value, Price and Profit*, chapter XII).



Everyone's reading it

Marketing the suicide seed

In the second week of February the United Nations convened a meeting in Bangkok that, despite its importance, failed to make newspaper headlines or feature anywhere in news broadcasts. The lack of apparent newsworthiness, however, belies the meeting's significance, for in time the issue under discussion could well turn out to have profound consequences for the world's food supply.

At this meeting the Canadian government attempted to overturn the 1998 international moratorium on the commercialisation of 'sterile gene technology.' The Canadian delegation, acting on behalf of the multinational seed companies as well as the US government - not a party to the UN Biodiversity Convention - fiercely attacked a UN report which urged governments throughout the world to ban this particularly nasty branch of GM technology. A reversal of the current moratorium would permit the unleashing of what is known as the Terminator seed with devastating consequences to farmers, particularly in the undeveloped world.

So why should this issue cause so much concern? The US Department of Agriculture first developed Terminator technology in conjunction with multinational seed corporations in the late 1990s. The primary inventor of this technology, Melvin J. Oliver of the United States Department of Agriculture, explained: "Our mission is to protect US agriculture and to make us competitive in the face of foreign competition. Without this, there is no way of protecting the patented seed technology"

(www.earthisland.org). The avowed aim was to protect the investment in the production of superior genetically modified seeds. It gave scientists the ability to modify plants that would produce seeds that grow to maturity but would be incapable of germinating if planted. Put simply, this means that while farmers will get a good crop in the first year of sowing, if they try to save harvested seed for planting in the following year the crop will be sterile, hence the name 'Terminator'.

When the discovery was made public in 1998 it provoked global condemnation, particularly from Asian and African countries and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity was compelled to impose a moratorium on its further development. To all intents and purposes, the issue seemed closed, although this did not deter the seed corporations from continuing their research and registering patent rights over areas of this technology.

Better than patents

Commercialising Terminator would have a devastating impact on an estimated 1.4 billion of the world's poorest farmers who depend on 'saved seeds' and who exchange seed to develop new varieties suited to their growing conditions as a primary source of seed stock, and hence food. In practice genetically modified Terminator seeds will be neither affordable nor relevant to the needs of

farmers in the undeveloped world. Terminator or 'suicide seeds' have been developed to prevent the successful sowing of 'saved seeds,' with a view to forcing farmers to purchase new seed every year and making them reliant on the seed market dominated by the gene corporations. As a means of controlling seed usage this biological solution is more permanent and infinitely more effective than patent or legal restrictions that seek to deny farmers the right to raise their own seed bank. In short Terminator has been developed solely to maximise the profits of the seed industry.

Half of the world's population cannot afford to buy new seed every year and typically depend on 'saved seed' and their skills to adapt a blend of varieties to suit growing conditions. Reversing the moratorium would enable the profit-seeking seed industry to enter completely "new sectors of the seed market - especially in self-pollinating seeds such as wheat, rice, cotton, soybeans, oats and sorghum" (www.earthisland.org). Until recently agribusiness had paid scant regard to crops grown in undeveloped countries, mainly because the industry had been unable to control seed reproduction. Those advocating sterile gene technology claim it could be a boon to undeveloped countries because the corporations that have developed new and better seed would then have the means of protecting their investment and could concentrate on the development of seeds suited to undeveloped countries, hitherto ignored, without having this investment undermined.



There can be little doubt that if Terminator is brought to market the logic of profit will mean the multinational seed corporations will seek to introduce genetic seed sterility into all genetically modified seeds offered for sale. Within a short time this could mean that the world's two most important food crops - wheat and rice, on which three-quarters of the world's poorest people depend - would come under the control of the seed monopolies. The notes to the first Terminator patent lodged by Delta and Pine Land explained that the company intended to make its technology widely available to competitors, but this was so as to penetrate the market with Terminator seed as quickly as possible and across as many varieties of crops as is feasible.

Investment follows profits and if the staple crops of the undeveloped countries can be 'tied up' by Terminator, investment will pour into the seed corporations commercially producing seed where market sales can be guaranteed year on year. It can be no coincidence that the agricultural chemical corporations including DuPont, Dow Corning, Novartis, AgroEvo, and Monsanto have acquired major interests in the seed breeding industry where the ten largest corporations control 40 percent of the global seed market.

Not surprising

The UN Bangkok meeting did not, however,

Sterile seeds - unimaginable in any sane society, but capitalism is not a sane society



conclude in the way the seed corporations had expected. Governments nurturing GM industries not as advanced as those of the US and Canada intervened to thwart the intentions of Canadian government and the multinational corporations. We should not be surprised by the stance of the Canadian government because it is the role of governments to act in the interest of the class who live by profit and it is only doing what is wanted by its masters. But even though the de facto moratorium remains intact the Terminator issue is still

on the negotiating table. It will be discussed at the next UN Convention of Biodiversity in March 2006 and the meeting of the G8 in Scotland this month and every other opportunity thereafter. The multinationals smell blood and have moved up a gear to bring the 'suicide seed' to market.

It is unimaginable that in any sane society scientists in GM technology would wish to identify and develop a terminator gene - only a society motivated by profit

could consider this worthwhile with no other conceivable purpose than to boost profits to those who sell it. But this is capitalism.

It is often claimed that science is neutral - being neither good nor bad. This is an abstraction that ignores the social relations, the social context in which science develops and fails to address the question - 'who benefits'? Technology is almost always directed to the maximisation of profit and frequently has a detrimental impact on the environment or

human well-being. With the pool of scientific knowledge reputedly doubling every twelve months people tend to be intimidated by 'science,' with no choice but to place reliance on so-called 'experts' who generally conceal a vested interest when urging a particular development. The real decisions that influence the world are made in secret and because we live in a society where the interests of the class that own the corporations and companies reign supreme, maximising profits will always head the agenda.

The prudent application of GM technology could be of some benefit to humanity and may be developed in socialism where food will be produced simply to feed people and not for profit. But like so many other scientific developments, the emergence of Terminator demonstrates that certain areas of science can become extremely dangerous when left in the hands of those whose only motivation is profit. In capitalism profit will always prevail over human need and research will normally be funded only into areas where profit can be maximised - regardless of the consequences on human welfare and the planet on which we depend. ■

STEVE TROTT

Enough for All

The Earth's population is now just over 6 billion, and rising. However, it is unlikely to just carry on increasing: with many now choosing to have fewer children, the likelihood is that population will level off around 2050, at around 10 billion (according to the best estimates of UN demographers). Socialist society will of course have to feed these billions, something that the present profit-based system is all too plainly unable to do. As argued by Colin Tudge in *So Shall We Reap* (Penguin 2004), it would not be at all difficult to feed even 10 billion, as long as agriculture were organised along sensible (his word is 'enlightened') lines.

The total land area of the planet is about 12 billion hectares, but only 1.3 billion hectares can currently be used as arable land. Even with a population of 10 billion, this would mean 0.13 hectares per person, or something over a third of an acre. If farmed by means of intensive horticulture (e.g. for tomatoes, avocados, mushrooms), a plot this size could feed dozens. But horticulture on a very large scale is hardly practicable, and ordinary arable farming has to be the essential basis for cultivating land. Proper mixtures of crops and livestock on mixed farms are in fact the best approach.

The average yield in England is about eight tonnes of wheat per hectare per year, enough to feed a couple of dozen people; so the 0.13 hectare per person available once global population settles down would be plenty to feed three or four. The conclusion of such calculations is inescapable: even without genetically-modified crops, the Earth can produce more than enough to feed likely future populations. Take account of the fact that the area under cultivation might be doubled, and fears of overpopulation and appalling famines seem to vanish. We need not take on board all of Tudge's ideas about food cultivation to accept his general point that more than enough food could be produced with current knowledge, resources and techniques, without a need for new technological discoveries.

Wheat, rice and maize are the three most important crops, and they can be produced in sufficient quantity to feed humanity, to ensure that nobody dies of malnutrition and no child goes to bed crying of hunger. A mixed diet of these cereals, together with fresh fruit and vegetables, plus some meat and fish as individuals desire, is just what the doctor (and the planet) ordered. To quote Tudge:

"when agriculture is expressly designed to feed people, all the associated problems seem to solve themselves. In essence, feeding people is easy."

(We suspect that 'easy' here is an exaggeration - 'straightforward' seems a better choice of word.)

So why does it not happen now? Tudge's answer is essentially the one that Socialists would give: food is produced for profit, and those who have no or very little money do not constitute a market. He identifies the current capitalist model as monetarised, industrialised, corporatised and globalised (MICG, for short). The interests of corporations, treating agriculture as just

a b a l a n c e d d i e t



A balanced diet for humanity is not beyond us

another industry to be milked for profits, take precedence over those of people, whether workers in 'advanced' capitalism or peasants or farmers in 'developing' countries. Companies like McDonald's have an enormous, and increasing, power over the livestock industry, a power they are now extending to the fruit-growers too. Many producers of fruit and vegetables are at the beck and call of the big supermarkets, forced to deliver the kind of bland homogenous pap that these claim their customers want but that in fact just provide bigger profits. And this mass-produced food is not even good for you: Britain has over four million reported cases of food poisoning a year, for instance.

Yet Tudge does not see the need for an alternative to capitalism. He regards the Russian dictatorship as having been the antithesis of capitalism (actually it was just another brand of capitalism), and naturally concludes that that was no solution. Instead he wants to replace the MICG version with 'a different model of capitalism', one which apparently will have all the features of the current model but none of the nasty side-effects. We need to be radical, he claims, but not revolutionary. But alas, his proposals are just wishful thinking within a profit-motivated system - as easily get an apple tree to grow rice as get capitalism to change its nature.

Tudge quotes a small farmer from the US as saying, 'I just want to farm well. I don't want to compete with anybody.' This is a deceptively simple but very profound statement. Why should the work of producing

food to keep people alive and satisfy their taste buds be a matter of cut-throat competition? Why, indeed, should life in general be a matter of competing with others and thereby being either a winner or a loser? Competition may be fine on the football field or the badminton court, but it is not the way to organise the production of food or anything else. People can work together - with each other and with the planet on which we all live - to make that work more pleasant and enjoyable and to produce things, including food, that people really want. But to achieve that will need a revolution in the way the world is organised. ■

PAUL BENNET

“Why should the work of producing food to keep people alive and satisfy their taste buds be a matter of cut-throat competition?”

Open letter to some anti-capitalists

MAKEYOURMARK are part of the *Dissent! Network of resistance against the G8. The group adheres to the Hallmarks of Peoples' Global Action which call for a rejection of capitalism through civil disobedience and non-violent direct action.*

Dear Friends,

I attended your meeting in Carlisle last night. It was good that so many people had turned out. I have sympathy with your organisation's objectives, but a few comments about your strategy.

I thought much of your analysis of capitalism as a system that can only put profit before people was correct, as well as the relation of capitalism to the issues of AIDS, water availability and poverty in Africa and South America. However, I have problems with the idea of nations as victims of capitalism. Less developed nations are the losers in competition against large industrialised nations and the majority of people in those countries suffer because of it, but the state in either type of nation represents the dominant economic interests. Indigenous capitalists in the less developed nations are fighting for themselves, for domination of local resources against multinational corporations - both of which wish to continue the exploitation of people and natural resources. The corollary is that you are supporting small nations against big nations, small capitalists against big capitalists, Robert Mugabe or King Mswati III against George Bush or Silvio Berlusconi for example - and in that I fail to see a rejection of capitalism.

You made an excellent point in your presentation about the man-made laws of capitalism being assumed to be natural laws and therefore unchangeable. I believe that this point also applies to the nation and inseparably the state which are also man-made constructs that have arisen to their present form with the need to manage the conflicting interests within capitalism. In short, the state is part of capitalism not separate from it. Which leads to another point in your presentation where you considered that state-owned industries are worth defending. The experience of state-run industries in this country and elsewhere is no utopia, in fact in some cases it has been a disaster. State-owned industries mostly don't have much difference in character to private industries, they consist of capital put forward by the state which wage or salary workers operate and the goods or services they produce are either sold or rationed out by bureaucrats. Neither for the consumer, as goods or services are still allocated according to ability-to-pay or by handout, or the producer, still embroiled in the labour-capital conflict, is the state ownership of capital a rejection of capitalism.

In one of your slides you asked whether the G8 should be reformed or abolished, I don't think either will 'make poverty history' or allow people to come before profit, nor will 'dropping the debt' or rearranging trade rules. Capitalism existed before the G8 and it would exist without the G8. You've recognised that

asking for reforms won't work, but I don't really see how making your own reforms through civil disobedience and direct action will change the fundamental social relations of capitalism. It is capitalism - the system of minority ownership of the means of producing and distributing goods and services and allocation according to ability to pay - that causes poverty and war, breeds racism and alienation, and hampers social organisation. If you were to abolish the G8 then another organisation could take its place or they could meet in secret - back to square one. I feel what is important is not challenging aspects of capitalism and trying to change them, but challenging the system as whole.

One of the slogans you displayed in the meeting room was about a small number of committed people making a difference. However well intentioned, I don't believe a minority of society can run society in the interests of the majority. The goal of those who reject capitalism should be to break the consensus that supports capitalism and organize politically - democratically - to a replace private ownership of the means of producing goods and services with common ownership, production for need and 'can't pay, can't have' with free access - that is to replace capitalism with socialism. I think that a society run for the majority must be made by the majority and the shortest distance between capitalism and an alternative society is a straight line. Let's campaign for the abolition of capitalism and not misdirect our energies in trying to humanise capitalism, which can only - as you recognise - put profit before people.

I'm hoping to get to Edinburgh for the G8 protest but not to beg for, or batter, a nicer kind of capitalism out of the G8 leaders. I'll be trying to get socialist ideas across to all those there who recognise that the world is in a mess and are willing to do something about it. I hope I'll see you there, maybe I'll give you a leaflet or a copy of the *Socialist Standard*.

Yours for world socialism
Piers Hobson

Africa: a Marxian Analysis

A 30-page pamphlet written by socialists living in Africa consisting mainly of reprints from *The Socialist Standard*. Marx's materialist conception of history and analysis of society is applied to:

- State and class in pre-colonial West Africa
- Early 20th Century South Africa
- Colonialism and Capitalism
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£1 (£1.35 by post). Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'

Book Reviews

Radical Politics in Modern Ireland. The Irish Socialist Republican Party 1896-1904. David Lynch. Irish Academic Press. €39.



The Irish Socialist Republican Party, which only existed between 1896 and 1904, was the equivalent in Ireland of the Social Democratic Federation in Britain. Like the SDF, the ISRP tried to combine campaigning for the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production (socialism, also called at the time, in Britain as well as Ireland, the Socialist Republic) with campaigning for reforms as a means, in the words of the ISRP's programme, "of palliating the evils of the present social system". The ISRP had another demand: Irish independence. As this book shows, it wasn't easy to combine these three objectives.

The party - which according to Lynch never had more than 80 members - was torn in all three directions. The main enemy was seen as the Home Rule party, both because it stood for capitalism in a Home Rule Ireland and because it didn't stand for a complete political break with the British Empire. This led the ISRP to appeal to "advanced Nationalists", trying to convince them that an independent capitalist Ireland was an impossibility and that if they wanted an independent Ireland they should support socialism. One of Lynch's criticisms of the ISRP is that it wasn't true that an independent capitalist Ireland wasn't possible. It was (and it happened), and was the explicit policy of Arthur Griffith's original Sinn Fein with its call for the establishment of an Irish Stock Exchange, an Irish merchant marine, protection for Irish manufacturing industries, etc and the implicit policy of the physical-force Republicans.

The leading light in the ISRP was James Connolly, who for virtually the whole of its existence was its full-time organiser and editor of its paper, the *Workers' Republic*. He was later to resolve the conflict between socialism and republicanism by opting for republicanism and to die in a futile bid to establish an independent Capitalist Republic in Ireland. He is in fact an Irish National Hero with a railway station in Dublin named after him. As a result, his political writings, including those in which his socialism was more prominent than his republicanism, are still printed and read. Particularly good, from this period, is his *Labour in Irish History* which, though not published as a pamphlet till 1910, first appeared as a series in the *Workers' Republic*.

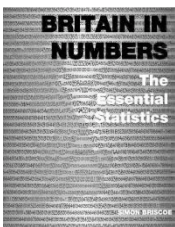
But it was not the conflict between socialism and republicanism that led to the demise of the ISRP in 1904, but that between socialism and reformism. From about 1898, as Lynch records, the ISRP came under the influence of the SLP of America and Daniel De Leon. In 1900 the SLP abandoned its reform programme and similar ideas spread within the ISRP. Although the ISRP never actually dropped its reform programme, when Connolly stood in the elections to Dublin City Council in 1903 his election address (reproduced as an appendix to this book, but which can also be seen at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/connolly/1903/01/woodquay.htm>), unlike at previous elections, contained no programme of reforms.

Connolly presided at the founding conference of the Socialist Labour Party of Britain in 1903 - part of the "impossibilist revolt" within the SDF which also led to the formation of the Socialist Party of Great Britain the following year. He emigrated to America in 1903, so contributing to the demise of the ISRP, joined the SLP and became a De Leonist Industrial Unionist for a while. But that's outside the period of this book. A number of early members of the SPGB had previously been in the ISRP.

Lynch writes as a Trotskyist (quoting from Tony Cliff's *Life of Lenin*), which leads to some misinterpretations. For instance, when the ISRP made the point that in socialism there'd be no need for trade unions and strikes (because there'd be no class working for wages) he likens this to Trotsky's proposal to suppress trade unions in Bolshevik Russia because there was no need for them under a "workers' government". More amusing in view of the sort of criticism the SWP makes of us, is Lynch's argument that the ISRP, despite its emphasis on electoral action, wasn't a mere electoralist party as it also held numerous street corner meetings and so was also engaged in street politics. Nevertheless, his book is the only history of the ISRP and as such a valuable addition to the history of the working-class movement in the two large islands off the north-west coast of the European mainland.

ALB

Britain in Numbers: The Essential Statistics by Simon Briscoe (Politico's, 2005) £14.99



Did you know that workers in Britain clock up nearly 900 million hours of work each week? That a recent survey of 688 school lunchboxes recorded just one salad? Or that half of the households in the UK have less than £1,500 in savings? Simon Briscoe is

Statistics Editor of the Financial Times and this book provides copious statistics on a range of key indicators for British society and the economy at large, including comparative statistics with other countries. There are 78 chapters in total covering everything from asylum seekers to unemployment through to internet usage and vegetarianism.

As is always the case with books such as this socialists will claim that a lot of the statistical categories deployed are highly superficial or artificial (those for class being the most obvious example), but much else of what is presented is valuable and can be used to test some of the claims of politicians of all parties on major economic, social and political issues. The early section of the book is particularly interesting as it accounts for the growth of statistics-keeping and publication in the UK, set in the context of more recent developments such as the increasing use of targets as an aid to meeting policy objectives. Briscoe also usefully discusses how statistics can be used to deceive as well as illuminate and identifies a number of the common tricks employed by governments and others using case studies to illustrate his point.

Briscoe is a strong critic of New

Labour in office and the Chancellor of the Exchequer in particular. The way in which the Chancellor has made extravagant claims for economic growth, low unemployment, inflation and interest rates attracts some merciless criticism, and rightly so, with Briscoe detailing the statistical distortions and trickery used to justify bogus (or highly partial) claims.

Unfortunately, other aspects of Briscoe's book are less satisfactory. While his critiques of Labour since 1997 are authoritative and have much to commend them, Briscoe has a regrettable tendency to argue that anything he considers to be positive about the British economy or society at present has its origins in the Conservative governments that dominated politics before Blair came to office. Quite remarkably, for instance, he can claim that the Conservatives appear to have "put in place many of the foundations for the current [economic] stability". Exactly what these foundations are or how the Conservatives laid them he doesn't say, and it is also noticeable that he doesn't say - with the type of sleight of hand he chides others for - that the UK saw its two most severe downturns since the Great Depression, firstly under Thatcher in the early eighties and then under Major in the early nineties, with the ERM debacle to boot. Some 'foundations' and some 'stability'.

Generally, he places far too much emphasis on differences between Labour and Conservative governments in office - on occasion not being able to see the wood for the trees (and sometimes the branches and even the twigs). Desperate to paint Labour as a party of big government, high spending and high taxation (and - by association - comparative economic incompetence) he manages to portray a picture of Labour and Conservative governments in modern history that few people who are thinking seriously about the issues are likely to find convincing.

You would never think it from reading Briscoe, but tax as a percentage of GDP was higher when Thatcher left office than it was when she was elected in 1979 and it is an almost identical figure now under Blair (at about 36 per cent). Similarly on government spending, where little that is remarkable has occurred for many years. Largely because of the raft of one-off privatisations in the 1980s, the proportion of GDP accounted for by state spending declined from its peacetime peak in the early-mid 1970s (under Tory Ted Heath and then Labour's Harold Wilson) but since then it has tended to hover around the 40 per cent mark under governments of both complexions.

So while useful, this book has to be treated with caution as it seems to exaggerate the differences between the parties when in office, and it certainly understates the uncontrollability and anarchy of the capitalist economy, subsequently over-estimating the power of governments (especially Conservative ones it would seem) to influence it through his favoured low tax and spend policies.

The book was published just before the General Election and was reviewed in many of the broadsheet newspapers with the underlying suspicion that Briscoe hoped it would open up a debate that might be ultimately favourable to the Tories on Labour's economic record. If so, it failed and is a bit of a curate's egg because of it.
DAP

Fifty Years Ago

Is it Foolish?

The following appeared in the *Stratford Express* (3 June 1955):-

"HOW FOOLISH"

"It seems so simple to put a cross against the name of a chosen candidate - so simple that it is almost impossible to go wrong. Yet in these local divisions scores of people wasted their votes by spoiling papers in one of a variety of ways. In one of the West Ham divisions, for instance, there were 40 spoilt papers. Some people had added their name and address; some had scrawled the letters S.P.G.B. (Socialist Party of Great Britain) on the paper, while others had voted for each of the candidates and a few had put the paper in the ballot box completely blank. An indication of their state of mind, perhaps!"

It is, of course, the reference to the S.P.G.B. that concerns us, and it has to be taken in conjunction with the statement that it is "so simple to put a cross against the name of a chosen candidate." But suppose you don't choose either candidate. Suppose you are one of the million and a half former Labour voters who could discern so little difference between the parties that it wasn't worthwhile voting.

Or, again, suppose you are a Socialist and do not want Capitalism at all, not Labour-administered Capitalism or Tory-administered Capitalism? What should you do then? Is it foolish to show on the ballot paper what you do want? It has any rate had the merit that it caught the attention of the *Stratford Express*.

Of course Socialists would prefer to have their own Socialist candidates to vote for, but the Labour, Tory and Liberal parties, by agreement on the £150 deposit, made it very difficult for a small organisation to enter the field.

(From *The Socialist Standard*, July 1955)



A Country Walk in Hertfordshire

Sunday 17 July 2005 at 11.00am

Six and a half miles, including a pub stop

Meet at Bishop's Stortford Railway Station (by rail: London Liverpool Street to Bishop's Stortford).

Further Information:

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VOTING AND DEMOCRACY; MEANS AND ENDS

The June *Pathfinders* page was in two parts "Would people in socialism spend all day voting on everything?" (small print) and "How would people vote?" (bigger print). The small print told us about "collaborative filtering" (CF) software. Developed for capitalist marketing purposes and producing recommendations based on people's likes and dislikes, CF can apparently be used in socialism to stop us voting all day on everything.

The example is given of a farmer using CF to get recommendations about what to vote on: crop yields, GM technology, etc. CF can also put people "in touch with other people of similar interests" - a variant of computer dating? Small-print *Pathfinder* admits that unfortunately "Technology cannot resolve issues of responsibility..."

Bigger-print *Pathfinder* presents as a dream what to me seems more like a

nightmare: "... in the future the technology to debate, dispute, appeal, complain, conference and vote will all be in place - at the touch of a phone button." The trouble with this is that it confuses means with ends. The essence of democracy is having information and ideas to exchange, considerations to weigh up, debates to participate in - and, in some cases, balances to be struck.

In the old days - and even to some extent today - the means to those democratic ends were focused on paper or persons - books and other publications, public meetings, casual or serious conversations. Now these old means are being challenged by new technology means - a screen to watch, a mouse to move, a button to push.

I don't doubt that a phone button or other technological device can play a part in voting and democracy. Some people - with busy lives or physical disabilities? - may find "new hat" voting technology better than the "inconvenient, time-consuming", in-company-with-other-

people method illustrated in *Pathfinder's* photo and labelled "old hat". But whatever technology is used, it is still a means to an end. It is not a substitute for that end. Debating, disputing, etc are not matters of a person relating to a piece of technology. They are matters of a person relating to one or more other persons using some form of technology as a means.

According to a 1980's pop song, video killed the radio star. It didn't. Books are said to be on the way out. They aren't - but they do have new technology competitors. This applies to debating, disputing, appealing, complaining, conferencing and voting. You can do these things directly, more or less face-to-face with other people. Or you can go a little or a long way on the road to human-to-machine "relationships". The choice is yours.

STAN PARKER (by e-mail).

Meetings

Manchester Branch Meetings

Monday 25 July, 8pm

Discussion on Charity

Saturday 30 July, 2 pm

Why You Should Be a Socialist

Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City Centre

Chiswick

Tuesday 19 July 8pm

Showing of film CAPITALISM AND KIDS' STUFF

Committee Room, Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Road), W4 (nearest tube: Chiswick Park)

Edinburgh Branch

Sunday 3 July, 3pm

The G8 Summit

Quakers Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria St.)

contact email

JIMMY@jmoir29.freeseve.co.uk

matt@wsmweb.fsnet.co.uk

ajsc21755@blueyonder.co.uk

Lancaster Branch

Monday, 18 July, 8pm (ring to confirm)

What will constitute criminal behaviour in socialism?

The Gregson Centre, Moor Lane, Lancaster

Enquiries: **01524 383798**

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 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.



Labour wins in 1945

It was the war what done it

In late September 1938 Neville Chamberlain came back from visiting Hitler in Munich and waved a piece

of paper which, he assured us, showed that he had cleverly arranged for peace in our time. A year later we found it was in fact war in our time, with serious questions about the Chamberlain government - about its complacency, ineptitude and collusion with Nazi Germany.

It was quickly apparent that there was to be no repeat of official propaganda to justify the war, by the crude "Your Country Needs You" style so typical of 1914/18. More suitable to the times, there had to be a campaign which implicitly accepted criticism of the past while relying on publicity about the horrors of Nazi Germany and of the occupied countries to persuade the British people that their first priority should be the war effort. Out of all the fear and loss and grief of war there would be a happier world, with human welfare as its dominant motivation.

The day after France had surrendered to Germany the Director General of the Ministry of Information set up a debate on "whether opportunity should be taken of an all-party government to make some promise as to social reforms after the war". A month or so later Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax, who looked and spoke like everyone's version of a typical Tory, wrote to another Cabinet Minister about a meeting with trade union leader Ernie Bevin which had discussed:

"the contrast between the readiness of the Nation, and particularly of the Treasury, to spend £9 million a day in war to protect a certain way of life and the unwillingness of the administrative authorities in peace to put up, shall we say, £10 million to assist in the reconditioning of Durham unless they could see the project earning a reasonable percentage."

Churchill speaks

The official propaganda strategy was to urge the working class to endure the miseries of war in the confident expectation that their reward would come with victory. In March 1943 Churchill broadcast the message, beginning by encouraging his listeners "to concentrate even more zealously upon the war effort" while assuring them that his government was "strong partisans of compulsory national insurance for all classes for all purposes from the cradle to the grave" - the kind of scheme designed by Beveridge, which was attracting popular support. There would, he said, be no unemployment after victory because the state would work with private industry to "enable the Government to exercise a balancing influence upon development which can be turned on or off as circumstances require. There is a broadening field for State ownership and enterprise, especially in relation to monopolies of all kinds".

Under the kind of benevolent stewardship Churchill was hinting at there would be expansion in education, housing and the health services. This kind of prospectus, false though it was, was highly appealing to the people whose opinions were reported by the Home Intelligence Unit of the Ministry of Information: "Three years ago, the term social security was almost unknown to the public as a whole. It now appears to be generally accepted as an urgent post-war need. It is commonly defined as 'a decent minimum standard of living for all'".

So with the end of the war, as Germany and much of the rest of Europe lay in ruins, as the full effects of the atomic bombing of the Japanese cities was being assessed, it was time for what was hoped would be a new beginning. The Conservatives were widely blamed for the cynical mess of the hapless years between one world war and another. The wartime experience of the state taking direct control of so many aspects of society encouraged the idea that this should be extended into key industries like the coal mines, the railways and the health service. In other words, the Labour Party's big day had arrived.

Labour government

If there was one lesson I had absorbed during the war, as I grew into my teens, it was that society must look to a political solution for its problems. Taking everything into account, the Labour Party seemed to me to be worth supporting, and anyway the Tory candidate in my constituency was everything I reviled. He was one of the MPs who had supported the Nazis, attending one of their big rallies and proudly shaking Hitler by the hand. An hereditary baronet, he oozed money along with his ineptitude and his ignorance of the lives of the people whose vote he assumed he could harvest by simply informing them that he supported Churchill for Prime Minister. I threw myself into working for the Labour candidate, who was in much better intellectual shape and was a dynamic campaigner. Excitedly, I stuffed envelopes and canvassed relentlessly, although I was once put out of my stride when a woman at her front door responded to my Labour Party rant by asking "

What about Ramsay MacDonald, then?" I am still embarrassed to remember that I had never even heard of the man, although learning about him did nothing to lessen my devotion to Labour; MacDonald was, I argued, all in the past, we are a new party now and we will rebuild Britain as it should be. When the results were declared in July 1945 I was able to swallow my rage and disappointment at that Tory being elected again because we had a Labour government, the first one with a working majority, so now there could be no obstacles - and no excuses either.

Some of the new Labour MPs were surprised to find themselves in the Commons. As a symptom of their emotional fragility they outraged tradition by singing The Red Flag in the Chamber. Chancellor of the Exchequer Hugh Dalton thought it was as if they were "walking with destiny" - except that the destiny which soon became obvious to the most star-struck MP was very different from all those exciting promises. British capitalism had emerged from the war in a severely damaged condition, having lost some two thirds of its export trade, with a consequent imbalance in its trade with America. The ambition - indeed, the priority - of the Labour government was to return British capitalism to its old pre-eminent position.

Worker exploitation

An important part of this was to intensify working class exploitation. A White Paper published in January 1947 laid it down that "What is necessary is increased production per annum. In attaining this everyone has a part to play". Of course the government did not really mean "everyone" - the people who had to increase their production were those whose livelihood depended on working for wages. In other words, the working class had to postpone any idea about a better, more secure life and accept what was effectively a reduction in their living standards by working harder for less. "We Work Or We Want" was how the government campaign put it, in posters and press adverts all over the country.

The Labour government quickly made it clear that they would have no truck with any nonsense about socialism (or rather what they called socialism) or workers' control; they would run this segment of capitalism as it had to be run - in the interests of the owning, ruling class. They resolutely opposed any efforts by workers to improve, or even defend, their conditions; on two occasions when dockers came out on strike they took emergency powers to order soldiers in to run the docks. They began the programme to make an atomic bomb and then a hydrogen bomb, at a cost of £100 million, without any proper discussion in Cabinet. They sent British troops to fight a colonial war in Malaysia and they joined America in the Korean war. To do this they increased the period of service under military conscription (which they had introduced, for the first time in peacetime, in March 1946) from 18 months to two years, while all those members of the government who had been conscientious objectors in the First World War kept their silence. At home, they abandoned the allegedly sacred alleged principle of the National Health Service by introducing charges for prescriptions (although this was not implemented until 1962, under a Tory government) and then for spectacles and dentures. The list of broken promises and abandoned principles grew longer almost by the day.

Unfamiliar case

Nationally there was a lot of dismay and resentment among Labour Party members at the massive betrayal of their dream of a more equal, more caring society which they had worked so hard for. For example a motion at their 1946 Conference complained about the "apparent continuance of a traditionally Conservative Party policy of power politics abroad". But such doubts had absolutely no effect on the government.

By 1947 it was clear to me that I was wasting my time in the Labour Party. The war had politicised me, as it had so many other people (although too many of them used it for different ends, staying with Labour Party through thick and thin) and I wanted a classless society based on human interests and not on production for profit or on discredited notions about patriotism and international power and influence. That left the question of what I should do. For a while I swirled around on the political surface, bobbing up against one party after another but never feeling good about any of them. Until one Saturday evening in summer when on our local green, a kind of mini Speakers' Corner, I heard this man speaking from an unfamiliar platform, putting an unfamiliar case about a moneyless world without leaders, with free access to wealth. ■

IVAN





Voice from the Back

Brazilian Genocide

Brazil had an estimated six million indigenous people when the Portuguese arrived in 1500. Today there are 700,000 out of a population of 183 million. Indian tribes have been frequent victims of massacres and agents from Brazil's National Indian Foundation fear that more tribal groups are in danger of genocide. They base this on a local court ruling lifting the protection order on tribal lands that allows loggers and ranchers new access. "A boom in prices for South American beef, soy and timber has sparked a surge in land grabs directed against indigenous groups by ranchers and loggers in other parts of the continent as well." (*Times*, 18 May) More profits equal more deaths, it was ever so.

The Crazy Society

Only capitalism with its rapacious drive to make money could produce the following crazy situation. "White wristbands sold by the Make Poverty History coalition were made in Chinese factories accused of using forced labour, it has been disclosed. The fashionable white wristbands, worn by celebrities and politicians, including Tony Blair, were made for a coalition of charities as a symbol of its 2005 campaign to end extreme poverty." (*Independent*, 30 May) As long as there is a couple of bucks to be made, there is nothing the owning class won't stoop to!



The wristband socialists would like to see - and not made in a sweatshop either.

The New Elite

"South Africa's mining magnates and millionaires have been meeting in the imposing Rand Club in downtown Johannesburg for more than a century. ... Built on the wealth of the largest goldmine in the world and the sweat of black labour, the club's membership was, until a few years ago, closed to South Africa's blacks. But these days, there's a new breed of tycoon walking the club's wood-panelled corridors and sipping whiskey in its stuffed leather chairs. A black elite has crossed over from politics and the ruling African National Congress (ANC). Rand Club members over the past few years have included Cyril Ramaphosa, 52, one of South Africa's richest men, who was once touted as a possible successor to Nelson Mandela, and Tokyo Sexwale, also 52, another politician turned capitalist." (*Time*, 6 June) The result of all those years of sacrifice and effort by workers to get rid of apartheid has come to this!

Rich Pickings

The gap between the rich and the rest of society is widening all the time as the research in the USA by The New York Times indicates. "A new breed of fabulously rich American is leaving the rest of the country far behind, in part because of President Bush's tax cuts. The "hyper-rich", 145,000 taxpayers earning an average \$3 million (£1.65 million) a year, have seen their earnings soar while their tax burden has decreased significantly in recent years. Their share of the national

income has doubled in the past 20 years while 90 per cent of taxpayers have seen their share fall." (*Times*, 6 June) The report goes on to give some examples of



Laughing all the way to the bank - Allen & Gates

the wealth of these capitalists - Bill Gates, Microsoft owner \$48 billion, Warren Buffett, investment magnate \$41 billion, Paul Allen, Microsoft co-founder \$20 billion and five members of the Walton family (Wal-Mart owners) \$18 billion each. Land of the free?

How The Other 5 Percent Live

As you worry about paying the rent, the mortgage or your payments on the credit card think about the owning class and their problems. "Mrs Wildenstien told her lawyers; during a cruise in the West Indies, the family's yacht was caught up in a storm. The crew tried to enter ports in Haiti and San Domingo but these were too small for the vessel. Finally, they struggled into a bay in one of the Virgin Islands. To mark their lucky survival, Daniel bought the island." (*Observer*, 12 June) See how lucky you are, fellow workers. You don't own a yacht too big to get in to Haiti or San Domingo, do you?



Typical worker's yacht, perhaps?

Free lunch

by Rigg

